

# Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCSE Italian (5IN04) Paper 1

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## Unit 4: Writing in Italian

The flexibility of the controlled assessment option provided candidates of all levels of ability with the opportunity to communicate effectively in written Italian on a variety of topics.

Work was generally of a high standard, well presented and substantial in content. The majority of candidates fulfilled the requirements of this paper and produced at least 200 words as an answer to a given stimulus. Most centres used tasks set by Edexcel, at times adapting them slightly.

The most popular choices were Task 2 (film review) and Task 3 (family life) for Media and Culture, Task 2 (health and fitness in young people) for Sport and leisure, Task 1 (letter to a hotel) and Task 4 (thank you email after a visit to Italy) for Travel and Tourism, and Task 1 (work experience) for Business, work and employment.

Some centres also used the sample assessment materials, also available from the Edexcel website, with the most popular tasks being Task 2 (TV programme) for Media and culture, Task 1 (diary of a week off school) and Task 2 (website for a health and fitness centre) for Sport and leisure, Task 1 (web page on the local area) and Task 2 (school trip abroad) for Travel and tourism, and Task 1 (work experience again) for Business, work and employment.

Some centres set their own tasks: popular choices were holidays, school and daily life. Most tasks chosen by teachers were generally appropriate, however candidates performed better when they had been given a clear and detailed stimulus, with bullet points rather than just a generic title. This year there were quite a number of centres that provided just a simple title: this often makes it more difficult for the candidate and it also makes it more difficult for the examiner to evaluate the relevance of the piece.

When setting their own tasks, centres should also be aware of the fact that the use of phrases like "You must/should include..." will penalise candidates who do not cover all the bullet points. This can be easily avoided by using phrase such as "You may include...".

The problem of topic overlap was at times encountered, for example between an account of a holiday and an account of a school exchange in Italy, or family life and free time activities: the phrases and vocabulary used were generally very similar and in some cases the content as well.

It is important that centres submit the correct number of tasks for each candidate, which must be written in controlled conditions, and that some guidance is provided for candidates.

Ideally tasks should also be differentiated depending on the candidates' abilities. Candidates can achieve full marks whilst keeping within the recommended word limits. This particularly applies to more able candidates and native or near native speaker candidates. On the other hand overly short pieces are self-penalising. Unfortunately this year some pieces were

too short (less than 200 words) so that candidates could not achieve top marks. Centres must remember that in order to obtain A\* to C grades candidates must submit a minimum of 200 words for each of the two tasks.

The range of language displayed in the controlled assessment was again impressive.

Many tasks had been specifically designed to include a range of tenses and complex structures (including the conditional and the subjunctive), descriptions and opinions, for which many candidates were duly rewarded. On the other hand, candidates should be reminded not to be overambitious and try to use very complex structures, such as the conditional or the imperfect subjunctive, if they have not really mastered them.

Also, as there are no tiers for this paper, centres should set differentiated tasks for candidates of different abilities. Candidates of higher ability should be encouraged to produce more individual work and use a wider variety of language so as to demonstrate manipulation of tenses and achieve their full potential. This has been an issue at times, where very able candidates lost marks by carrying out tasks such as a brochure on the local area entirely in the present tense, or else a diary all in the *passato prossimo*. The nature of such tasks is self-penalising. Each piece should ideally display a range of tenses. Conversely, some weaker candidates would perform better with simpler tasks such as family life, rather than more demanding ones such as a healthy lifestyle or a film review.

Teachers are reminded that the marks awarded for Communication and Content are not merely related to the number of words in the task or the relevance to the title but closely depend on the quality of the language, as described in the mark scheme. Therefore, if the language causes ambiguity or if is too simple (for example no variety of tenses or very basic, repetitive vocabulary), full marks cannot be awarded even if the task is completed.

Finally, centres are reminded that the controlled assessment pieces should be the candidate's own work. There were quite a few instances of pieces which appeared to have been pre-learnt. This was successful in some cases but in others not so, owing to the frequency of errors and the complete disintegration of language when candidates failed to recall the pre-learnt material. Similarly, some candidates had been drilled to incorporate pronouns, tenses and opinions to such a degree that their writing was very unnatural, repetitive and at times almost incoherent. Candidates should be encouraged to produce more individual pieces: it is a little unlikely for the whole class to have seen the same film and have identical opinions about it!

There were also a few instances of plagiarism, where candidates had clearly lifted material from the Internet (typically a film review or the profile of a famous person). This normally shows in the quality of language and can be easily proved by using a search engine e.g. Google, and searching for key phrases written in the piece. Teachers are reminded that they are required to sign a form declaring that the piece is the candidate's own work.

Centres also need to remember that each candidate's work should be accompanied by the Candidate Mark Sheet for Unit 4 (available from the Edexcel website), which now includes the authentication signatures from both the teacher and the candidate, and when applicable the CA4 note form. If no CA4 form has been used centres should send a note stating so. Candidates should write no more than 30 words on the CA4 form.

From an administrative point of view, each individual piece should ideally be labelled with the candidate's name and number and preferably the centre's name and/or number, so as to be identifiable by the examiner.

OPTEMs, filled in with the candidates' marks must also be forwarded to the examiner. The top copy should be sent to the address written on the left-hand side of the form, the yellow copy to the examiner and the green copy must be retained by the centre. In addition to this, it is essential that all centres adhere to the controlled assessment receipt deadline.

For more information about this unit please refer to the specification or the 'Controlled Assessment Support Book – Writing'. Both of which can be found on the Edexcel web site:

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/mfl/italian/Pages/default.aspx>

## **Grade Boundaries**

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.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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