

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCSE Italian (5IN04)  
Paper 1 Writing in Italian

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**GCSE Italian**  
**Unit 4 Writing in Italian**  
**Examiner Report**

The flexibility of the controlled assessment option provided students 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 students fulfilled the requirements of this paper and produced at least 200 words as an answer to a given stimulus. All students, even the less able, tried to cover all the given bullet points.

Most centres used tasks set by Edexcel (they can be downloaded from the Edexcel website), at times adapting them slightly.

All four themes were covered although the most common ones were Sport and Leisure, and Travel and Tourism.

The most popular topics were holidays, home and family, local area, healthy living, free time, work experience, environment, a celebrity interview, a film review.

Many students' responses to questions relating to holidays and free time were stereotypical, though a good percentage of centres engaged in exploring more challenging forms of description as well as analysis of the motivations behind the choice of a particular holiday or hobby from the point of view of young people. At one level a simplistic view of a holiday seen as synonymous of sunshine, swimming and good food prevailed. At other levels, the detailed description of events coupled with unambiguous communication produced good responses to the well planned stimuli.

Responses about the environment were generally well planned and developed, narrative was enriched by more technical terms and communication was clear and coherent. At other levels, the simplistic listing of "good things" for the environment together with less unambiguous communication prevailed. At all levels great concern for the environment was shown and students were familiar with such terms as 'pollution', 'global warming', and 'green house effect'. These responses were often very mature and reflected the progression route to A Level.

Some of the tasks were more challenging than others and some weaker students were disadvantaged by being set these tasks as they were unable to meet the demands of the task and did not score well as a result. This was particularly noticeable when weaker students wrote a review of a film.

On the other hand, some simple and straightforward tasks (for example family) did not lend themselves to achievement of high grades.

Many centres set their own tasks: as mentioned above, popular choices were holidays, school, daily life, family, a film review. Most tasks set by teachers were appropriate, however students 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 student and it also makes it more difficult for the examiner to evaluate the relevance of the piece. A list of bullet points will help students to focus on the task and will also provide some guidance as to what should be included in the piece to maximise marks (for example the inclusion of opinions).

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 students 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 student) and when only one piece is sent it would be helpful if the centre put in a note explaining why some students only submitted one piece. If students write more than two pieces the teacher should just send the best two (providing they are whole tasks and not broken down in 4 smaller tasks as is optional for weaker students).

Students can achieve full marks whilst keeping within the recommended word limits. This particularly applies to more able students and native or near native speakers. On the other hand, overly short pieces are self-penalising. Centres must remember that in order to obtain A\* to C grades students must submit a minimum of 200 words for each of the two tasks.

The two writing tasks must be completed in controlled conditions, i.e. students 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 or specific feedback.

The controlled assessment pieces should be the student's own work. This year again there were a few instances of extremely good pieces where all students had written pretty much the same things or had used the same phrases. In other instances pieces appeared to have been pre-learnt (with different degrees of success), with some students clearly forgetting words or chunks from memorised sentences. This does give rise to the suspicion that perhaps too much "scaffolding" has at times been provided by teachers. Teachers are reminded that they are required to sign a form declaring that the piece is the student's own work. Students 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 students were

duly rewarded. On the other hand, students 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. Some students 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 mark scheme. 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 student's work should be accompanied by the Student Mark Sheet for Unit 4 (the more recent one available from the Edexcel website), which now includes the authentication signatures from both the teacher and the student, and when applicable the CA4 note form. If no CA4 form has been used centres should indicate this on the CM4 form. Students 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 set 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 student's name and number and preferably the centre's name and/or number, so as to be identifiable by the examiner. Each student's work should be clearly separated from the others, ideally using a stapler/treasury tag. They should be arranged in the same order as on the register.

It is essential that all centres adhere to the controlled assessment receipt deadline. Many controlled assessments this year were sent well after the 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.

**Grade Boundaries**

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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