



## Course Report 2017

Subject	Italian
Level	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

## **Section 1: Comments on the assessment**

### **Component 1: question paper: Reading and Translation**

The paper as a whole performed to expectations, and appears to have been well received by teachers and candidates. The marking instructions worked effectively and required only minor changes. There were no instances of non-functioning questions.

### **Component 2: question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

Candidates performed largely as expected in this paper. The original marking instructions proved to be largely accurate, requiring very few additions or amendments. All questions functioned well, with a wide variety of marks awarded.

### **Component 3: portfolio**

The recent changes in format appear to have been fully understood by centres and candidates alike. There was a welcome input of new texts and topics, and some interesting and well-devised titles were observed. A full spread of marks was awarded. Very few essays were penalised for excessive length and/or lack of a bibliography.

### **Component 4: performance: Talking**

There were some strong performances from candidates. Once again, a full range of marks was achieved.

## **Section 2: Comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas in which candidates performed well**

#### **Component 1: question paper: Reading and Translation**

The subject matter seems to have been fully accessible to all candidates and the comprehension questions were generally well done, with an appropriate spread of marks in evidence.

#### **Component 2: question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

A full range of performances was observed in both sections 1 and 2. There were no problematic questions; the speed and clarity of the recording seem to have been appropriate. Candidates showed evidence of effective note-taking, both in English and in

Italian. There were some excellent performances in Discursive Writing, and the full range of essay titles was addressed.

### **Component 3: portfolio**

The portfolio was generally of a good standard, with most essays being well-written and some exceeding the level expected at Advanced Higher. Care was taken to avoid excessive length, and bibliographies were more than adequate. Some candidates also provided helpful footnotes and endnotes. This year candidates showed greater skill in reconciling sources, thereby ensuring effective essay titles.

### **Component 4: performance: Talking**

The majority of candidates were well-prepared for this component. Performance was very good.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Component 1: question paper: Reading and Translation**

The translation was challenging in parts, but proved to be a good discriminator of ability. Performance in the standardised inferential question was a little inconsistent, perhaps due to poor time management; some candidates appeared to rush this part of the paper. There were also instances of poor English in all parts of the paper. This was especially evident in the translation.

### **Component 2: question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

Some candidates demonstrated weaknesses in grammar and a lack of effective checking and proofreading.

### **Component 3: portfolio**

The use of footnotes and endnotes could sometimes be excessive. There were some instances of essay titles that were poorly phrased and/or too generalised. These were consequently self-penalising as they did not allow for a proper critical analysis.

### **Component 4: performance: Talking**

There was evidence of large chunks of pre-learned material being incorporated into the conversation; candidates here were not always able to improvise when asked to expand on an answer. Some candidates appeared not to have undertaken thorough and detailed enough preparation for this component.

## **Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates**

### **Component 1: question paper: Reading and Translation**

Care should be taken to do 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 inferential and translation questions.

The comprehension questions should be carefully read and answered succinctly, without translating large chunks of language; information from the translation section should never be included in these answers.

Enough time should be set aside to attempt the inferential and translation questions properly. 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 official marking instructions. More attention should be devoted to ensuring that the level and standard of English is adequate, to avoid possible lack of precision and subsequent miscomprehension by examiners.

### **Component 2: question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

For the discursive essay, proofreading is an area in which candidates should be thoroughly trained, as many basic errors could be avoided by careful checking of verb tenses and endings, adjectival agreements, genders, spellings and accents. More detailed and frequent grammar input and practice is also recommended here, as many of the errors detected by examiners originate from these areas.

### **Component 3: portfolio**

- ◆ Great care should be taken in the selection of essay titles, avoiding those that are too contrived, vague, over-ambitious or incapable of being properly addressed within the prescribed word-length.
- ◆ The selection of sources should also receive adequate attention. Bibliographies should be of an appropriate level, and candidates should present them in a systematic format. There is an over-reliance on Wikipedia, which is not always the most accurate of sources.
- ◆ 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 and length are most suitable for their candidates. New texts and topics are always welcome.

- ◆ Candidates should adhere to the word count and not be over, as they risk incurring a penalty.

#### **Component 4: performance: Talking**

Pre-learned material has to be incorporated naturally, and care must be taken to avoid any tendency to deliver mini-speeches, as this component is a test of the ability to generate and sustain an unscripted conversation. If notes are to be used, teachers should check to ensure that these are of an appropriate length. Care should be taken to ensure that topics and texts are recorded succinctly and accurately when submitting STL forms.

## Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	22
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Number of resulted entries in 2017	28
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### Statistical information: Performance of candidates

#### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	53.6%	53.6%	15	140
B	17.9%	71.4%	5	120
C	17.9%	89.3%	5	100
D	10.7%	100.0%	3	90
No award	0.0%	-	0	-

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and 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.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ 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.