

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCE  
In Italian (6IN03) Paper 1A  
Spoken Expression (TE)

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## GCE - ITALIAN 6IN03 – SUMMER 2016

### General Introduction

This unit requires candidates to use the language of **debate** and **argument** to discuss the issue of their choice; to defend their views and sustain discussion as the teacher-examiner **moves the conversation away** from their chosen issue covering **two unpredictable** areas of discussion.

The topic of debate does not have to relate to the General Topic Area listed in the specification for AS or A2. This unit assess advanced level understanding as well as speaking skills.

### Assessment Principles

A maximum of **50** marks will be awarded using the assessment criteria for each of the following categories:

#### Response (20 marks)

There are three descriptors in this box:

- **Spontaneity**: a genuine, spontaneous conversation will have minimal hesitations, allowing time to think, and then explain.
- **Range of lexis**: a good range of lexis and sentence structures pertinent to the issues discussed.
- **Abstract language**: a discussion about ideas not purely narrative or descriptive.

#### Quality of Language (7 marks)

Communicating without loss of message. Frequency of basic errors not interfering as to be a distraction.

#### Reading and Research (7 marks)

What is required is evidence that the candidate has read extensively and in some depth.

#### Comprehension and Development (16 marks)

There are two descriptors in this box:

- **Comprehension**: understand all the implications of the questions.
- **Listening skills** are tested in the unit and this does have a **significant impact** on the way in which questions are formulated and asked.
- **Development**: respond, demonstrating understanding, taking the initiative and moving the discussion forward.

## Assessment information

### Format

Candidates are required to choose and **prepare an issue**, on which they must **adopt a stance**. They must complete the oral chosen issue form with a brief statement of the issue to debate, **in Italian**. It is therefore advisable to choose a confrontational issue, to which a stance can be taken.

The first section is a debate and requires candidates to present and take a **clear** stance on any issue of their choice. **The examiner** then plays the role of devil's advocate, **expressing views contrary** to those of the candidate, being careful to avoid an aggressive or confrontational tone.

There is no requirement to relate the initial issue to the culture and society of the target language and/or any of the general topic areas for this specification. Candidates may select any viable issue to debate.

### Timing is crucial!

It is difficult for candidates to access the highest marks if the correct timing is not adhered to.

The test begins with the candidate outlining their stance for about **1** minute. The teacher-examiner then challenges it and the candidate must defend it, in discussion, for **3-4** minutes. For the remaining **8** minutes, the teacher-examiner initiates a spontaneous discussion on **two** further issues, **moving away** from the chosen one, onto unpredictable areas.

It is very helpful if the TE clearly indicates a move to the second part of the exam by saying: "**ora passiamo a un altro argomento**". If this is not mentioned, the candidate may lose marks by continuing to elaborate on the initial issue.

Candidates are expected to express and justify opinions, argue a case, discuss problems or current controversies as they arise naturally, in spontaneous conversation. It is possible for candidates to gain high marks in the first part of the test, because they are on familiar ground. Candidates should be aware that the topic chosen should be one for which there are two possible sides to the argument. **Teacher-examiners should verify in advance that the topic is an appropriate one**; otherwise, marks can be lost unnecessarily.

The following are examples of unsuitable issues with which to develop a debate:

- *La scuola in Italia*
- *Luoghi da visitare in Italia*
- *Penso che a X non dovrebbe essere permesso allenare il club Y*
- *Penso che l'inquinamento faccia male alla salute*
- *Sono a favore per una soluzione al bullismo*
- *Sono a favore dell'uso degli agnelli a Pasqua*
- *Sono a favore dell' Islam*

The unpredictable areas are more complex; these should be **genuinely unforeseen** topics. **Rehearsed and recited** quantities of material cannot gain high marks. The difference between well prepared material and recited material is easy to detect often from speed, reaction and intonation.

The second part of the test should be a spontaneous discussion, not just a question and answer session, covering too many topics, asking too many factual questions and/or a general chat.

Some examples of inappropriate questions for this Unit:

- *Che cosa farai quest'estate?*
- *Qual è la tua materia preferita?*
- *Preferisci la scuola italiana o quella inglese?*
- *Come ti mantieni in forma?*
- *Cosa si deve mangiare per avere un'alimentazione sana?*
- *Che sai sulla storia dell'immigrazione in Italia!*
- *Qual era la realtà in Italia del Sud negli anni 70?*
- *Parlami del turismo in Italia?*
- *Cosa pensi dell'immigrazione?*
- *Parlami dei diritti delle donne*

The two unpredictable areas for the second part of the exam can be chosen from the General Topic Areas for A2 but also from the General Topic Area for AS. **However**, for a candidate to obtain higher marks **the AS topics**, covered at A2, **should clearly indicate progression**.

### **Candidates' Responses**

In this summer examination, the majority of candidates were thoroughly prepared and TEs followed scrupulously the guidelines for conducting the oral tests. **Well done!**

The A2 oral examinations for 2016 showed, in many cases, an excellent standard of spoken Italian, with a commendable level of spontaneity, allowing candidates to converse convincingly and with ease. There were few problems in the way the examinations were conducted, and most schools were aware of the time limit. Some centres allowed candidates to speak well beyond the allotted 13 minutes, this occurred particularly where the issue for debate was protracted unnecessarily, leaving insufficient time to develop fully the discussion of the additional two topics.

Some teacher examiners very sensibly announced the division between the initial issue for debate and the two further topics for discussion, possibly to keep themselves on track. This certainly made the task of the Edexcel examiner a little easier.

As in previous years and perhaps in the belief of generating more natural conversation some teacher examiners tended to set the scene for a certain aspect of a given topic. This approach, however, takes up time and allows the candidate to take as his own what were actually the words and ideas of the teacher. There is always a risk of the teacher examiners, especially when they have strong views on a given subject, of speaking more than the candidate, this should be avoided. It is probably always better simply to speak clearly and naturally. Some teacher examiners leave too long a pause between each question. The problem with this is that it leaves the candidates wondering just how much more they are supposed to say. There were no obvious cases

of irregular examining, although where examining technique was weak, the candidate's performance sometimes bordered on what appeared to be a monologue. Whilst the candidate was allowed a free choice in terms of the initial issue for debate, it was clear that some topics lend themselves to debate more easily than others. Some topics were, intellectually, simply less demanding.

There was clear evidence that well-planned questions led to debates that were interesting and engaging. When questions were far too generic, the debate broke down and did not progress. In a minority of cases this led to reverting back to the original stance to attempt to add detail.

In a minority of cases teachers tried to explore far too many topics, limiting each one to one or two closed questions and quickly moving on. This strategy did not allow candidates to demonstrate their skills and perform at their best.

Unfortunately in a small number of cases teacher examiners:

- let the candidates speak for 4/5 minutes to outline the issue instead of 1 m. and the test did not move away from initial issue
- conducted an exam without initial debate
- did not challenge the candidate on his/her stance in the first part of test
- asked factual questions not designed to elicit opinions
- did not initiate a spontaneous discussion in the second part but stated the title of each subtopic area and asked a list of questions mainly factual not designed to elicit opinions
- questions were repetitive or ended up to be too personal
- occasionally too much time was spent on the chosen issue and consequently there was no evidence of further unpredictable areas being explored
- the variety of questions was at times limited, especially when many candidates chose the same stance
- some teachers talked too much and insisted on voicing opinions.
- native speakers were given mundane questions, which did not allow them to display debating skills
- sometimes candidates were asked fewer questions bringing the exam to an earlier close, resulting in a loss of marks
- In a small but significant number of cases, the teacher appeared unprepared and questioning was too generic and restrictive
- Teachers' linguistic competence was, in a few cases, inadequate

Teacher-examiners must conduct the test in accordance with the guidelines that are set in the Oral Training Guide. Misinterpretation in conducting the exam, for example, timings of the test, lack of administration of the exam and insufficient questioning can disadvantage candidates even when they are prepared.

Teachers are advised to prepare a wide variety of topics, so that each candidate has something different to debate. If there are only few topics used for the discussion, it can appear as if these have been well prepared in advance and are **not precisely unpredictable**.

In contrast to this, most teacher-examiners were **excellent** in opposing the candidates' views and **eliciting** good debate **throughout** the exam.

Many candidates' responses showed extensive reading of newspaper articles on current affairs within topic areas like politics, environmental issues, emigration, euthanasia, nuclear power.

Some interesting stances on the following topics:

- *islamofobia*
- *multiculturalismo*
- *crimine informatico*
- *femminismo*
- *discriminazioni sociali*
- *immigrazione*
- *terrorismo*
- *brexit/bremain*

The issue must be **clear** and written in the **target language**:

- *le misure di sicurezza limitano la liberta' dei cittadini*
- *i simboli religiosi dovrebbero essere aboliti dai luoghi pubblici*
- *i giovani sono rappresentati in modo negativo nei mass media*
- *la chiesa ha un influenza troppo forte sulle famiglie e le decisioni del governo*
- *caccia dei lupi in Piemonte*
- *effetti positivi della musica*
- *potere pericoloso dei tabloids in Gran Bretagna*
- *finalmente una legge sulle modifiche degli embrioni in GB*

Debates that reflected current issues were performed successfully when candidates were able to combine relevant factual knowledge with abstract concepts.

This is an example of a good performance:

(Both candidate and teacher examiner not native)

**ISSUE:** l'islamismo non è violento

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Candidate:** *oggi vorrei parlare delle percezioni giuste che circondano l'Islamismo; spiegare perché io penso che l'islam non possa essere giudicata una religione che sparge solamente violenza. Nonostante la religione in questi giorni sia sinonimo per molti di ingiustizia, l'islam viene associata più di ogni altra religione del mondo occidentale con la violenza ed i sentimenti di odio e di paura provati verso il mondo musulmano hanno contribuito a coniare il termine islamofobia ovvero la paura verso il mondo musulmano, una paura generata da un'enorme ignoranza che purtroppo ha dato inizio a dei pregiudizi pericolosi ed immorali.*

**Examiner:** *però nel testo sacro dell'islam non mancano passaggi che potrebbero essere interpretati in modo violento, dunque di per sé è una religione che si presta ad un uso violento.*

**Candidate:** *innanzitutto vorrei ricordare che la parola islam significa abbandono totale a Dio e che nella storia delle religioni l'islam non ha incitato alla violenza in misura maggiore di quelle che si potrebbero trovare in altre religioni. Questo mi porta ad esporre quale sia il punto più importante del dibattito. Attraverso le mie ricerche ho appreso che l'islam non può essere definita in termini così semplici come una religione violenta o una pacifica, invece secondo il teologo statunitense Reza Aslan la religione è basata sull'interpretazione di colui che la segue. Questo sta a significare che una*

*persona violenta avrà una percezione violenta della religione mentre una persona pacifica si orienterà verso gli insegnamento del corano in modo molto diverso. In questo senso credo che l'islam si possa definire una religione veramente eclettica. Non promuove un solo stile di vita e non promuove la violenza come unico scopo della religione.*

**Examiner:** *sarà vero, però molti gruppi estremisti in Medio Oriente ed Africa usano il Corano come fonte e giustificazione per i loro atti e già questo dimostra che la violenza è radicata profondamente in questa religione.*

**Candidate:** *devo dire che quello che mi spaventa di più in questa islamofobia è l'ampiezza dell'ignoranza che circonda questa materia. Dobbiamo ricordarci che per esempio negli USA uno su quattro cittadini è musulmano. Se dovessi usare la logica di un islamofobo dovrei allora concludere che un quarto della popolazione americana è dedita al compimento di atti di violenza, votata alla guerra e convinto sostenitore di una religione che promuove la sottomissione della donna. Ma come si può giudicare una religione seguita da 1 miliardo e mezzo di persone come una religione solamente dedicata alla sottomissione degli infedeli? Una tale percezione ricorda il fanatismo, il nazismo che circondava l'ebraismo durante la II GM...*

The most popular **unpredictable areas** of discussion for the second part of the exam were:

- *famiglia tradizionale*
- *matrimoni ed adozioni da parte di omosessuali*
- *tecnologia*
- *eutanasia*
- *legalizzazione delle droghe leggere*
- *terrorismo,*
- *razzismo,*
- *immigrazione,*
- *aborto,*
- *moda*
- *scuola/università*
- *parità tra uomo e donna*
- *energia nucleare/energie rinnovabili*
- *sport e società*
- *obesità/anoressia/bulimia*
- *fumo/droga/alcol*
- *pena di morte*
- *femminismo*
- *il ruolo della religione nella società odierna*
- *la necessità di regole severe nel campo dello sport*
- *il ruolo della TV come fonte di informazione*
- *Soluzione ai problemi della povertà mondiale*

### **Quality of language**

Although in some cases accuracy was variable, many candidates achieved at least 5 marks. There were also examples of candidates without an Italian background whose oral performance was highly accurate.

Pronunciation was generally good.

The use of object pronouns tends to be more difficult even than the use of the subjunctive and, this year, among weaker candidates, there has been no noticeable improvement. Nonetheless, in broad terms, many candidates gave an able performance as regards accuracy and had an adequate command of the use of the subjunctive. Sometimes this knowledge of the subjunctive remained theoretical and in practice, verbs of feeling, for example, were often followed by the indicative when the subjunctive might have been better. Expressions of the type **è importante che** and **è necessario che** were frequently used throughout the test but were often incorrectly followed by the indicative.

Some candidates were unaware that the conditional of verbs of wanting is followed by the imperfect subjunctive and not the present. Some weaker candidates were still insecure in their knowledge of grammar associated with GCSE. Thus, the definite article and the possessive adjective both caused problems.

Some candidates do not distinguish between **meglio** and **migliore**. Some candidates, too, were unaware, perhaps through the interference of Spanish, that the Italian for bad is **cattivo** and not **male**. There were a number of GCSE-type mistakes, for example modal verbs were sometimes not followed by the infinitive. Some candidates did not distinguish between **chi** and **che**, assuming that they were interchangeable. Maybe because English has only a single form of the definite article, the correct use of the definite article in Italian appears to be haphazard. Where a candidate had to use a word with which he was not too familiar, the associated article was often merely a guess with no distinction between, for instance, the correct use of **gli** and **i**. Largely because English has only one form for a given adjective, some candidates simply ignore adjectival endings completely. Some candidates, including some teacher examiners, continue to use the particle **di** where it is not necessary. It was not uncommon to hear **è importante di ricordare**, maybe through the influence of French.

Some candidates are also vague in their use of verbs taking a preposition or conversely taking no preposition.

Despite what is said above, many candidates were happy to show just how competent their knowledge of Italian was – examples such as **benché** and **nonostante** readily followed by the subjunctive.

#### Most common mistakes:

- Misuse of idiomatic expressions **allo stato brodo** instead of **allo stato brado**; **un capo spiratorio** instead of **un capo espiatorio**
- Vocabulary: *la gente possono, ci può essere problemi, mi preferisce, accessibile, ameliorare, anglosassa, coppie in fatto, i crimi, critica, il danneggio, danneggioso, il diffuso, disavvantaggio, una dosa, maltrattazione, maltrato, un mentale, la metoda, la pena di morta, i pericolosi, la pianeta, a più possibile, più meglio, proibizzazione, pregiudismo, il prigionio, aborzione*
- Definite articles: *i studenti, i inglesi, il studio*
- Agreement: *I studenti inglese*
- Prepositions: *che aspettano (di) essere adottati, in piedi (a piedi)*
- Sequence of tenses: *se farebbero*
- Passive voice: *sono stati detti*
- Verb forms/auxiliaries: *rimaneranno, ha (è) cambiato*
- Pronunciation: *amici*

- False Friends: *affettare* instead of *influenzare* (in English *affect*); *i soggetti* instead of *le materie*

## Reading and Research

Candidates were able to achieve 5 to 6 marks through reference to articles, books, and internet sources, offering detail and convincing opinion. Many candidates' responses showed extensive reading of newspaper articles on current affairs.

Most candidates are aware that for a successful debate they will need to have researched their chosen topic carefully. Many debates were carried out with a good level of repartee between candidate and teacher examiner. They are to be commended on their hard work in this aspect of their studies. In some cases, possibly because of insufficient drive on the part of the teacher examiner, the debate tended, in part, towards a simple presentation.

More-able candidates did not always score highly in the section Reading and Research. Some teacher examiners were tempted, whilst discussing a popular topic – *adoption of children in same sex relationships* – to revert to family life and involve the candidate in a more extended, simple conversation about their own family. This took up time and reduced the level to that of GCSE.

Can we remind candidates and teachers that to show extensive reading and research on the issue, it is not sufficient to say: “**Ho letto un articolo nel giornale o in Internet...**”.

## Comprehension and Development

There were some very interesting and challenging questions, which allowed a natural and logical interaction with the teacher-examiner, taking into consideration the fact that this unit assesses advanced-level understanding as well as speaking skills. Some teacher examiners were able to take their line of questioning to quite demanding levels and equally some candidates were able to respond appropriately to certain questions in considerable depth. In many cases they were able to respond at a high level to questions relating, for example, to social justice, imprisonment, religion and politics. They were also able to engage in moral debate. Where, however, the topic for discussion was less demanding, this had implications for the mark that could be awarded, both in terms of comprehension and in terms of development.

## Teacher-Examiners

Candidates' success in Unit 3 is dependent on the good conduct of the exam, as the quality of debate depends very much on the teacher examiner's counterarguments for the chosen issue and the nature of the questions asked for the further issues.

Sometimes Edexcel examiners are faced by the difficulty to determine whether in the discussion there are two further issues or only one.

Whilst thanking many examiners who conducted the exam successfully, we would like to encourage others to improve and develop the skills of the teacher examiners.

### Some examples of good questions:

- L'arte dovrebbe essere gratuita a tutti e perchè?
- In che cosa consiste il patrimonio culturale di un paese?
- Perchè la religione è importante nella nostra società?
- Qual'è il ruolo della chiesa in un paese laico?
- Pensi che la chiesa cattolica discrimini contro le donne?
- Dove possiamo fissare il limite tra il rispetto dei simboli religiosi (come cador e burka) e sicurezza pubblica?
- Come spieghi questo successo di Donald Trump?
- Quale tipo di discriminazione e' piu' difficile da eradicare nella nostra società?
- Dove finisce il diritto di informazione e comincia quello della privacy ?
- Parlando di privacy è piu' importante il nostro diritto a sapere o il diritto della persone a proteggersi?
- In che modo internet viola la nostra privacy?
- Perchè pur sapendo che le aziende cercano questi dati noi continuiamo a usare lo shopping on line?
- Esistono elementi positivi connessi all'immigrazione?
- Fino a che punto la religione e la violenza sarebbero collegate?
- Come nasce la violenza giovanile?
- Se qualcuno non ha un talento per le lingue come forzarlo a studiarle e non ad applicare il proprio talento in un'altra materia?
- Che interesse hanno i giovani nella politica oggi?
- Come si fa a distinguere tra la vera religione e la falsa?
- Le lingue sono un fattore di integrazione?
- Ormai le donne hanno ottenuto tutto che volevano: non credi ci sia più ragione di lottare.
- Fino a che punto siamo responsabili delle catastrofi naturali?
- Immagini di modelle troppo magre sono consuete e largamente diffuse, credi sia facile riconoscere i sintomi dei problemi di alimentazione?

To avoid later disappointments, centres must note that if they employ Italian native speakers (and not qualified teachers) to conduct the exam, they **should make sure that all the important information on the conduct of the tests are understood**. On the other hand, any TE conducting the test **should have a good knowledge of the language**. Centres without a teacher could ask information about the possibility to use **London Centre Orals** for their candidates.

The teacher examiner should study the oral form before undertaking the conduct of the oral and should prepare valid counterarguments to avoid silences. For the debate to be interesting, the counterarguments must be well focused. Both the candidates and their examiners should be well prepared.

The all too frequent "***Dimmi cosa sai di...– Sei a favore o contro?***" are likely to produce a weak debate.

After about **5** minutes the TE should initiate a spontaneous discussion covering **two** further issues.

Although examiners are not required to take the opposite view in the unpredictable areas, inputs like "***Cambiamo argomento; che cosa sai su...?***" will not prompt a

high level of debate or be considered a complex and challenging question; complexity can be linguistic (language and structure) and/or conceptual (abstraction).

To recap the most frequent problems were:

- initial issue not always arguable
- stance not challenged enough by the teacher-examiner
- some questions on personal life not appropriate for this unit
- too many factual questions not designed to elicit opinions
- questions at GCSE level
- only one topic discussed after initial issue
- no further topics
- difficulties to establish the two unpredictable areas, as questions were all within the issue chosen by the candidate
- candidates not allowed to demonstrate debating skills.

## **Administration**

Some issues arising from the administration of the test can be summarised as follows:

- during recording some background noise and/or other sounds (the bell, telephone, mobile phones, etc.) which made candidates lose concentration
- no name or number of candidates on the box or CD
- no teacher/examiner name on the box or CD
- stance not clear and/or written in English
- exam either too long or too short
- old Oral Topic Form OR3
- incomplete Oral Topic Form OR3
- no attendance registers sent
- badly damaged CDs
- CDs for the 01 and the 03 examination in the same parcel

Sound quality of CDs was excellent. Centres should wrap CDs in an appropriate plastic box or at least in a padded envelope.

## **Conclusion**

### **Congratulations to teachers and candidates!**

This summer, exams were very well conducted in several centres.

Many candidates performed well in this examination and appear to have worked thoroughly to prepare themselves.

The facility to contact any of the Principal Examiners through the Ask the Expert service is offered to the centres.

An online Oral Training Guide is also accessible.

