



L-Università
ta' Malta

MATSEC
Examinations Board



Examiners' Report

AM Italian

Special September Session 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	2
B.	COMMENTS ON PAPERS I – IV	3
	Paper I: Oral Component; Dictation and Listening comprehension	3
	Paper II: Essay and Language Exercises	3
	Section A: Essay.....	3
	Section B: Language Exercises.....	3
	Paper III: Summary and written comprehension	3
	Section A: Summary	3
	Section B: Written Comprehension	4
	Paper IV: Anthology and the Novel	4
	Section A – Anthologia	4
	Section B – Romanzo: Tabucchi / Bassani / Tomasi di Lampedusa	0
C.	CONCLUDING COMMENTS	0

A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

This report refers to the Special September session 2020 which is replacing the May session that has been postponed because of Covid-19. So it is not easy to make comparisons with previous sessions although the same format is going to be used for the report. It is also important to bear in mind that Paper I, made up of the Aural component with the Dictation and Listening Comprehension, and the Oral component consisting of Topic Presentation and Interactive Conversation, has been left out, and the candidates were given the full marks allotted for this component, i.e. 20%, as a mitigating action. The table below shows the number of candidates who registered for the Italian examination at Advanced Level in May sessions in 2018 and 2019, and those sitting for the Special September session of 2020, together with the tallies of grades obtained and figures reported for these examinations.

	May 2018	%	May 2019	%	Special Sept 2020	%
Candidates	102	100	95	100	91	100
Grades A-E	78	76.5	67	70.5	59	64.8
Grades A-C	48	47.1	53	55.8	53	58.2
Failed	19	18.6	9	9.5	3	3.3
Grade A	8	7.8	7	7.4	9	9.9
Grade B	10	9.8	11	11.6	10	11.0
Grade C	30	29.4	35	36.8	34	37.4
Grade D	18	17.6	8	8.4	4	4.4
Grade E	12	11.8	6	6.3	2	2.2
Absent	5	4.9	19	20	29	31.9

Table 1: Grades obtained by candidates in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

One should look first and foremost at the number of absent candidates. Nearly one out of three candidates applied for the Advanced Level of Italian but then did not turn up for the exam. For Paper IV, the literature paper, 33 candidates were absent and that would mean that 36% of the candidates who applied, did not present themselves for the exam. Even in 2019 this tendency was evident but now this absenteeism has led to having only 58 candidates sitting for all the exam papers at Advanced level of Italian.

This high percentage of absentees makes comparisons with previous sessions harder but it certainly worth pointing out that the grades A-C have had an increase while candidates obtaining D or E have decreased. In fact the overall percentage of candidates who obtained a pass mark (grades A-E) has decreased. This can be confirmed moreover by the remarkable drop in the percentage of failures (only 3 candidates failed).

B. COMMENTS ON PAPERS I – IV

Paper I: Oral Component; Dictation and Listening comprehension

As indicated above, as a mitigating factor, the marks of paper I (20% of the final mark) were given in full to all candidates.

Paper II: Essay and Language Exercises

Section A: Essay

A good number of essays had a good level of Italian, with idiomatic expressions and a smooth and manageable general content. Candidates preferred to write about friendship. The titles about nature vs human overdevelopment and journalism were also favoured and well addressed.

Thoughts and ideas were in most of the cases logical and well presented, with some faults in the punctuation and in the general presentation of the text. It is not obligatory to skip a line between main paragraphs, but when done, it gives a general neat and well distributed outlook.

The level of language varies: some candidates were weak in the use of verbs (wrong use of verbs in the *Periodo Ipotetico* and some confusion in the *Passato Prossimo/Imperfetto*). Candidates have the usual difficulties in *concordanze* and in making a distinction between *e* and *è*. There were some false friends mainly English/Italian but also Spanish/Italian. Undoubtedly, as part of their essay writing 'training', candidates are taught to and led into delving deeper in researching, reading and ultimately applying the knowledge gained from such an exercise to the probable essay titles.

Section B: Language Exercises

This part of the exam had 5 exercises, namely on lexicon, adverbs, verbs, *nomi alterati* and *valenza* of verbs and nouns. It was impressive how much the candidates scored high on the verbs exercise. This means that they are getting enough training on this aspect of morphology. However, the same cannot be said for the other exercises. Candidates need to strike a balance and focus on other aspects of morphology in fact, points were lost on exercises 2, 4 and 5. In general, the performance of the candidates was good.

Paper III: Summary and written comprehension

Section A: Summary

Most candidates presented quite a good summary which showed their understanding of the text that was quite challenging, and a good grasp of the language. There were summaries written in a flowing language with quite complex sentences which showed the candidates' effort at presenting a mature work. The

absolute majority knew that a summary has to be written in one paragraph and managed to include the most important points of the text. Very few candidates divided the summary in paragraphs.

Some of the most common mistakes were related to the use of the *Pronomi Relativi*, *Preposizioni articolate* and the distinctive use of the *Passato Prossimo* and the *Imperfetto*. Some candidates also kept switching from the present to the past tense and vice versa. Some summaries lacked the use of conjunctions thus resulting in a disjointed work which sounded rather as a listing of points. A small number of candidates wrote a comment on the text rather than a summary. A common mistake was that many reverted to literal translations to say for example that Camilleri will be missed. Others are not yet aware that the surname of the author (Andrea Camilleri) has to be used when speaking or writing about him and not refer to him as Andrea.

Section B: Written Comprehension

Candidates did quite well, although there were some questions which proved tricky. These mainly were the question about the 4 characteristics of the *Maggiolina* and the questions in which they were asked to explain a certain expression or word. Unfortunately, it was evident that some candidates did not comprehend the text.

Paper IV: Anthology and the Novel

Section A – Anthologia

The analysis of the texts was generally satisfactory and the knowledge level, with some exceptions, shows a remarkable improvement compared to last year's. The effort to grasp the different literary styles and genres was generally satisfactory, particularly in light of the fact that the candidates' exposure to Italian language and literature has been limited by the Covid-19 situation. Candidates need to sharpen their writing skills and their studying skills since a recurrence of grammatical errors and orthographical mistakes still highlights their answers.

The candidates' answers demonstrated a global grasp of the most important features and the key elements of Italian works proposed by the syllabus, even though several mistakes clearly showed their difficulties with contextualizing the texts and their lack of historical/literary knowledge and background.

A question in particular, dealing with the idea of the "smart answer" of Chichibio in Boccaccio's work and the different social positions, highlights the difficulties of the candidates in analysing separately the social/historical context and the semantic/lexical one.

Section B – Romanzo: Tabucchi / Bassani / Tomasi di Lampedusa

The marks ranged depending on the quality of answers even though language skills were widely lacking. Most essays were not coherent, lacked an adequate introduction and conclusion and had a shopping list approach. Character analysis has to be done in the light of main themes present in the book and in the light of other characters.

A good essay shows the evolution of the character and it is of utmost importance to situate the book in a context being it historical, biographical etc. Candidates need to take the novel more seriously and answer to the questions in an insightful manner showing that they have understood the purpose of the story and show that they have background knowledge about the author. High marks were given to the essays with these characteristics.

C. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

While the candidates sitting for Italian at Advanced Level continue to decrease as the trend has shown during the last years, the percentage of those not turning up for the exam is practically double that registered last year after that in 2019 it was five times that of 2018. Two positive comments close this report: only 3 candidates (3.3%) failed in Italian Advanced level and the percentage of candidates who obtained Grades A to C increased by nearly 3%.

The oral/aural sections had to be eliminated for this session to safeguard the well-being of candidates and examiners alike. Full marks were awarded to all candidates in all components which could not be assessed due to Covid-19.

Chairperson

Examination Panel 2020