



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Italian
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

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 examinations. 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 and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The final year of the Intermediate 1 examination closely followed the prescriptive guidance to setters relating to each of the components in terms of length, difficulty, text type and sampling of a range of topics, resulting in a challenge to the candidates deemed very much 'on standard'.

The 2015 cohort was small, reflecting the fact that this was the final year of the examination and reflecting also dual running with the new National 4 Italian award.

Estimated grades for the small retained cohort were for a one hundred per cent pass rate, and this was mirrored in the actual overall performance of the candidates across all four components. Mean marks (2014 marks in brackets) were:

Reading = 28.3 out of 35 — (26.7)

Listening = 16.6 out of 20 — (14.2)

Writing = 10.7 out of 15 — (8.8)

Speaking = 28.2 out of 30 — (24.6)

Mean marks indicate that the retained candidature was indeed an able one — mean marks in each component progressed by close to two full marks over scores achieved in 2014. Speaking continued to make the greatest contribution to marks awarded, followed by Reading. In Listening, candidates took full advantage of being able to hear each question as a separate item three times. Writing continues to be a relatively testing skill, though there were also pleasing responses which attracted full marks.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates related well to the sports tournament theme running through the **Reading Paper**. Marks were achieved throughout all questions, including the formal text of the third question, where technical vocabulary such as *Autostrada A14, uscita Rimini Sud* was well handled, while past tenses in the longer text for Question 4 (a) (i) *ho cominciato a fare ginnastica a sei anni* (b)(i) *sono andata ad abitare a Milano*, and (e) *ha enfatizzato il lato negativo della mia personalita* were well recognised by many candidates.

In the **Listening Paper** candidates had been well prepared by centres on essentials such as numbers and times as in Questions 1 (*il biglietto di andata per Rimini costa otto euro, 7 (le camere sono al secondo piano)*) and 8, (*dalle sette e trenta fino alle dieci*). Candidates also rose to meet the challenge presented by language on Home Town (Q2), Free time (Q3) School and Work (Q5) as well as Tourism (Qs7 and 8).

Areas which candidates found demanding

In the **Reading Paper**, the distinction between the singular and the plural continues to prove difficult for some candidates. In Question 2(b): *ricco di monumenti dell'epoca romana* was

given as 'a Roman monument', and Question 2 (c) *splendide colline* given as 'hill'. *Cucina* is also a word which when it means 'cooking' rather than kitchen, can be misunderstood by some candidates. The phrase accompanying the cognate *una vita normale* in Question 7(f)ii (*ho sempre i finesettimana per fare ...*) posed problems for some.

In the **Listening Paper**, in Question 3 the similarity in sound of *matematica* and *informatica* caused a little difficulty. In Question 4 *disoccupazione* tended to be recognised in the main by the more able candidates. In Question 9 *un regalo dei nostri sponsor* proved more testing, and in Question 10 there was evidence of confusion of *Piazza* with *pizza*.

In **Writing** there was evidence again of some candidates, perhaps under the pressure of sitting an exam, being uncertain of correct verb endings, often arising from confusion between the first person singular '-----o' and 'the third person singular '-----a'. Correct agreements of the various forms of 'my' in Italian also caused some errors.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

While there will be no more candidates for an examination which has served its purpose over the years, some salient points still emerge from this year's examination which can aid practitioners in the practice of Reading and Listening skills.

Centres should continue to ensure that candidates are given a rigorous grounding in basic numbers, times etc and in high frequency vocabulary.

Lexical items which are liable to cause difficulty due to their similarity of spelling or sound (*piazza/pizza*), *matematica/informatica*), (*libri/liberi*) should be highlighted in learning.

Learners could be given special practice in paying attention to the final vowel to distinguish the singular form from the plural form when giving answers.

A more testing but worthwhile task is to train candidates to realise that it may not be enough to recognise an item of vocabulary but also necessary to focus on how the sense of a phrase can change depending on the accompanying verb or phrase, as with the cognate *una vita normale* in Question 4(f)ii in the Reading Paper.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	39
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	20
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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 - 100				
A	90.0%	90.0%	18	70
B	10.0%	100.0%	2	60
C	0.0%	100.0%	0	50
D	0.0%	100.0%	0	45
No award	0.0%	-	0	-

For this Course, grade boundaries have been stable for a number of years and the intention was to set similar grade boundaries to previous years. The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

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.