

External Assessment Report 2013

Italian Advanced Higher

General Comments

- The indications are that the paper was well received by teachers and candidates; no critical comments from centres were received, and there were no setting issues.
- Marking Instructions worked well and only minor amendments were made; there were no non-functioning questions.
- As is usually the case in Advanced Higher Italian, all candidates opted for the Extended Reading/Viewing option in the folio.
- In the Speaking Assessment the average mark of 40.0 was slightly down on last year's 41.7, but a number of good performances were noted.
- Overall attainment this year was excellent, with 91.7% of candidates receiving grade A–C. 58.3% of candidates obtained an A pass.

Paper I

- The subject matter of Paper I was found to be accessible to candidates and most tackled the comprehension questions successfully.
- In the inferential question, some neglected to justify their assertions with detailed reference to the text, and, instead, tended to offer vague and generalised observations; this may have been due in some cases to lack of time — some candidates tend to spend too long on the comprehension questions.
- Some candidates scored poorly in what was a testing translation task. There were instances of poor command of English and improper dictionary use.

Paper II

- It was heartening to see a number of good performances from candidates who, in some cases, presented accurate and imaginative discussions of the range of topics.
- At times, there were areas of weaknesses in grammar and general proof-reading was poor, the latter being an area in which candidates would benefit from more training and guidance from teachers.

Folio

- Performance in the Folio was comparable with previous years, with the appearance of some new texts and background studies titles. As was the case last year, the increase in word-count continues to give candidates a better opportunity to express themselves fully.
- Essays on background topics were often less well done than those on literary texts, with little attempt at critical evaluation or analysis; this was due for the most part to essay titles which were far too vague and open-ended.

Speaking

- In the Speaking Assessment, some candidates tended to over-rely on pre-learned material and were uncomfortable when asked to digress or expand on this.

Advice to centres on the preparation of future candidates

- It is recommended that candidates answer Paper 1 in the order in which it is presented. It is unwise to do the translation and/or inferential question before completing the comprehension questions. Working through the comprehension questions enables candidates to get an impression of the content, style and message of the passage and should therefore precede any attempt at the inferential and translation question.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read all the comprehension questions carefully and to attempt to answer the specific questions precisely, avoiding the temptation to translate chunks of language. They should be clear that no information from the translation section should be included in these answers.
- Candidates should have plenty practice so as to manage their time more effectively. Every year there is evidence of candidates rushing through the inferential question and translation because they have not given themselves enough time. In the translation, 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.
- More detailed and frequent grammar input and practice is recommended for the discursive essay. Teachers should work with candidates on developing effective proofreading skills. Many basic errors could be avoided by carefully checking verb tenses and endings, adjectival agreements, genders, spellings and accents.
- Candidates should be trained to incorporate pre-learned material naturally in the Speaking Assessment and should avoid any tendency to deliver mini-speeches. They should understand fully that the Speaking Assessment is a test of the ability to generate and sustain an ongoing and unscripted conversation.
- The choice of background topic essay titles in the Folio should be carefully considered by both teachers and pupils so as to avoid titles that are too vague, over-ambitious and incapable of being properly addressed within the prescribed word-length.
- More detailed bibliographies are recommended for the Folio pieces.
- If possible, schools should try to select literary texts whose intellectual content and length is most suitable for S6 pupils. New texts and background topics are always welcome.
- Candidates should aim to adhere to the 750 word Folio essay limit.