

# Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE Italian (6IN03) Paper 1A

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## Unit description

This unit requires students 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 moves the conversation away from their chosen issue. The topic of debate does not have to relate to the General Topic Area listed in the specification for AS or A2. This unit assesses advanced level understanding as well as speaking skills.

### Assessment Principles

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

- response ( initiative, development and abstract language) - 20 marks
- quality of language ( pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary) – 7 marks
- reading and research ( knowledge of issue and other topics) – 7 marks
- comprehension and development (understanding and ability to deal with questioning) – 16 marks

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 his/her stance for about **1** minute. The examiner then challenges it and the candidate must defend it in discussion for **3-4** minutes. For the remaining **8** minutes the examiner (TE) initiates a spontaneous discussion on **TWO** further issues, **moving away** from the chosen one onto unpredictable areas. 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. Teachers should verify in advance that the topic is an appropriate one, otherwise marks can be lost unnecessarily.

It is problematical to argue opposing to:

- *Sono per una vita sana con molto esercizio fisico e una dieta bilanciata*
- *Il fumo e i suoi problemi*
- *Gli adolescenti e i loro problemi*

The unpredictable areas are more complex; these should be really 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 intonation.

The second part of the test should be a spontaneous discussion, not just a question and answer session covering too many topics (some examiners covered very superficially too many topics asking a question, waiting for an answer and then asking another question on a different topic) and/or a general chitchat (enquiries about future plans, etc.), *"dove sei andata in vacanza lo scorso anno?"* – *"Dove andrai quest'anno?"*.

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 looks as these have been well prepared in advance and is not precisely unpredictable.

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 candidates were thoroughly prepared with some exceptions. The majority of candidates showed genuine interest in their chosen issue and were motivated to discuss it with intelligence.

Unfortunately there were still a number of stage-managed conversations in which candidates' performances suffered as a result. At worst native speakers were restricted in their responses and denied the opportunity to explore further topics.

In a small number of cases teachers did not challenge the initial issue adequately, asked irrelevant personal questions or reverted to the AS format for the second part of the examination. Occasionally too much time was spent on the chosen issue and consequently there was no evidence of further unpredictable areas being explored.

Candidates who did not do so well as they could have, at times did so because of teachers' misinterpretation in conducting the exam (careless about the correct time required for exam, inexperienced about the administration of the exam, poor questioning or not challenging enough), rather than their own inability or lack of preparation.

Similarly most teachers were excellent in opposing the candidates' views and eliciting good debate throughout the exam.

A wider range of issues was chosen and it was interesting to listen to discussions concerning current issues such as:

- Uguaglianza delle donne nell'esercito
- Pro insegnamento delle religioni
- L'Italia festeggia l'unità ma è un paese diviso
- Contro la legge Buscaglia
- A favore dell'uso delle cellule staminali per scopi medici
- A favore della responsabilità criminale a 14 anni
- Agnelli era il re d'Italia senza corona
- Roma, capitale d'Europa
- Pro l'indipendenza della Scozia
- Pro/contro il Crocefisso nella scuola
- Pro la legalizzazione della prostituzione
- Fate l'amore non le pellicce.
- Non bisogna tenere un animale in città.
- Contro la proibizione del Burka
- La musica può essere usata per scopi terapeutici
- L'importanza della religione sta diminuendo
- Contro l'insegnamento dei dialetti in Italia.

The most popular topics were:

- Immigration, Criminality, Violence and Unemployment
- Nuclear and Alternative Energy
- Death Penalty, Abortion, Euthanasia (if one topic was chosen, one of the other two automatically was a certainty in the course of the discussion)
- Gays' marriage and adoption
- The modern family and the role of the woman
- Global Warming and Environment
- Legalisation of Drugs, Smoking, Alcohol
- Health
- Education and University
- The importance of Technology
- Racism
- Plastic Surgery
- Animal Testing

It was seldom the case that candidates were entered for an examination too difficult for them.

### Quality of language

Although in some cases accuracy was variable, many students 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 although intonation was often rather less convincing. Many words with the wrong stress, such as: *eutanasia*; *provoca*; *ipocriti*; *guidare*, *fotografi*.

Most common mistakes:

- agreements ; wrong tenses; wrong use of prepositions; relative pronouns
- i studenti
- una tema
- le facilità
- una problema
- la sistema
- affetta
- gli umani
- penso che è
- serio
- tutti le due
- governamento

"*Se io fossi*" was learnt as a set statement to be included in the oral; however candidates could not produce other imperfect subjunctives.

When the impersonal subject was used, candidates tended to utilise the singular when the plural was needed: *si può scaricare le canzoni*; *si può vedere le conseguenze*.

A recurring odd word was "*umani*".

### Reading and research

Candidates were, in many cases, through reference to articles, books, and internet sources, often able to achieve 5 to 6 marks – offering detail and convincing opinion. Many candidates' responses showed extensive reading of newspaper articles on current affairs within topic areas like politics, environmental issues, emigration, euthanasia and nuclear power.

### Comprehension and development

Many students deserved at least 11 marks in these Criteria.

Some very interesting and challenging questions on:

- Lingue minori- conservazione e diffusione
- Multilinguismo
- Bioetica e cellule staminali- ricerca, benefici, problemi
- Testamento biologico- questione morale
- Religione- diversità e tolleranza
- Religione come causa di conflitti sociali

- Patrimonio artistico - conservazione e sostenibilità
- Energia nucleare- difficoltà a trovare un accordo
- Aumento delle tasse universitarie- giusto o sbagliato
- La mafia rappresentata dai media
- Le Olimpiadi a Londra un vantaggio all'economia o solo uno spreco di soldi
- Le donne arbitri delle partite di serie A
- Tutela delle popolazioni indigene
- Jimmy Hendricks
- Non chiudiamo le frontiere agli immigrati
- L'uso del crocifisso nelle scuole italiane
- Il federalismo minaccia alla fragile unità dell'Italia
- L'eccessiva regolamentazione nella nostra società

### Teacher Examiners (TE)

Candidates' success in Unit 3 is reliant on a good conduct of exam as the quality of debate depends very much on TE counterarguments for the chosen issue and the nature of the questions asked for the further issues. Whilst thanking many examiners who were good in conducting the exams bringing out the best from their candidates, it could be useful to highlight examples of less successful conduct for the benefit of future TE or those in need to improve their skills.

Some examples of good questions:

- *I diritti umani, sei d'accordo che e' un tema importante al giorno d'oggi? Secondo te un governo deve perdere la sua legittimita' se non rispetta i diritti umani?*
- *Come si spiega che, secondo un'inchiesta condotta in Gran Bretagna, piu' del 70% dei giovani britannici teme gli immigrati? Secondo te a cosa è dovuto?*
- *Quali potrebbero essere le soluzioni efficaci all'immigrazione clandestina?*

Some example of poor questions:

- *Parlami dei problemi che hanno oggi i giovani*
- *Parlami della droga. Come si puo' risolvere questo problema?*
- *Chi e' il mamzone? Che fare per cambiare questa situazione?*
- *Che cos'e' l'eutanasia?*
- *Che cos'e' il testamento biologico?*

Centres that employ Italian native speakers (and not teachers) to conduct the exam, should make sure that all the important information on the conduct of the tests are understood, to avoid later disappointments.

The TE should get sight of the oral form before undertaking the conduct of the oral and should prepare valid counterarguments to avoid awkward silences and/or to be stuck for issues to discuss. For the debate to be interesting the counterarguments must be well focused. The all too frequent "*Cosa ne pensi?- Perchè sei interessato?- Dimmi cosa hai studiato?- Dove hai fatto le ricerche? – Sei a favore o contro?*" are likely to produce nothing more than a wishy-washy debate. After about 5 minutes the TE should initiate a **SPONTANEOUS** discussion covering two further issues.

A significant number of teacher examiners completely ignored the requirements to explore at least **TWO** further unpredictable issues. If a TE covers just one issue then the mark for Response, Reading & Research and Comprehension & development are reduced. Although examiners are not required to take the opposite view in the unpredictable areas, inputs like "*Adesso 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).

A small number of TE still not aware of the requirements, treating the second part of the test more as a conversation rather than a discussion and causing candidates to lose marks. The role of TE is not to ask questions to elicit factual information, although the candidate might well refer to some factual information to help to support and justify a point of view.

Some TE made the mistake to introduce too many issues without allowing any in depth discussion. It is acceptable to move on if a candidate is really floundering and might handle another issue better, but a string of issues only just touched upon is not likely to show the candidate's ability to sustain the discussion. TE must remember that a good debate depends very much on the challenge that he/she puts to the candidates, both for the chosen and unpredictable issues. If candidates are trained regularly in the art of debate and discussion, they will almost certainly do well.

The following is an example of some good questions and the ability to flow from the debate to the topics.

**Issue:**

A favore dell'abolizione della monarchia in Inghilterra.

**Debate:**

- *Tu dici che è fuori moda ma in realtà ha il consenso popolare; la maggior parte degli inglesi la vuole.*
- *La tradizione e' importante per gli inglesi!*
- *E il turismo? Ma cosa sarebbe Londra senza il cambio della guardia?*
- *Costa molto passare dalla monarchia alla repubblica, costa caro cambiare le istituzioni.*
- *Forse potremmo eliminare la monarchia, ma ci sono tanti aristocratici, che sono grandi proprietari terrieri e questo non si può eliminare...*
- *Se ci fosse un referendum adesso, che risultati otterremmo?*

The last question is used to move away from the initial issue and introduce the first unpredictable topic:

- *Tu credi che un referendum sia un buon metodo per vedere le reazioni della gente?*
- *In realtà un referendum e' caro. Siamo stati noi a eleggere i nostri rappresentanti quindi dobbiamo fidarci di loro.*
- *Il pubblico non vota veramente seguendo le proprie idee personali, vota seguendo quello che dice il partito.*
- *Cosa credi si sia concluso col referendum fatto la scorsa settimana?*

Change of topic:



- *Dovremmo avere un referendum anche sull'immigrazione?*
- *Recentemente c'è stato un grande problema in Italia con l'arrivo di barche di immigrati a Lampedusa. Tu cosa ne pensi di questa situazione?*
- *Come può intervenire l'Italia? Secondo te gestiscono bene la situazione?*

The following is an example of an issue that is not arguable, some poor questions and only one further unpredictable area eventually explored.

**Issue:** Vorrei parlare della Toscana perchè è la regione più bella nella mia opinione. C'è l'arte e molte cose interessanti.

**Debate:**

- *Cosa c'è di bello da vedere nelle città senesi?*
- *La capitale Firenze è importante?*
- *Parlami dell'arte di Firenze.*
- *Conosci solo il Davide?*
- *Sei stata in altri posti in Italia?*
- *Cosa hai fatto?*
- *Ti piace viaggiare?*

Change of topic:

- *Perché sono importanti le lingue?*
- *Cosa faresti con questa lingua?*
- *Dove ti piace viaggiare?*
- *Che altri hobby hai?*
- *Ti piace ballare?*
- *Un personaggio di Riverdance.*
- *Sei mai stata in Irlanda?*
- *Perché ti piace l'Irlanda?*
- *Dove ti piacerebbe andare in Italia?*
- *Perché è importante andare a Roma?*
- *Viaggi da sola o con amici?*

**To recap the most frequent problems were:**

- Initial issue not always arguable
- Stance not challenged enough by the TE
- Some question on summer holidays or personal life totally inappropriate
- Too many factual questions not designed to elicit opinions
- Questions at GSCE level asked
- Only one topic discussed after initial issue
- Difficulties to establish the two unpredictable areas as questions were all within the issue chosen by the candidate
- candidates not allowed to demonstrate language and debating skills

## **Administration**

Some problems arising from the administration of the test can be recapped as follow:

- recording equipment tested and in good working order, but microphone moved away from the candidate during the test, resulting in almost inaudible recording.
- Some background noise and/or other sounds (the bell, telephone, mobile phones, etc) which made candidates lose concentration
- no name of candidates on the box or cassette
- stance not clear and/or written in English
- exam either too long or too short
- incomplete Oral Topic Form OR3
- no attendance registers sent
- some CD and cassettes badly damaged

Sound quality of CDs is excellent, although examiners need to know, for the sake of efficiency, if a given CD needs to be run on computer or on a simple CD player. Centres would be well advised to package CDs in an appropriate plastic box, as for cassettes, or at least in a padded envelope.

## **Advice and Guidance**

Teacher's examiners should:

- make sure that the issue is clearly stated and a stance is taken
- prepare challenging counterarguments
- debate the chosen issue for the time required, but no longer
- introduce two further issues
- exploit all the potential of subsequent issues
- keep the debate going
- remember that eliciting knowledge or chatting about personal experiences is a waste of time and opportunity
- In the interest of candidates, teacher examiners are advised to scrupulously adhere to administrative procedures

Candidates should:

- select an issue that is of genuine personal interest
- adopt a stance and be ready to defend it
- be prepared to be engaged in a free-ranging discussion of further issues for the remaining 8 minutes

## **Conclusion**

This summer exams were very well conducted in several centres. Many candidates performed well in this examination and appear to have taken the trouble to prepare themselves proficiently.

## Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response

### Marking guidance for oral examiners

#### Tests that are too short

A test is too short if it is less than 10 minutes 30 seconds. Candidates are allowed a 30 second tolerance.

Drop down one mark band to the corresponding mark across the following assessment grids:

- 'Response'
- 'Comprehension and Development'

e.g.

5-8	Limited incidence of spontaneous discourse; limited range of lexis and structures; very little evidence of abstract language.
9-12	Satisfactory incidence of spontaneous discourse; range of lexis and structures adequate with some ability to handle language of abstract concepts.
13-16	Frequent examples of spontaneous discourse; good range of lexis and structures; good use of abstract concepts.

If a candidate would have scored 12, they should be given 8, if they would have scored 9, they should be given 5. The adjustment should not be applied to 'Quality of language' or 'Reading and research'.

#### Test that are too long

Once the 13 minute mark has passed, the examiner stops listening at the end of the next sentence.

#### Tests that do not move away from initial input

e.g. spontaneous discussion is not initiated/further unpredictable areas of discussion are not covered.

Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see the grids.

Response	
No unpredictable areas discussed	Only <b>one</b> unpredictable area discussed
No more than 8 marks	No more than 12 marks

Reading and research	
No unpredictable areas discussed	Only <b>one</b> unpredictable area discussed
No more than 3 marks	No more than 4 marks

Comprehension and development	
No unpredictable areas discussed	Only <b>one</b> unpredictable area discussed
No more than 7 marks	No more than 10 marks

**Tests that are pre-learnt**

Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see 'Response' grid.

- 'Response' - cannot score more than 8, irrespective of use of lexis/structure/abstract language.

## **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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