2019

The upper secondary leaving examination: new dispositions applied from school year 2019/2020

On 25 November 2019, the Ministry of education, university and research has delivered to all schools a Circular letter on the 2019/2020 State upper secondary leaving examination.

The Circular letter partially amends the previous dispositions on the final exam. In particular, from 2019/2020 the participation in the standardised tests held in the last year of studies is a necessary requirement to be admitted to the exam.

Moreover, the Minister has re-introduced the option of the written test on history in the first written test on Italian language. Finally, students will no longer choose the questions for the interview from three closed envelopes but, instead, the examination board will directly submit to the student the questions to discuss on for the oral test.

Civic education

On the 2nd May 2019, the chamber of Deputies has approved the bill no. 682 on the introduction of the compulsory teaching of civic education as a separate subject of the compulsory curriculum at primary and secondary level.

This document establishes, starting from the 1st September of the year subsequent to the publication of the law, the introduction in the annual compulsory timetable of at least 33 hours dedicated to the transversal teaching ‘civic education’. These 33 hours must be taken from the compulsory timetable of the other subjects.

The cross-curricular teaching of ‘Citizenship and Constitution’ is cancelled.

In the first cycle of education (primary and lower secondary level), all class teachers are responsible of teaching ‘civic education’.

In the second cycle of education (upper secondary level), the teachers assigned to the school for the autonomous activities or, if available, teachers of the legal and economic sectors will be involved in teaching civic education.

Pupils and students at all levels will be assessed as for the other subjects.

The Ministry of education will issue a specific decree with guidelines for teaching civic education, including the specific learning goals expected on the Italian constitution, national institutions, the EU and international institutions, education to digital citizenship, bullying and cyberbullying, basics of
law, environmental education, sustainable development, education to legality.

Following the approval of the final text by the Parliament, the law that has been published in the Official Journal as law n. 92 of 20 August 2019.

The teaching of civic education will start in school year 2020/2021.

2018

The new final exam at upper secondary level

On 26 November, the Ministry of education published the reference frameworks for the written tests of the new final exam of upper secondary education. The new exam has been introduced by law 107/2015 and will be held under the new structure in June 2019.

Students will sit for two written tests, instead of the previous three, and one interview. The first test, on 19 June, will evaluate students’ mastery of the Italian language. The second test, on 20 June, will cover one or more subjects specific of each study branch.

The frameworks published on 26 November describe in details the possible contents and the aims of each test.

For the first time, the Ministry has also provided schools with evaluation form models to have a more homogeneous evaluation of students. Evaluation forms are included in the frameworks.

The Ministry will publish the framework of the oral test and the list of the subjects for the second written test in January 2019.

Publication of the document ‘National guidelines and new scenarios’

On the 1st of March 2018, the National scientific committee has published a document, delivered to all schools through the Regional school offices, underlining the importance of including some cultural and educational issues in the application of the National guidelines for the curriculum of 2012.

The aim of the document is to renew the attention of schools on the National guidelines for the curriculum by highlighting the importance of focusing on citizenship, already included in the guidelines, meant as the background of all disciplines.

The new document does not replace the National guidelines but, instead, is meant as a support for teachers for carrying out a more in-depth understanding of the guidelines and for developing teaching methods that integrate all disciplines, from sciences to history, from arts to technology.

The new scenarios involve also CPD of teachers, as well as self-evaluation approaches and autonomy of schools.

The National scientific committee will organise occasions for exchanging of views among teachers’ associations, scientific and professional communities, with the world of the school in general, to collect elements useful for the possible review and update of the National guidelines of 2012. The Ministry of education will also organise national seminars on the themes highlighted in the document and will collect the best practices to create an archive useful for further development of the curriculum, as well as for CPD activities and for the update of the guidelines.
2017

Pupil assessment in the first cycle of education (primary and lower secondary school)

On 10 October 2017, the Minister of education has signed two decrees on pupils’ assessment, according to what established by the reform law 107/2015:

1. decree no. 741 [2] that makes applicable the reform on the assessment of pupils in the first cycle of education foreseen by law 107/2015 and Legislative Decree 62/2017;
2. decree no. 742 [3] that provides the model for the certification of competences in primary and lower secondary education.

Following the decrees, the Ministry has also published a note [4] aimed at helping schools with the application of the new assessment regulations.

According to the reform, starting from the school year 2017/2018 pupil assessment in the first cycle of education will change as follows:

- pupils receive, for each subject, both a numerical mark in tenths and an assessment report;
- pupils in lower secondary school receive, like pupils in primary school, an assessment report on their behaviour instead of marks;
- pupils at lower secondary level progress to the following grade even if they have a mark lower than 6/10;
- at lower secondary level, the written tests in the final exam reduce from six to three (Italian, mathematics and one test for the two foreign languages);
- at lower secondary level, national testing is not part of the final State exam anymore but is a compulsory requirement to access the exam and the mark obtained in the tests does not count in the final mark;
- at primary and lower secondary level, the national testing is held in April and assesses also pupils’ attainment in English (besides Italian and maths).

Finally, at the end of primary and lower secondary school pupils will receive a document that certifies the competences acquired during the relevant level of education. The Ministry has provided the official model for the certification of competences valid nationwide.

Launch of the National plan for four-year general and technical upper secondary education

On 7 August, the Minister of education has signed a decree for the launch of the National plan for the experimentation of shorter general upper secondary study courses. According to the experimentation, the duration of general and technical upper secondary studies will be of four years instead of the current five.

The experimentation will start in school year 2018/2019 and will involve 100 classes. The Ministry will launch a national call in September and schools willing to be part of the experimentation should submit their proposal of revised study plans. Projects will be selected according to specific criteria such as high standards of innovation, the use of technology, guidance processes towards the labour market and further studies. Proposals of revised study plans should take into account that students must be guaranteed the achievement of all learning goals established for students attending mainstream programmes.
Specific scientific committees will monitor the four-year trial phase both at national and regional level.

Approval of the draft decrees on school education

On 14 January, the Government has approved seven draft Decrees on school education, as established by law 107/2015. After the discussion in the relevant parliamentary commission for advice, with the involvement of stakeholders, the final drafts of the decrees have been approved on 13 April 2017 and published in the Official Journal in May.

The seven approved decrees on school education deal with:

- The initial teacher education and teachers’ recruitment procedures
- The promotion of school inclusion of students with special educational needs
- The revision of vocational education
- The right to study
- The promotion of the classical culture
- The revision of dispositions on the Italian education institutions abroad
- The revision of regulations on students’ assessment

Here below a brief description of the decrees.

Initial teacher education and teachers’ recruitment procedures

At present, teachers at lower and upper secondary level need to complete their initial training by attending a specific one-year traineeship (TFA), which gives access to the open competition for teachers. According to the reform, holding a second-level higher qualification will give access to the open competition for teachers. Those passing the competition will attend a three-year training, two years of which spent at school. At the end of the third year, teachers will have a permanent contract.

Promotion of school inclusion of students with special educational needs

The decree on school inclusion foresees the simplification of the procedures to activate the support measures for pupils with special educational needs. Support measures will take into account the needs of pupils with disabilities in a wider perspective, instead of focusing mainly on the type of disability and on its seriousness.

Revision of vocational school education

The focus is on the innovation of the vocational offer and on the revision of study programmes in order to avoid overlapping with the technical paths and with the vocational training organised at regional level.

The present six branches of studies will increased to 11 and the percentage of time dedicated to branch-related learning will increased to 40% in the first two years of study and to 50% in the last three years.

Starting from school year 2018/2019, vocational institutes and regional vocational education and training providers will be part of the national network of vocational schools, created in order to have a more efficient vocational offer.

Right to study

The decree on the right to study foresees the allocation of 10 million euros to students attending the
last two years of upper secondary education for purchasing textbooks, for mobility and transport and to access cultural services. Students will also be exempted from fees.

**Promotion of the classical culture**

The teaching of music, dance, cinema and theatre, arts, design, writing will increase, in particular at upper secondary level.

Work-based learning will involve also public and private subjects working in the field of art conservation and production.

**Revision of Italian education institutions abroad**

The decree includes dispositions aimed at harmonising the educational offer abroad with the offer in the country. Teachers will stay abroad for 6 years instead of 9 years and 50 new teachers will join the teaching staff of Italian schools abroad.

**Revision of regulations on students’ assessment**

The decree foresees some changes in the final examination at lower and upper secondary level starting from 2018.

At lower secondary level, the written tests in the final exam will reduce from six to three (Italian, mathematics and foreign language). The standardised national test that, at present, is part of the final examination, will be held during the last school year.

At upper secondary level, written test in the final exam will reduce from three to two (Italian and a subject related to the course of study). Work-based activities will be taken into account for the admission to the exam.

In the calculation of the final mark, the overall evaluation of the last three years of studies will count up to 40 points (now it counts 25), while the two written tests and the oral test will count up to 20 points each.

At all levels, standardised national tests will include English and will be held during the last year of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary level. Standardised tests will be taken into account for the admission to the final exams at lower and upper secondary level, but will no longer count in the calculation of the final marks.