

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCE

GCE Italian (8IN01/9IN01)

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Italian 6IN01: Spoken Expression and Response in Italian

In this Unit candidates are required to demonstrate their understanding of a short Italian text (linked to one of the general topic areas of the AS specification) and to engage in general discussion on the same topic area. The candidates' understanding of the text is tested by 4 questions posed by their teacher examiner (TE), who then develops the conversation into a more general discussion of the topic area chosen by the candidate before the test. The general topic areas are as follows:

- Youth culture and concerns
- Lifestyle: health and fitness
- The world around us: travel, tourism, environmental issues and the Italian-speaking world
- Education and employment

Candidates are free to choose any of the four general topic areas, according to their preference and interests. They should be advised to choose a topic area with which they are familiar and which they are prepared to discuss in detail. They will need to research their chosen area and undertake reading from a variety of sources. Candidates are given 15 minutes prior to their examination to prepare their stimulus text. During this time, they should study the text with a view to answering questions about it, offering their opinions about the subject of the text and the related subtopic and to discussing the subject of the text in more detail. The Oral form, (see Appendix 1 in the specification), must be completed with the general topic area chosen by the candidate and the number of the stimulus used.

Assessment Principles

Up to 50 marks are awarded positively using the appropriate grids for **Quality of Language** (16 marks, 8 for **Accuracy** and 8 for **Range of Lexis**), **Response** (20 marks) and **Understanding** (14 marks, 4 **Stimulus specific** and 10 related to the **General Topic area**)

Candidates' Responses

The majority of centres that entered candidates for the new AS oral examination in Italian should, in general terms, be congratulated on the thoroughness of their preparation. Many centres kept to the spirit of the examination, in allowing candidates to speak in a natural way within the broad topic area of discussion.

As in previous years a good number of candidates reached commendable levels of linguistic competence. Many candidates were able to sustain their discussion well and offer interesting slants in their opinion of given topics.

There were a few cases of over rehearsal, although fewer centres appear to have tried this approach than had been the case in the past.

The importance of spontaneity must be stressed in relation to performances that can only be described as:

- stage-managed, in which candidates have learned everything by heart for the whole of Part B and at times spend an agonizing 8 minutes regurgitating information, often leaving out bits so that the conversation becomes largely meaningless.
- monologue, with little or no teacher participation.
- one centre one topic, when a class had studied the same topic and TE rotates the same unpredictable questions to all candidates (all of whom had learned the answers more or less well).

This is often done in complete good faith but the lack of spontaneity severely limits the marks for Response. The repetition of language, often far above candidates' real level of competence, can only result in poor levels of accuracy.

Part A

Generally speaking, weaker candidates found it difficult to give a report of the content of the text without quoting verbatim from it. In some cases, they simply read the relevant chunks of the stimulus, making it difficult to assess their actual understanding. Some better candidates had been encouraged to give full answers to Q1 and pre-empted Q2. Q3 and 4, being more general, were answered well by better candidates, who put forward very interesting opinions and ideas and produced well developed answers. These questions also showed up the weaknesses of other candidates, who performed better in part B, as they had been able to prepare this. Some candidates offered little expansion and did not cover the required time needed to be spent on the first part of the oral exam.

Part B

This was on the whole well done, and candidates seemed less inclined to simply deliver pre-learnt material than was the case with the old syllabus

Education and Employment

This seemed to be the least popular topic area. However, students who chose it generally answered well. For Stimulus 1, many candidates gave incomplete answers to Q2 because they focused exclusively on *donne* rather than on *laureati* as well. However, they were able to use their own experience to answer Q4 more fully. By contrast, others found Q4 of Stimulus 2 more challenging. In general conversation, most questions centred on prospects of employment, and a great number of candidates made reference to the current economic crisis, to good effect.

The world around us

This topic area gave good scope in Part B, with questions ranging from the environment to natural disasters, with a definite focus on what could be done to help. Both Stimuli elicited full answers from candidates, although in Q4 of Stimulus 1, many candidates thought that the change mentioned in the question referred to the change of means of transport rather than the length of the holiday as a whole, and therefore explained the impact that the wider use of cars has on the environment. Answers to Q4 of Stimulus 2 showed great concern for the environment at all levels and candidates were familiar with such terms as 'greenhouse effect, ozone layer, sustainable development'. There were many interesting suggestions on how young people can contribute to the protection of the environment. Candidates who chose this topic area tended to be quite strong and able to discuss issues in detail.

Youth culture and concerns

By far the most popular topic area. Stimulus 1 prompted a range of answers, with many candidates able to detail the risks of excessive computer use: isolation, poor social skills, etc. which in turn led to productive starting points for the general conversation. Q2 created problems for the weaker candidates, who could not identify the differences between traditional videogames and videogames used in school as a learning tool. This question was often answered with phrases lifted from the text. With Stimulus 2, many candidates answered Q2 when responding to Q1. Limited answers were usually offered to Q4, focusing mainly on "not interesting". By contrast, strong candidates mentioned the recent race row on British Big Brother.

The possibilities for general conversation were broad and produced a range of discussions - drugs, alcohol, bullying, but also new technology, with many candidates seemingly enjoying discussions of Facebook

Lifestyle, health and fitness

Stimulus 1 caused some difficulties for candidates, with Q3 and 4 in particular receiving limited responses. Likewise, not all candidates with Stimulus 2 recognised that these therapies were for sick people and described their benefits in more general terms. General conversation focused on sport and healthy eating, with stronger candidates able to stretch themselves with vocabulary

Candidates' performance in terms of linguistic criteria did not differ greatly from the previous exam series: the range was wide and well distributed, from very good performances - above specification requirements - to a moderate but nevertheless an extension of the linguistic skills required at GCSE level.

The range of lexis was good or even very good, but structures were very often limited and repetitive, with a large number of candidates not attempting any subordinate clauses. In the few case of scripted material, structures were often too complex for the candidates' ability and resulted in very flawed performances with marked differences between Parts A and B.

Accuracy about agreements, gender and often verbs endings is still a problem even with stronger candidates and errors in word stress remain frequent.

Teacher Examiners (TE)

The exams were generally well conducted and taking into consideration the fact that this was a new examination, the majority of TE and their candidates did extremely well. It was evident that a good number of TE had conscientiously prepared their candidates' topics eliciting very good performances from their students. However, there are some TE who tend to keep the conversation within the level of factual knowledge rather than encouraging the expression of opinions and discussion.

Administration

There were some problems with the timing: in some cases the examinations were either too short or too long, but the most recurrent problem was the insufficient time given to Part A. In a minority of cases, it was obvious that the stimulus-related questions had been known to the candidates before they were asked by the TE, and even this part took the form of a regurgitation of pre-learnt material.

Another recurrent problem was the rephrasing and/or expansion of the stimulus-related questions.

This is regrettable, as it ultimately has an adverse effect on the candidates, and it must be reiterated that, in the interest of fairness and comparability, candidates will be penalised if the examinations do not take place according to the specifications. It is therefore imperative that centres ensure that TE are familiar with the prescriptions which govern the conduct of the oral examination.

Finally, some centres did not include the oral form or the register and some did not use the correct stimulus.

Quality of recording was generally good but there were still isolated cases where exams were inaudible. Centres must ensure that recording equipment is in good order so that the recordings made are of good quality and can be marked.

Advice and guidance

Detailed advice and guidance can be derived from comments made throughout the report. In particular:

- candidates should choose a general topic area which reflects their personal interest
- the material should not only involve factual knowledge but also include opinion
- candidates should be prepared to give full and extended answers to the stimulus-related questions
- candidates should plan and prepare, not memorise, the discussion in Part B.

Teacher examiners should:

- use the correct stimulus
- ask the 4 stimulus-related questions as they appear on the card, without re-phrasing or expanding them
- elicit opinions and not test for factual knowledge only
- ensure that sufficient time is devoted to Part A
- move away from the topic of Part A to more general discussion of the topic area
- ask genuine unpredictable questions related to the chosen topic
- give a hesitant candidate the chance to respond but don't correct or interrupt

Italian 6IN02: Listening, Reading and Writing

Section A: Listening

In the first part of this unit candidates are required to listen to authentic recorded target-language material and to retrieve and convey information by responding to a range of mainly target-language questions.

Assessment principles

Up to 20 marks are awarded positively for correct information retrieved and conveyed in response to target-language and English-language. The quality of language is not relevant unless it impedes communication.

Candidates' responses

Candidates showed understanding of the requirements of this unit and generally performed well.

Question 1 (Multiple choice) was intended to be accessible to the majority of the candidates. However, in (a) weaker candidates were confused by the mention of *città fantasma* in the recording and therefore chose incorrectly (i), just picking on the key word they had heard.

In (b) almost 30% of candidates surprisingly chose incorrectly either (i), perhaps because they were not familiar with the word *edifici*, or (ii), having heard *sala da ballo* in the recording.

(c) was generally well answered while in (d) some chose (iii), having heard *fine settimana* in the recording.

Question 2 (Table) was as accessible as it was intended to be. Most candidates managed to score at least 3 points here. The items that were sometimes ticked incorrectly, with subsequent loss of marks, were (d), as candidates heard *25 settembre* in the recording, and (g), possibly by candidates who were not familiar with *pericoloso*.

Question 3 (Gap filling) was generally answered well apart from (d) where only the very best candidates chose the correct answer (*impiegato*) rather than the incorrect *durato* (if they had translated the sentence in English they would have realised that *Il treno ha durato venti ore* does not make sense in either language). Weaker candidates also opted incorrectly for *incidente* in (a) and occasionally *ristoranti* in (c), which made sense but did not correspond to the recording. As usual there was also a surprising number of candidates (11%) who could not recognise basic numbers so that in (b) they chose incorrectly *470*.

Question 4 (Target language questions and answers) the passage was an interview with the swimming champion Alessia Filippi and was generally well understood. This set of questions catered well for all ranges of abilities. Some factual questions could be successfully tackled by all candidates, some required more interpretation and were intended to separate the more able candidates. Most candidates managed to score at least 6 out of 8 marks.

(a) was generally well answered, with just a few candidates losing marks because they had answered "*è la regina del nuoto*", which was too general, or because of their spelling of *due record*, which sometimes resembled more the word "*ricordi*".

In (b) most candidates were able to provide at least two details of Alessia's life. The mark scheme was quite generous here and allowed a variety of possible answers, with no need to mention precise times.

In (c), (d) and (e) only the weaker candidates were not able to manipulate the language to adapt the recording from the "I" form to the "she" form required by the answer. There were the occasional transcriptions or the wrong piece of information.

(e) was partly targeted at the more able candidates as it required a fair amount of interpretation and manipulation so that only the better candidates scored both points. Most understood the fact that the two girls are friends but many did not pick on the fact that they are also rivals when they are swimming, although some managed to score this point by correctly transcribing "*la rivalità è solo in vasca*". Others were confused by "*non si guarda in faccia a nessuno*" and had difficulty in re-wording the answer. Some expanded on the fact that Federica had hugged Alessia, which was not a relevant answer.

(f) was generally well answered although some wrote incorrectly "*non è il tempo di innamorarsi*", which takes on a different meaning, or else thought that Alessia was in love with a famous actor.

Overall only the weakest candidates struggled to adapt the "tu/io" verb forms of the interview into the "she" form required by the questions.

Section B: Reading

In the second part of this paper candidates are required to read authentic texts in Italian and to retrieve and convey information given in the texts by responding to a range of question types mainly in Italian. Candidates performed generally well in this section as well.

Assessment principles

Up to 20 marks are awarded positively for correct information retrieved and conveyed in response to target-language and English-language. The quality of language is not relevant unless it impedes communication. It was encouraging to note that most candidates now realise that they are not allowed to copy their answers verbatim from the text and they often tried to rephrase it in their own words. Inevitably it is usually the weaker candidates who lack the linguistic skill to do other than copy. It is worth reminding candidates that they are not expected to find synonyms for every word but they are expected to re-phrase some parts of the original text.

Candidates' Responses

Question 5 (grid) was intended to be a gentle introduction to the reading section and most candidates managed to score at least 3 or 4 points out of 5. The weaker ones struggled with (d), which was often left blank, and partly also with (e).

Question 6 (questions in English) was also answered quite well.

However, some candidates lost marks in (a) by not mentioning that Giorgio has travelled to all seven continents (they simply said that he has travelled all over the world but the rubrics do ask to convey all the relevant information).

Weaker candidates in (b) incorrectly translated *Paesi* as "cities", while in (c) numbers posed problems again, as quite a few, even able candidates, translated *sessantuno* as "60" or more commonly "71 countries".

Most candidates coped well with (d), the only ones who lost this mark lost it because of excessive conciseness (they simply wrote "clothes, documents and medicines", which was too unclear).

(e) was the most demanding part as many candidates were not able to translate "*non sembra essere turbato*". To avoid giving a translation of that sentence some simply said that he is still a child or that he still plays with his toys, which did not constitute an answer as it was actually in the question.

Question 7 (Questions and answers in Italian) was the question that best discriminated between those candidates who responded appropriately and fairly accurately and others whose linguistic skills are weak. The questions were carefully devised to ensure that candidates could not just lift their answers verbatim but there are always some that manage to do so.

Question (a) required some degree of inference, as candidates could answer either yes, Leanne was prepared for her job as a baby sitter, or no, she was not prepared, as long as they were able to justify it with some details from the text. So many said that yes, she was prepared as she had worked for her neighbours in England/she already had some experience of it whilst others said that no, she was not prepared as she had not done it as a proper job, just for her friends or she did not have enough experience. Some lost the mark by giving reasons that were a bit too general, mainly for the no, for example "she is only 18" or "she is too young".

(b) was designed so as to avoid lifting: candidates were supposed to answer this question by rephrasing the text (which said that Italian mothers are too demanding) saying that English mothers are less demanding. However, a few candidates simply lifted the sentence from the text and in fact said what Italian mothers are like rather than what English mothers are like.

(c) was sometimes misunderstood: some candidates interpreted it as how Leanne found her job rather than what she thought of it and therefore gave irrelevant answers (she met an Italian woman on holiday). Others found it difficult to manipulate the language to change the noun in the text (*disorientamento*) into an adjective (*Leanne era disorientata*).

(d) was fairly straightforward but not all were able to manipulate the language in order to answer it. Some simply changed the text from the "I" form to the "she" form but did not change the turn of the sentence so that they wrote something like "*ci trascorrevva il tempo libero*", which did not mean anything.

In (e) most managed to score at least one point but some lost the second one, as they did not mention that the lady was not happy about Leanne taking time off to study.

(f) was generally answered correctly, with only a few losing this point by answering that Leanne had actually gone back to England or that she had stayed in Italy because she had found another job.

In (g) quite a few candidates lost the mark because they simply lifted part of the text ("un'associazione benefica a favore delle madri sole"). On the other hand, better candidates went out of their way to try and find a synonym for *madri sole* (which was not necessary, something like "*aiuta /lavora con le madri sole*" would have been sufficient).

The answer to (h) was also often lifted by candidates who were unable to manipulate the text and copied it verbatim ("*I bambini non possono.../I bambini italiani sono troppo controllati*"). In fact the question asked what Italian parents do and required the candidates to rephrase the original text to say what they do not allow their children to do.

Section C: Writing

In the third part of this paper candidates are required to write 200-220 words in Italian based on a short printed stimulus and a list of four bullet points in the target language. This year candidates were required to write a letter in Italian in response to an extract from a newspaper article about shopping online.

Assessment principles

The written task, Question 8, is marked for Content (15 marks) and for Quality of Language (15 marks).

Candidates should stay within the word limit, as it is self-penalising to write more than 220 words (please note the increased word limit compared to the previous GCE syllabus). The appropriate letter format - if required by the task or used anyway - is not counted in the maximum word limit.

Candidates' Responses

There were some really good answers to **question 8**. The best responses were those where candidates clearly dealt with the four bullet points in the order in which they were presented, keeping concise and focused and refraining from irrelevance and thus scoring high marks under Content.

The first bullet point was supposed to be the easiest one in terms of language required as it asked candidates to write about their own personal experiences with online shopping. This task could be carried out either in the present tense, stating what they normally buy online, or else in the past tense by relating what they have bought online. Some candidates who do not shop online addressed this point by saying that they do not shop online but then recounted the experiences of someone else in their family, which was acceptable. Other candidates unfortunately did not fully address this point as they answered it by saying why they do or don't do shopping online and thus ended up repeating some of the same points later mentioned as advantages or disadvantages.

The second bullet point generally produced good responses. Virtually all candidates were able to mention some advantages and disadvantages of e-commerce, such as better prices, wider choice, no need to go out and therefore ideal for people with mobility problems, good for the environment etc. on the positive and the risk of fraud, identity theft, the cost of postage as some of the disadvantages. Obviously some responses were deeper and better organised than others and this is something that discriminated well in terms of content.

For the third bullet point candidates could make use of the suggestion contained in the stimulus material i.e. the fact that Italians like to buy only what they can actually touch, but many came up with other ideas, such as Italians like shopping in little individual shops, Italians are very sociable people and for that you need to go out, Italians love fresh ingredients etc. Some did end up including some irrelevant material in answer to this bullet point as they expanded too much on the Italian way of life and their eating culture in particular.

The fourth bullet point required candidates to make suggestions on how Italian supermarkets could improve their online sales. Sometimes this was not always as well developed as the other bullet points, possibly because of the constraints posed by the word limit. Most candidates gave one or two suggestions, but not always well thought out, with some rather impractical or odd suggestions. The most common ones, however, were either discounts and special offers or more advertising. This bullet point was also more demanding in terms of language, as it required the use of

more advanced advice structures, such as the conditional or, with the better candidates, *periodo ipotetico*.

As far as Quality of Language is concerned, there was much variety. Most of the marks were between 7 and 12 out of 15, with a minority of extremely good candidates who displayed a good range of structures and vocabulary and made very few errors and were thus awarded maximum marks. Other candidates tended to use a limited number of tenses and structures and the variety of vocabulary was lacking. The bullet point on advantages and disadvantages gave a good opportunity to display the impersonal structures but not all made use of it, some used the generic "tu" or even talked in the first person. The very weak candidates had very little inkling of the structure of the language and made a lot of basic mistakes. At this level candidates are expected to be able to write a simple sentence with a certain degree of accuracy. Many of the structures that the weaker candidates attempted to use were rather anglicised. Other weaknesses included: adjectival agreement; incorrect endings of regular verbs in the present, future and conditional; incorrect use of the definite and indefinite articles; incorrect use of the auxiliary with frequently used verbs e.g. *ho andato*. At times there was also a tendency for some candidates to be over-ambitious and insist on using *periodo ipotetico* at all costs, which made the language a bit unnatural.

Advice and Guidance

For the Listening section candidates are reminded of the importance of reading the questions carefully before they start and of listening to the whole extract once before trying to answer the questions, so as to have a general understanding of the recording. Weaker ones should not just be swayed by the key words they hear, as they need to listen to the actual meaning of these words.

As to the Reading section, candidates are reminded of the importance of complying with all the necessary instructions in the rubrics. It is always a good idea to draw the candidates' attention at frequent intervals to the various strategies that can be employed to guess the meaning of Italian words, of particular importance for questions 5 and 7. In order to develop a good range of vocabulary candidates need to be exposed to a variety of texts and have ample practice in different exercise types to be able to deal competently with the reading questions. For question 6, spelling and the inability to communicate answers in English will remain a problem if candidates do not spend sufficient time reading in their native language. It would at least be useful if teachers concentrated on parts of a text they are using in class and got their students to express the meaning of certain expressions in English. All candidates require a good deal of classroom practice in re-phrasing and manipulating the language of the original text to be able to cope adequately with question 7. Training in time-management and reading techniques such as skimming and scanning should also form an integral part of exam preparation.

As to the Writing section (question 8), it is always worth reminding candidates of the need to answer the final written task within the word limit as failure to do so can result in a loss of marks for Content. They would be well advised to devote an appropriate amount of their time to this activity and ensure that it is well planned so that all the bullet points are dealt with appropriately and preferably in the same order as in the stimulus. All candidates need regular practice in the art of getting the essential parts of the message across in a concise way. In a Writing task that imposes a maximum word limit of 220 words there is no place for irrelevant passages.

Finally candidates are reminded that tidy presentation is even more essential now that answers are marked on line. Candidates are strongly advised to write their

answers in the space provided or to indicate it clearly if for any reason the answer is completed elsewhere.

Statistics

Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response in Italian (6IN01)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw Boundary Mark	50	41	36	32	28	24
Uniform Mark	60	48	42	36	30	24

Candidates who do not achieve the standard required for a Grade E will receive a uniform mark in the range 0-23.

The above boundary is applicable to options 1A and 1B.

Unit 2: Understanding and Written Response in Italian (6IN02)

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw Boundary Mark	70	55	49	44	39	34
Uniform Mark	140	112	98	84	70	56

Candidates who do not achieve the standard required for a Grade E will receive a uniform mark in the range 0-55.

Advanced Subsidiary Cash in code - 8IN01

Grade	Max. mark	A	B	C	D	E
Uniform Mark	200	160	140	120	100	80

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

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