

SQA Higher Italian External Assessment Report 2014

General comments

- There were no significant issues regarding content, level of difficulty and marking
- This year there was a drop in the number of presentations: 173 as against 234 last year (down 26%). For the most part, this was due to a number of centres who only present every two years. The figures in this respect are very similar to those of 2012.
- The Component Average mark for each element was as follows (figures for 2013 are in brackets):
 - Paper 1 = 31.0 (33.4)
 - Paper 2 = 19.4 (16.1)
 - Speaking = 23.1 (22.5)

Reading and Directed Writing

- Most candidates responded positively to the subject matter of the Reading Comprehension, with very few poor performances noted.
- Poor English in some responses to the comprehension questions and the translation led to a loss of marks.

Listening and personal response essay

- Performance in the Short Essay was better than usual. Most candidates were successful in using information gleaned from the Listening to help with content and less reliant on pre-learned material.
- The following weaknesses in grammatical knowledge and accuracy were noted:
 - *piacere* in all its forms
 - difference between perfect and imperfect tenses
 - verbs with collective nouns as subjects
 - *qualche* with a plural noun
 - agreement of adjectives
 - articulated prepositions
 - incorrect definite and indefinite articles
 - prepositions before infinitives, towns and countries
 - plural nouns and adjectives, especially those ending in *-co* and *-go*
 - confusion between *tu, voi* and *si*
 - irregular past participles, especially *decidere* and *mettere*
 - direct and indirect object pronouns
 - *pensare di / che*
 - *aiutare a*
 - possessive adjectives with family members
 - confusion between *c'era, era* and *c'erano*

Advice to centres on the preparation of future candidates

Reading and Translation

- Candidates are advised to tackle Paper 1 in the order in which it is presented. This year there were again several instances of either the Translation or Directed Writing being done first, followed by the comprehension questions; in these cases performance was sometimes compromised.
- Candidates should be encouraged to make sure that they read questions carefully and attempt to answer them accurately and succinctly, avoiding the temptation to translate chunks of language.
- Candidates should know not to include information from the translation section in their comprehension answers.
- Encourage candidates to pay careful attention when translating numbers, especially larger ones.
- Candidates should set aside enough time to do the Translation properly and avoid rushing it.
- Candidates should also check carefully for accuracy and possible omissions, especially of single words as these can often incur a one or two point penalty.

Directed Writing

- Double line spacing is recommended for maximum legibility, especially if something is crossed out and then rewritten.
- It is disappointing to note that, in some centres, candidates write almost identical essays or almost identical paragraphs to specific bullet points.
- This year there were several instances of candidates lifting phrases, whole sentences and sometimes even entire paragraphs from the text of the Reading Comprehension. This should be avoided.

Listening/Writing

- Candidates should listen carefully to numbers, times, dates and days, as many careless mistakes are made here.
- Similarly, they should make sure that they include relevant adjectives in their answers, as these are often essential for a point or points to be awarded.
- Advise candidates that if a question asks *where* or *when exactly*, this usually indicates that some detail is required.
- Candidates should also ensure that any rough working is clearly scored out.
- In the Short Essay candidates must ensure that they read the essay question carefully and attempt to address the precise issue(s) raised. The use of pre-learned material here may lead to partial or total irrelevance, unless an effort is made to adapt it to the essay title.
- Centres should note carefully how uneven writing is marked in the *What if ...?* section of the Marking Instructions for the Short Essay.
- As is the case with Directed Writing, double line spacing is recommended for maximum legibility, especially if something is crossed out and then rewritten.