



Course report 2019

Subject	Italian
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

The paper performed very well and the subject matter seems to have been fully accessible to the majority of candidates. All questions performed as expected.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The paper performed as expected and appeared to be accessible to all candidates. An appropriate range of marks was observed in both the listening and discursive writing sections.

The reaction of candidates to the subject matter of the listening section seems to have been largely positive. In the discursive writing section all essay titles were attempted. There were no non-functioning questions in the listening question paper.

Portfolio

There were a number of new texts observed this year and some good essay titles; however, some other titles proved to be less satisfactory. A full range of marks was awarded.

Performance–talking

Performance levels have been stable in this element of course assessment for a number of years. Several very competent performances were observed this year. The new recording arrangements were well received and appear to have helped put candidates at ease.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Overall, the comprehension questions were well done, and the translation proved to be straightforward, with many candidates achieving good levels of performance.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening section of the question paper, part 2 was well done and candidates seem to have been comfortable with the subject matter and content of the discussion.

A good number of candidates achieved the highest pegged marks in discursive writing.

Portfolio

Portfolios this year were well-presented and there were no penalties applied for exceeding the word count or not including bibliographies. There were some excellent essays, mostly written in response to carefully-crafted titles and showing a good degree of skill in the management of varied resources.

Performance-taking

The vast majority of candidates performed very well, mostly due to excellent and thorough preparation. It was pleasing to note that none of the candidates resorted to written notes, and most interacted very well with the visiting assessor.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper: Reading and Translation

As in previous years, candidates did not perform as well in the overall purpose question in the reading section. This is possibly due to a small number of candidates running out of time as they attempted this question last. Candidates would benefit from better overall time management in the question paper.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening section of this question paper, part 1, candidates did not do well where the recognition of numbers was involved.

In the discursive writing section, there was a lack of essays gaining the mid-range of pegged marks, and a weaknesses in grammar and spelling. Centres should encourage candidates to spend more time reviewing what they have written in the discursive writing section.

Portfolio

Candidates performed less well in this element of course assessment. This was mainly due to a number of inappropriate essay titles, which were too loose and open-ended. This

resulted in generalised, rather than concise analysis which is required here. In some cases, candidates could have given more detail in their bibliographies.

Performance–talking

Some candidates relied heavily on pre-learned material which sometimes outweighed the use of natural, spontaneous language, which is required.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Centres should encourage candidates to complete the paper in the order in which it is presented. Many candidates attempt the translation and/or inferential question before the comprehension questions. This is not good practice as addressing the comprehension questions first allows candidates to build up a detailed idea of the content, style and message of the text, which is vital to good performance in the overall purpose and translation questions.

Candidates should read all of the comprehension questions carefully and answer succinctly, without translating large chunks of language. Information from the translation section should never be included in these answers.

Candidates should ensure that they allocate sufficient time to attempting the inferential and translation questions. In the translation, candidates should also check carefully for accuracy and possible omissions of single words as these often incur a penalty. When answering the inferential question, candidates should avoid using large chunks of language lifted from previous marking instructions.

More attention should be given to ensuring that the overall level and standard of English when writing answers is adequate, so as to avoid possible lack of precision and subsequent miscomprehension.

Candidates should be encouraged to use quotations in the overall purpose question to support points they make, however they should ensure that quotations are not overly long and complicated.

Question Paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Centres should give more time ensuring candidates have a good knowledge and understanding of the Italian number system. Many marks are lost in part 1 of the listening question paper through not understanding the various statistics cited, which are a common feature of this part of the paper.

Centres should encourage candidates to set aside adequate time to proofread their discursive writing. Candidates could avoid many basic errors by carefully checking verb tenses and endings, adjectival agreements, genders, spellings and accents.

Centres should give candidates more detailed and frequent grammar input and practice to help them prepare for the discursive writing. Many of the errors noted by examiners originate from lack of knowledge of these areas.

Portfolio

Candidates and centres should ensure that they have fully understood the requirements of the portfolio as detailed in the course specification.

Candidates should take great care in the selection of essay titles, avoiding those which are too contrived, vague, over-ambitious and incapable of addressing it fully within the prescribed word count. Teachers and lecturers should take adequate time to discuss possible titles devised by candidates and give appropriate advice when required.

Candidates should give the selection of sources adequate attention and ensure that content from them is fully integrated into their essay.

Bibliographies should be as comprehensive as possible, citing all sources the candidate uses.

Essays on literary texts should clearly show that the candidate has read the original in Italian and not the English translation. If possible, centres should try to select literary texts whose intellectual content is most suitable for their candidates. New texts and topics are always welcome.

Candidates should adhere to the word count, as if they exceed the maximum by more than 10%, a penalty is applied.

Centres should ensure candidates accurately fill in, sign and date the necessary flyleaf.

Performance–talking

Candidates must incorporate pre-learned material naturally and avoid any tendency to deliver mini-speeches. This performance is a test of the ability to generate and sustain an ongoing and unscripted conversation.

If candidates are using notes, the teacher or lecturer should check to ensure that these are of the prescribed length.

Centres should ensure candidates record their topics and texts succinctly and accurately when submitting candidate STL forms. There is sometimes a tendency to offer too many topics, and this results in examiners having to pick and choose due to time restraints, which is not always to the benefit of the candidate.

Centres should take special care to ensure that the assessment takes place in a quiet area. They should gather all candidates together at the beginning of the session so that visiting assessors have a chance to brief them as a group.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	36
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	27
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	63.0%	63.0%	17	140
B	14.8%	77.8%	4	120
C	7.4%	85.2%	2	100
D	7.4%	92.6%	2	90
No award	7.4%	-	2	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The principal assessor and SQA qualifications manager meet with the relevant SQA head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.