Students assessment

Vocational upper secondary education

As a general principle, the 'Charter of students' (Statuto delle studentesse e degli studenti [1]) in secondary schools sets out the right of students to 'transparent and rapid evaluation aimed at starting a process of self-evaluation to identify his/her own strengths and weaknesses and improve his/her own performance'.

Students assessment at upper secondary level is regulated by law 107/2015, and subsequent Legislative Decree 62/2017, that partially amended the previous legislation, in particular the Presidential Decree 122/2009.

Students' assessment is both formative and summative and focuses on students' learning processes as well as on their overall learning outcomes and conduct. It should also be consistent with the learning objectives established in the educational offer plan (Piano triennale dell'offerta formativa - PTOF [2]) of each school, with the Guidelines for each type of upper secondary course of study and with students' personalised plans. In the PTOF, the Teachers' Assembly of each school also defines the methods and criteria for assuring that assessment is equal, transparent and fair.

The assessment of students' conduct refers to the development of citizenship competences, according to what established by the 'Charter of students', by the 'Joint responsibility agreement' signed by pupils and parents at enrolment, and by each school regulations.

Class teachers are responsible for daily, periodic and final assessment of pupils as well as for verifying the students’ competences at the end of compulsory education and during the course of study.

Periodic assessment takes place at the end of each term. For assessment purposes the school year is divided into three-month or four-month terms, as established by each school.

Final assessment takes place at the end of each school year and at final State examinations held at the end of the course of study (fifth grade).

Special dispositions apply for the assessment of pupils with special educational needs [3] and of hospitalised pupils. In the case of hospitalised pupils, if the period in hospital is longer than the time spent in class, the student’s assessment is carried out directly by the hospital teachers. They work always in collaboration with the school teachers who provide all the useful elements for the pupil’s assessment. The same applies in case of hospitalization during the final examinations and to pupils who receive education at home because they are unable to attend school for health reasons.

Periodic/annual assessment
At the end of every term and every school year, the **Class Council**, made up of all the teachers for a given class, assigns marks to each student for each subject and conduct (the procedure is known as *scrutinio*). Each subject teacher proposes the mark for a given student for the relevant subject to the Class Council. The latter approves marks by majority vote. If no majority is reached, the vote of the school manager prevails.

Marks range from 0 to 10. A mark of 6/10 corresponds to a pass. Students with a mark below 6/10 in conduct can neither progress to the following grade nor access the final examination.

In addition, at the end of each of the last three years of study, students receive a score in credits called ‘school credit’ (*credito scolastico*). The school credit corresponds to the average of the student’s final marks, including the mark in conduct, and takes into account other aspects such as school attendance, extracurricular activities etc.

The number of credits obtained at the end of each year is called ‘school credit’ (*credito scolastico*). Students gain a maximum of 12 credits in the third grade, 13 in the fourth grade and 15 in the fifth and last grade, up to a total of 40 credits altogether for the last three years of study.

The Ministry provides schools with the table for the conversion of average marks into credits (annex A to the decree 62/2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average mark</th>
<th>Credits for the 3rd grade</th>
<th>Credits for the 4th grade</th>
<th>Credits for the 5th grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A &lt; 6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A = 6</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 &lt; A ≤ 7</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 &lt; A ≤ 8</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 &lt; A ≤ 9</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>12-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 &lt; A ≤ 10</td>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>14-15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, students receive ‘training credits’ (*crediti formativi*) for any approved experience gained outside of school (e.g. training in cultural activities, the arts, sports, etc.). Such experiences must be duly documented and be related to the specialisation of the State examination. ‘Training credits’ contribute, along with ‘school credits’, to the final score in the final State examination.

Finally, the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (*Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema di istruzione e formazione - INVALSI*) carries out the **external assessment** of students. National standardised testing takes place during the second and fifth grades. The national testing verifies the learning attainments of students in Italian, Mathematics and English. According to the Decree n. 62/2017, the participation in the national testing in the fifth grade is one of the mandatory requirements for the admission to the final examination. Students who cannot, for serious and motivated reasons, sit for the external assessment tests can take the tests in a supplementary session. This disposition will apply from school year 2019/2020.

All students participate in standardised testing, included those attending home education for testing held during compulsory education and to access the final State exam as **external candidates**. For students with disabilities and for students with specific learning disorders, the Class council can foresee specific compensation tools and dispensation measures.
Upper secondary education leaving examination (State examination)

At the end of both general and vocational upper secondary school, students sit for a State examination.

The final State examination verifies the knowledge and skills gained during the last year of the study path, according to the general and specific objectives of each branch of study, as well as the general cultural knowledge and the critical skills of candidates.

The law 107/2015 has partially reformed the final State examination. The following sections describe the final State exam as regulated by the most recent legislation.

Admission of internal candidates

Students who have attended the last year of vocational (technical or vocational) upper secondary education at State or paritarie schools sit for the final examination as internal candidates. Exams take place at the school they have attended.

Also students holding a four-year qualification obtained in the Regional vocational training system (Sistema di istruzione e formazione professionale – IFP) access the State exam as internal candidates, provided they have successfully attended an additional one-year course.

The Class council of each school decides for students' admission to the state examination in the occasion of the final assessment at the end of the fifth grade of the course of study. Students access the final exam if they:

- have attended at least 75% of the annual teaching time;
- have obtained a mark of 6/10 or higher in each subject or group of subjects assessed with a single mark, and in their conduct;
- have taken part in the external standardised testing held during the last year;
- have carried out the traineeship activities foreseen for each course of studies.

In exceptional cases, the Class council can admit to the exam students with an attendance lower than 75%, unless the absences prevent a regular assessment.

The Class council can admit a student to the State exam even in case of marks lower than 6/10 in one or in a group of subject. The decision must be duly motivated and involves all class teachers, included teachers of Catholic religion and of the alternative subjects. In case a student has a mark lower than 6/10 in conduct, the Class council must refuse the admission to the exam.

The Class council decides whether or not to admit the student to the final examination after an overall assessment that takes into consideration also the school credits assigned to the student. The outcome of the final assessment, along with the indication <admitted> or <not admitted>, is posted on the school notice board. The marks assigned for each subject and for conduct are included on the student's assessment document.

Students enrolled in the penultimate year sit, upon their own request, for the State examination if they:

- have gained a mark equal to 8/10 or higher in each subject, except for Catholic religion, and conduct in their final assessment;
- have attended upper secondary school regularly;
- have obtained marks equal to 7/10 or higher in each subject and 8/10 conduct in the final
assessment of the previous two years.

These students receive the maximum number of credits (15) for the last grade they have not attended.

Admission of external candidates

Those who meet one of the following requirements can access the final State exam as external candidates:

- turning 19 in the calendar year in which the state examination takes place and have completed compulsory education;
- holding a first-cycle certification, issued at least the same number of years previously as the duration of their current course, irrespective of the age;
- holding any other qualification obtained at the end of a four-year upper secondary programme, either in the education system - ‘old’ programmes - or in the regional vocational training system;
- leaving school before 15 March of the fifth and last year of studies.

Finally, candidates who have not attended the last grade, although in possession of the admission to the last grade itself, are required to pass the preliminary examination on all subjects included in the curriculum of the last grade of the relevant course of study. In case candidates lack the promotion to one of the grades previous to the last one, they are required to pass a preliminary examination on the subjects of the lacking grade/grades and in the study programme of the last grade.

External candidates submit their request of admission to the State examinations to the head of the relevant Regional School Office. The head of the Regional School Office will then assign the students to the institutes of the municipalities they live in (or of the Province or of the Region). Students take preliminary examinations, if required, in the institute where they take the exam.

The examination board

The examination board for the state leaving examination is made up of six members and one chairman. One examination board examines students from two class groups. Three members and the chairman are external, while three members are teachers of each class group. The director of the Regional School Office appoints all members of the examination board, in accordance with criteria established at central level by the Ministry of education.

The chairman is either a school manager or a teacher of an upper secondary state school, while external members are teachers of upper secondary state schools. Anyhow, the examination board must include teachers of the subjects assessed with the final examination. In fact, each year the Ministry of education selects the subjects that will be examined.

The examination board takes its decision at absolute majority of votes.

Beside the assessment of students, the examination board is also responsible of drawing up the practical test for students in vocational institutes.

Contents of the State examination

The state examination includes two written tests and an interview. The tracks for the first and the second written tests are selected by the Minister among a range of tracks drawn up by an ad hoc commission. The Ministry delivers the selected tracks to schools through data communication.
The examination board assigns a maximum of 20 marks out of 100 for each test, for a total of 60 marks.

Every year, the Ministry of education publishes the calendar with the dates for the written exams and the starting dates of the interviews. The examination procedures must end within the month of July.

**The first written test**

The purpose of the first written national test is to verify the proficiency in Italian or in the language of teaching, as well as the expressive, logical-linguistic and critical skills of the candidate.

The Examination board submits to students three types of tracks:

Type A – analysis and interpretation of a piece of Italian literature.

Type B – analysis of a text and production of a written comment on it.

Type C – critical comment on recent events.

The three types of tracks cover the fields of arts, literature, history, philosophy, sciences, technology, economics and social issues.

Students have six hours to complete the first written test.

**The second written test**

The second written test aims at verifying the student’s knowledge and competences in one or more of the main subjects of the programme he/she has attended.

The Ministry of education has established a range of subjects specific for each type of programme – general or vocational – and for each branch of study (Ministerial Decree no. 10/2015).

Among this range of subjects, within the month of January of each year, the Minister chooses the one or more subjects that will be assessed in the second test (Dlgs 62/2017).

In technical institutes, the second written test has a first part, the same for all students, and a second part in which students are asked to choose among several tracks.

Students have from six to eight hours to complete the test.

In vocational institutes, the first part of the second written test is common to all students and is chosen by the Minister among all the test prepared by an ad hoc commission.

The second part is prepared by the examination board of each school according to the school educational offer plan (PTOF) and has a more practical approach.

Students have from six to eight hours, distributed in one or two days, to complete the test.

**The interview**

The interview is about all the subjects of the curriculum of the final year of studies. Through the analysis and critical discussion of documents, texts, projects and experiences, the commission verifies the students' knowledge and skills related to each subject of the curriculum, as well as the student's ability to link this knowledge to each other.
The commission also verifies students’ knowledge and competences referred to the cross-curricular teaching ‘Citizenship and Constitution’.

Finally, students present a brief report and/or a multi-media work on their traineeship experience.

**Examination results**

At the end of the state examination, the commission assigns the student the final mark in hundredths.

The final mark is the sum of the points given in the tests – a maximum 20 points for each written test and the interview for a total of 60 points – and the school credit (maximum 40 points).

A final mark of 60/100 is the minimum required to pass the final examination.

The school publishes the results of the written tests on the notice board at least two days before the start of the oral tests.

The examination committee can award a maximum of five supplementary points to the final mark if the candidate has obtained a school credit of at least 30 points and a minimum overall score of 50 in the tests. The reasons for this decision must be accounted for.

The examination committee can, upon unanimous decision, award a merit (lode) to students who have gained the maximum score of 100 with no supplementary points if they obtain the maximum score for the school credit upon unanimous decision.

Once the examination procedures have ended, the school publishes the results for each class on the notice board showing the mark obtained by each students and, in case of fail, reporting only the words ‘non graduate’.

**Outstanding students may be awarded one of the following:**

- free or subsidised access to libraries, museums and cultural centres;
- admission to training courses;
- admission to special initiatives organised by science centres throughout the country;
- educational trips and visits to specialist centres;
- economic benefits;
- other benefits by special agreement with public or private organisations.

Finally, outstanding students may be awarded 25 marks out of 105 for university admission tests.

Candidates who pass the examination receive a diploma and a document called ‘student’s curriculum’.

**Specific dispositions for students with disabilities and with specific learning disorders**

Students with disabilities and students with specific learning disorders access the final State exams as all the other internal candidates.

The examination board prepares the tests for these students taking into consideration the documentation provided by the Class council.

In particular, for students with disabilities, such documentation describes the activities the student has carried out, the student’s assessment and the type of measures used for supporting his/her autonomy. The Class council also establishes the type of tests and their equivalence to mainstream
For students with specific learning disorders, the Class council describes the compensation/dispensation measures taken for their assessments during the school year. In case of serious disorders, students undergo non-equivalent tests.

If tests are equivalent, both students with disabilities and students with SLD obtain the final Diploma without mentioning the differences in the tests taken by the student.

If tests are not equivalent, or the student does not sit all or part of the examinations, he/she receive a certification attesting the course of study, its duration and the subjects included in the study plan.

**Regional vocational education and training (IFP)**

Continuous assessment is carried out through several tools ranging from more traditional interviews and class work to assess content, to practical tests (e.g. producing of technical projects) for a more effective assessment of the learning/teaching of competencies.

The final assessment, i.e. the qualification examination, varies from region to region, but shares a number of elements.

In most Regions, for admission to the final examination, students are expected to have attended at least 70% of the overall final-year programme and 50% of the work placement.

There are generally three types of tests:

- theory or written
- practical (e.g. laboratory work, use of machines, problem-solving, etc.)
- oral or interview

In some Regions, institutions prepare their own tests, whereas in some Regions, tests are prepared centrally at provincial/regional level and used by all institutions/agencies (provided that final examinations take place at the same time); in other Regions, theory tests are prepared centrally and practical tests are organised at institution/agency level.

The final overall mark leading to the final qualification is the sum of several evaluations, whose importance varies from Region to Region. These evaluations include the average mark for the last year of study, the overall score from the final examination and, in some cases, the work placement company’s appraisal.

The composition of examination committees varies between the Regions. Committees may be small (three members and one chairman) and made up of internal members or larger with mostly external members from the Regions, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, trade unions and employers, as well as teachers and the person in charge of the agency/institution.

Although assessment procedures, tests and admission requirements to the final examination are generally shared at national level, the same does not apply to assessment scales. In fact, some Regions use written assessments, while others use different numerical scales, which may range out of one hundred, six or thirty.

Once or several times per year, learners evaluate teaching and the organisation of the course through questionnaires. In some cases, these assessments are carried out within standardised quality assurance procedures.
**Progression of students**

In vocational upper secondary education, for the school year to be valid, students must attend at least three quarters of the annual teaching time. In exceptional cases, schools can autonomously provide for justified derogations. However, if the number of absences jeopardises the possibility of a regular assessment, the student cannot be admitted to the next grade or to the State examination at the end of the second cycle of education. Before the start of each school year, schools must define the annual teaching time to be used to calculate the 75% attendance required to validate that school year. At the same time, the school also defines the circumstances for derogations.

Admission to the following grade requires, besides the minimum school attendance, marks equal to or higher than 6/10 in each subject, or group of subjects assessed with a single mark, and conduct.

The assessment is suspended if a student obtains a mark just below 6/10 in one or more subjects. In this case, the student is re-assessed before the start of the following school year in each subject in which he or she has a fail. Schools can autonomously organise catch-up courses or activities. Students with a minimum score of 6/10 pass to the next grade.

Students with a fail in conduct (a mark below 6/10), usually assigned in serious cases which must be duly explained, are always refused admission to the following grade and to the final examination.

Students are entitled to transfer to another school of the same or different type. In the latter case, students have to pass a supplementary examination on all or part of the subjects not included in the curriculum of the type of school of origin.

From the first or second year of study, schools offer integrative activities to students who wish to transfer to a different type of school. Teachers from both schools work together to design support activities, which usually take place in the school of origin. On completion of these special courses, the student receives a certificate attesting that they have acquired the knowledge, skills and abilities required to change course.

**Certification**

**School-based vocational upper secondary education**

Schools autonomously establish how to inform students and their parents on the results obtained in periodic and final assessments. Communication must be efficient and transparent. Generally, students and their families receive an individual assessment document with the marks obtained in each subject and conduct. Schools deliver the assessment paper in electronic format at the end of both each term and school year and usually parents discuss the results with teachers.

Students who have attended optional Catholic religion receive a separate assessment report by the teacher. The report describes the interest shown by the student in the subject and the results achieved.

The personal assessment paper delivered at the end of each school year also indicates the student’s admission or non-admission to the following year or to the final State examination if released at the end of the last year of studies.

Students who pass the final State examination, receive a technical education diploma (*Diploma di istruzione tecnica*) or a vocational education diploma (*Diploma di istruzione professionale*). The Diploma is delivered together with the ‘student’s curriculum’ (*curriculum dello studente*).
The Diploma includes the student's personal details and certifies the pathway attended (i.e. the type of technical or vocational path and, in case, the specific option), the length of the whole course of study and the mark obtained in the final examination.

The Diploma allows access to tertiary education.

The student’s curriculum contains the following information:

- the curricular subjects and the total number of teaching hours of each subject,
- the learning levels achieved in the national standardised testing, in each subject (Italian, mathematics and English) and the certification of competences in English,
- competences and knowledge acquired through out-of-school cultural activities, including volunteering, sports and musical experiences,
- compulsory traineeship activities,
- any other certification.

Schools release the diploma and the curriculum after the completion of all examination procedures that must always end within the month of July.

The same dispositions on the diploma and the student’s curriculum apply to students with disabilities and students with specific learning disorders who have undergone an examination with personalised tests equivalent to the tests done by all other students.

The Ministry of education delivers to schools the models for drawing up the diploma and the student’s curriculum.

While waiting for the Ministry to make the curriculum model available, the schools will deliver, alongside the Diploma, the ‘Europass certificate supplement’. The supplement describes, for each type of upper secondary school, the official course of study attended, the correspondent EQF level, general and specific competences expected and career opportunities.

Finally, at the end of compulsory education, i.e. after two years of upper secondary education, upon students’ request, schools draft and deliver the certification of the levels of competences (basic, intermediate and advanced) acquired by students after 10 years of compulsory education.

Regional vocational education and training (IFP)

Three-year vocational training courses lead to the qualification of ‘worker in +’, while four-year courses lead to the qualification ‘technician in +’.

Certification is aimed at ensuring the recognition of qualifications, in order to enable trainees to enter or re-enter the system of vocational education and training in the mobility system. The certified skills constitute training credit. The regions are responsible for the final and intermediate certification. They organise the implementation procedures taking into account the minimum standards and the types of certification defined at national level.

Legislative references

DPR 22 June 2009, no. 122 (assessment and certification)

Law 11 January 2007, no. 1 (State exam)

Dlgs 13 April 2017, no. 62
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Links