

## ITALIAN A1

### Overall grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	E	D	C	B	A
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 7	8 - 15	16 - 22	23 - 28	29 - 36

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

Candidates presented a good variety of topics, but only a few of the essays were really interesting and imaginative, and based on a thorough analysis of the literary texts. The majority were mainly a compilation of materials drawn from secondary sources, with little personal contribution by the candidates and scarce literary content. The *Extended Essay Guide* states that in Group 1 “the topic chosen must be literary in nature” and that, when “literary works address philosophical, political or social questions”, “the major focus of the essay should be the literary treatment of such questions. The literary works should not be... treated simply as documentary evidence in a discussion of philosophical, political or social issues.” These clear and reasonable recommendations are rarely followed properly: in the majority of essays the literary works were precisely “treated as documentary evidence” in a discussion of non-literary issues.

A matter of special concern is the increasing number of topics manifestly inappropriate for the subject: the percentage of such essays, negligible up to 2010, rose from just below 4 percent in the May 2011 session to more than 9 percent in the present (May 2012) session. I wonder if candidates and supervising teachers are aware that such essays will be precluded from scoring well in a number of criteria.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

#### Criterion A: research question

More than one third of the candidates stated their research questions clearly; only about 12 percent failed completely to do so. This situation represents an improvement over previous sessions, though there is still room for further improvement.

#### Criterion B: introduction

Many candidates did not have a clear idea of the difference between the abstract and introduction; under the heading “abstract” they actually wrote an introduction, explaining why they had chosen their topic and its significance. As a result, the abstract was often weak as well (see below, criterion J).

**Criterion C: investigation**

The range of sources consulted was generally either limited or sufficient; there was little planning of the investigation.

**Criterion D: knowledge and understanding**

Only a few candidates deserved the maximum level in this criterion, while the majority remained in the middle, at either level 2 or 3. Knowledge of the literary works selected was generally good but the understanding was often marred by overuse of secondary sources, while here “the quality of the student’s understanding of the primary text(s) is the main concern”.

**Criterion E: reasoned argument**

The candidates’ views were not always effectively supported by reasoned argument likely to persuade the reader of their validity.

**Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills**

This is the criterion in which candidates performed least satisfactorily (after criterion J): the discriminating factor here - as with the understanding in criterion D - is whether candidates actually analyzed their primary sources, or they relied on second-hand interpretations that were derived solely from secondary sources. In the latter case, they lost marks under this criterion. Since most candidates did actually rely on secondary sources it is not surprising that only 7 percent of the essays deserved the maximum level in this is criterion.

**Criterion G: use of language**

Most essays were generally appropriate, often accurate using subject terminology; there were however some lapses.

**Criterion H: conclusion**

A conclusion was generally attempted, and it was usually relevant but not always consistent and effective. Fewer than half of the essays deserved the maximum level in this criterion.

**Criterion I: formal presentation**

Overall this aspect of the essays was satisfactory; in very rare cases the table of contents was missing. It is important to show how the essay is organized and to separate different sections in the text-this helps the examiner to see how the essay has developed.

**Criterion J: abstract**

Candidates often mistook the introduction for the abstract, so in almost one third of the essays the abstract did not meet the requirements and was completely unsatisfactory. In the remaining cases, the three elements of an abstract were present, but were not clearly stated. The candidates’ performance against this criterion was the poorest of all, (followed by F:

application of analytical and evaluative skills): less than one fourth of the essays gained the maximum level in this criterion.

### **Criterion K: holistic judgment**

Few essays – around 13% – earned the maximum level in this criterion; many lacked a genuine personal contribution by the candidates.

## **Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates**

It is recommended that candidates:

- read the *Extended Essay Guide* carefully, especially (but not only) with respect to the choice of the topic, making sure that is appropriate for the subject and literary in nature
- base their essays on primary sources, using secondary sources only to support their own argument, and not as a substitute for that argument
- define and state their research question clearly: a badly defined research question may impact negatively on other important aspects of the essay, such as the introduction, the reasoned argument and the conclusion
- learn to write a proper abstract making sure that it contains the three necessary elements, and a proper introduction, without confusing one for the other
- carefully plan their selection of appropriate sources for their investigation and gather all the necessary evidence for their research.