



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Italian
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

In its final year, this examination once again closely followed the prescriptive guidance to setters relating to each of the components in terms of length, difficulty, style of text and sampling of a range of topics, resulting in a challenge to the candidates which was deemed very much on a par with that presented in previous years.

The difference in this final year of the examination was the vastly reduced size of the cohort, down from 151 to 18, reflecting a migration to the new National 5 examination, figures that are mirrored in the number of presenting centres, down from 24 to eight. Whereas the 2014 cohort comprised more candidates at the S4 stage, the 2015 cohort was made up mainly of S6 candidates.

Mean marks were as follows:

Reading = 24.3 (30) — up 0.9 on 2014

Listening = 14.6 (20) — down 1.0 on 2014

Writing = 14.8 (20) — no change from 2014

Speaking = 27.6 (30) — up 2.1 on 2014

Mean scores indicate that candidates achieved more than half the marks available in all components, with performances in Speaking and Reading contributing a majority of the marks. The settled nature of the Writing task allowed centres to prepare candidates thoroughly to make important contributions to total marks achieved. While Listening remained the more testing of the components, candidates had also been well prepared by centres to rise to the challenge posed in that skill.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates overall found the **Reading Paper** accessible throughout the first three texts based loosely around blogs on hobbies, ICT and holidays, and also gained marks throughout the longer fourth text based on an interview with an Italian tennis player. The frequency term in *bisogna usare la bicicletta il più spesso possibile* was well dealt with by candidates in Question 1(c), as was the gerund in the longer phrase *guadagnare soldi mettendo in vendita appunti tesi e composizioni* in Question 2(c).

Similarly, the challenging structure of *vado in città per comprare tutte le cose di cui avrò bisogno* in Question 3(c) still provided a mark for many candidates. The lively interview in Question 4 yielded marks throughout, with candidates getting credit for correctly rendering the superlative in *una delle tenniste più ammirate di tutto il mondo* for Question 4(a) and understanding the past tenses in *è stato suo padre a metterle in mano una racchetta quando aveva solo cinque anni* for Question 4(c).

The **Listening Paper** performed as intended and was also handled satisfactorily by candidates who scored evenly across the three monologues based on the prescribed topics

of Family, School and Holidays. Most candidates achieved the mark at Question 1 (a) where cognates of *timida* and *determinata* got them off to a good start. The reasons for the brother choosing to become an engineer (*è un lavoro soddisfacente e guadagna bene*) in Question 1(c) yielded another mark for many.

In Question 2, understanding the imperfect tense in *le lingue erano le materie più utili per il mio lavoro* provided another mark. Centres had also prepared their candidates well to deal with the tourist/holiday type language arising in Question 3: *fare una vacanza culturale con un gruppo di amici ...* and *prendere il treno per visitare altre città della regione* yielded more marks, for example in Questions 3 (a) and (b) respectively.

In **Writing** there were many examples of responses where candidates had been well versed in the task by centres. Credit was given where candidates adapted learned material appropriately to the job specification.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In **Reading** Question 2 (b) some candidates missed the 'ti' in *materie che ti interessano* and stated 'interesting subjects' rather than subject which are of interest to **you**. Not all gave sufficient information for Question 3(a): 'pack your suitcase **the day before you leave**'. In Question 4 (a) English expression caused some candidates to lose a mark when *un'autobiografia di successo* elicited 'she wrote a successful biography'.

In **Listening** Question 1 (e) some candidates lost the mark when they did not recognise the subject of the verb in *adoriamo cucinare ...* erroneously stating that only the grandmother liked to cook. In Question 2 (d) a mark was lost when the number in *solo un computer ogni quaranta studenti* was not correctly translated. The longer run of language involved in Question 3 (c) *si doveva fare la prima colazione nella camera perché non c'era una sala da pranzo* proved the most difficult mark to access.

In **Writing** the final bullet point again continued to be a source of inaccuracies of spelling or expression in candidates' responses, some of which were otherwise very competent.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

While there will be no more candidates at Intermediate 2 Italian, when preparing candidates at a similar level in **Reading and Listening Skills**, centres should continue to ensure that candidates are given a rigorous grounding in the suggested Contexts and Topics, without neglecting the more testing examples of key areas such as numbers, times, days and weather. These might involve modified numbers and fractions (*oltre mille ... quasi un terzo*) or the need to recognise a combination of simpler items embedded in a longer sentence in Listening, for example. As always, centres should train candidates routinely to offer a sufficient amount of detail in responses. Care in details of expression of answers in English will continue to benefit candidates.

In **Writing**, over past years the best responses to the compulsory bullet points have been ones in which candidates elaborated on opinions and reasons, and avoided a mere

repetition of for example a list of school subjects. In terms of accuracy, candidates can benefit from extra attention to detail with agreements both of number and gender, as well as first and third person verb endings in the present tense in particular, and the formation of the present perfect tense.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	116
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	19
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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	78.9%	78.9%	15	69
B	5.3%	84.2%	1	59
C	10.5%	94.7%	2	49
D	5.3%	100.0%	1	44
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.