

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback Summer 2010

GCE

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

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

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 still some 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.

With Stimulus 1A, Q1, not all candidates understood the word *gestita* and only answered the first part of the question. In answering Q.3, weaker students were unable to expand on the advantages and disadvantages of this initiative. They just repeated the two advantages mentioned in the article. With Stimulus 2A, many candidates were able to respond to the stimulus using their own words and developing their thoughts with confidence.

The topics explored in the general conversation included the importance of receiving an education, the elimination of university taxes and equal opportunities at work.

THE WORLD AROUND US

Stimuli 1A/B were generally well understood. The overall response was in favour of more drastic actions to reinforce the use of helmets and the need to educate and help youngsters to become more responsible on the roads through awareness campaigns and more discussions in school. Stimuli 2A/B proved difficult for weaker candidates, who struggled to develop their responses, particularly to Q2, and only managed simple information referring to figures and practical examples often read from the text.

Stimulus 2, Q.4: answers to this question 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 we can contribute to reduce the impact of food shopping on the environment.

Both stimuli gave good scope in section B to talk about the environment, recycling and the changes in global tourism. Other topics discussed in Part B included ecotourism, increasing awareness of environmental responsibilities among students, recycling, alternative ways to travel to work (car-sharing) and when on holiday and the impact of immigration on tourism.

YOUTH CULTURE AND CONCERNS

Once again, a very popular topic area.

Stimulus 1A, Q.2: this question created problems for the weaker candidates, who could not identify the characteristics of this web site (free downloading paid for by advertising).

Q.3 Advantages and disadvantages of this site: only the most able candidate managed to give a good answer. Some students attempted to explain their views using abstract concepts.

Stimulus 2B: often candidates answered Q2 by explaining with concrete examples the attitude that young people have towards fashion in Q1.

Q.3 Many candidates found it difficult to highlight the differences between fashion and elegance/style.

The possibilities for general conversation were broad and produced a good range of discussions: the importance of fashion and self-image, the music industry and the importance of a musical education; bullying, binge drinking, the increased consumption of alcohol by youth in Italy and in the UK and the legalization of soft drugs.

LIFESTYLE, HEALTH AND FITNESS

Another very popular topic area.

Stimulus 2, Q.2 could be interpreted in two ways, both acceptable: the impact could be that the new material improves performance; or the impact could be that it has caused disagreement because some people think that athletes lose importance, as happens in other sports where man and technology have the same importance, whereas others think that this change enhances the combination between athletes and costumes. A number of candidates found it difficult to answer. They clearly understood the question but struggled to manipulate the language effectively to provide all the information using their own words. General conversation focused on eating disorders, obesity in children and its potential health risks, the importance of food education in schools, sedentary life and the role of sport in school, the smoking ban in public places and the role of advertising in promoting a healthy lifestyle.

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 cases 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: 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

Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Raw mark boundary	50	41	36	32	28	24	20	0
Uniform mark scale boundary	60	48	42	36	30	24	18	0

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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