Course Report 2016

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

This paper performed fully to expectations and appears to have been well received by teachers and candidates. The marking instruction worked well (only minor amendments were made) and there were no non-functioning questions.

Component 2: Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Once again performance was largely as expected. There were very few additions or amendments to the marking instruction and all questions functioned very well, with a wide spread of marks achieved.

Component 3: Portfolio

This is an area where there has been significant change in format, and candidates and centres appear to have reacted well to this. Literary and media sources included: *Sostiene Pereira, Io non ho paura, Volevo i pantaloni, Leopardi* and *La vita è bella*.

Component 4: Performance

There were very good performances from a cohort as a whole.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper: Reading and Translation

The subject matter of Paper 1 (young people and politics) appears to have been very well received by all candidates, and there was a wide spread of marks in the comprehension questions. Performance in the translation and overall purpose question continues to improve with the advent of the new course.

Component 2: Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

There were a range of performances in both Listening texts. No particular question proved to be problematic and candidates continue to show good skills in note-taking and accurately transcribing their final answers. There were some very good performances in Discursive Writing.

Component 3: Portfolio

Performance in the Portfolio was generally good. Some essays were very well written, and care was taken to provide frequent footnotes, endnotes and bibliographies. The word-limit appears to have given candidates a good opportunity to express themselves fully.

Component 4: Performance

Most candidates were very well prepared for this component and were often able to sustain long and varied stretches of conversation. Several candidates attained full marks. It was interesting to observe that there was very little reliance on written notes.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper: Reading and Translation

The inferential and translation questions proved to be effective discriminators of ability. Both questions were poorly done by a few candidates who were obviously short of time, having spent too long on the comprehension questions. There were also some instances of poor English in the translation.

Component 2: Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

One particular essay title (relating to the context of learning) proved to be much more popular than the others. Overall, some candidates demonstrated weaknesses in grammar and a lack of effective checking and proof-reading.

Component 3: Portfolio

Some candidates had difficulty in reconciling their chosen sources, leading to ineffective essay titles that were in two parts. There were some instances where a novel and a film were presented as sources but with no mention of the film in the essay. Some inconsistency in the production of bibliographies was observed.

Component 4: Performance

In the Performance, there was the occasional problem of candidates over-relying on pre-learned material and getting into difficulty when asked to digress or expand on this.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper: Reading and Translation

This paper should be done in the order in which it is presented. Some candidates attempted the translation and/or inferential question(s) before the comprehension questions; this is to be discouraged as working through the comprehension questions first enables candidates to build up a detailed idea of the content, style and message of the text before embarking on the inferential and translation questions.

Candidates should also ensure that they read all the comprehension questions carefully and attempt to answer them precisely, avoiding the temptation to translate chunks of language. They should not include information from the translation section in these answers.

Enough time should set aside to complete the inferential and translation questions; there was some evidence of these questions having been rushed. In the translation, candidates should also check carefully for accuracy and possible omissions, especially of single words, as these can often incur a penalty.

Component 2: Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

More detailed and frequent grammar input and practice is recommended for the discursive essay, together with the development of effective proof-reading skills. Many basic errors could be avoided by the careful checking of verb tenses and endings, adjectival agreements, genders, spellings and accents.

Component 3: Portfolio

When choosing essay titles, care should be taken to avoid those that are too contrived, vague, over-ambitious or incapable of being properly addressed within the prescribed word-limit.

Care should be taken over the selection of sources. More detailed bibliographies are needed, and candidates should present them in a systematic format. Essays on literary texts should clearly demonstrate 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 S6 pupils. New texts are always welcome.

Candidates should stick to the word-count, as they otherwise risk incurring a penalty.

Component 4: Performance

Candidates should incorporate any pre-learned material naturally and avoid any tendency to deliver mini-speeches, as this component is a test of the ability to generate and sustain an ongoing and unscripted conversation. If notes are to be used, teachers should check to ensure that these are of an appropriate length.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	0

Number of resulted entries in 2016	22

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	59.1%	59.1%	13	140
B	27.3%	86.4%	6	120
C	4.5%	90.9%	1	100
D	4.5%	95.5%	1	90
No award	4.5%	-	1	0

Decision Making Record Statement:

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.