

Examiners' Report /
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCSE Italian (5IN04) Paper 01

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Examiner Report

The flexibility of this controlled assessment unit 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 very high standard, well presented and substantial in content. The majority of candidates fulfilled the requirements of this paper and produced at least 200 words in response to a given stimulus.

Most centres used tasks set by Edexcel (they can be downloaded from the Edexcel website at: <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/mfl/italian/Pages/default.aspx>), at times adapting them slightly.

For Media and Culture the most popular choice was Task 3 (young people's lifestyles), but quite a few centres also used Task 4 (a cultural event like a wedding, a festival or a birthday), while Task 1 (a TV programme) and Task 2 (a celebrity) were often slightly streamlined by centres.

For Sport and Leisure both Task 1 (free time) and Task 4 (a healthy lifestyle) were both extremely popular, as they consist of well-rehearsed topics. Task 3 (a famous sport personality) and Task 5 (sports facilities in your area) were also often chosen by centres.

For Travel and Tourism most centres used centre-devised tasks about holidays, but some used the Edexcel tasks, particularly Task 5 (a school trip to Italy). Task 2 and Task 4 were generally adapted into a more straightforward typical piece about the local area.

For Business, Work and Employment most centres adapted the material supplied by Edexcel to write about a work experience or sometimes a letter of application. The other topic that was extremely popular was a centre-devised option about school.

Many centres set their own tasks: as mentioned above, popular choices were holidays, school, daily life/diary, a film review. Most tasks chosen by teachers were 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 some centres 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. A list of bullet points will help candidates to focus on the task and will also provide some guidance as to what should be included in the piece to maximise marks.

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

It is important that centres submit the correct number of tasks (2 for each candidate) and when only one piece is sent it would be helpful if the centre put in a note explaining why some candidates only submitted one piece. If candidates write more than two pieces the teacher should just send the best two. Candidates can achieve full marks whilst keeping within the recommended word limits. However, overly short pieces are self-penalising. 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 two tasks must be written in controlled conditions, i.e. candidates should only have access to their CA4 note form with a maximum of 30 words and a dictionary. Drafts are not allowed nor the retaking of the same assessment. Teachers are allowed to provide some guidance when the task is set but they cannot provide any help during the preparation time or during the assessment or offer specific feedback.

The controlled assessment pieces should be the candidate's own work. This year there were many instances of extremely good pieces where all candidates within the centre had used a lot of very similar phrases. In other instances pieces appeared to have been pre-learnt (with different degrees of success), with some candidates clearly forgetting words or chunks from memorised sentences. This does give rise to the suspicion that perhaps too much support has at times been provided by teachers. Teachers are reminded that they are required to sign a form declaring that the piece is the candidate's own work. Candidates should be encouraged to produce more individual pieces.

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. Candidates should however 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. 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.

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 assessment criteria. Therefore, if the language causes ambiguity or if it 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.

Centres also need to remember that each candidate's work should be accompanied by the Candidate Mark Sheet for Unit 4 (CM4), 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 indicate this on the CM4 form. Candidates should write no more than 30 words on the CA4 form.

Centres should also send a copy of the stimuli used for the controlled assessments. As mentioned above, a simple title, for example, 'My holidays', is not ideal. If a centre is not using the Edexcel tasks, a task made up of a list of bullet points is preferable. A word count at the end of each piece would also be appreciated.

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. Each candidate's work should be clearly separated from the others, ideally stapled.

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>

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