PRINCIPAL COURSE ITALIAN

Paper 9783/01

Speaking

Key Messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:
- in Part I, consider the issue raised in their chosen article and their own reaction(s) to it
- in Part II, choose a subject which genuinely interests them and which clearly relates to a country where the target language is spoken
- in Parts I and II, be prepared to take the lead in the conversation
- in Parts I and II, be ready to engage in natural and spontaneous discussion.

General comments

The Discussion of a newspaper article and related topics represents a free and challenging exercise in which candidates can demonstrate the ability to engage in free-flowing discussion with the Examiner. The Topic is as required for the Short Course and Examiners interpret and apply the mark grids in an identical fashion.

The overall exam is demanding in terms of length. Candidates were, however, able to maintain their level of performance over the entire exam, probably because the second part was totally different in nature and involved a lesser degree of unpredictability. Performances for the two parts of the exam were well balanced with only a marginally higher mean mark for language in **part 2**, as could be expected.

Part 1 Discussion of a newspaper article and related topics

Candidates could choose a stimulus cord from

1   *I voli low cost* (Travel and tourism)
2   *Proposta una legge a favore degli animali* (Law and order)
3   *Pane amore e social network* (Young people)
4   *Scienziato e ingegnere. Professioni maschili?* (Equal opportunity)

Card 3 was by far the most popular, as the broader theme of young people was very appealing.

Candidates should not feel that they should understand every word of the article, but should be able to use it as a springboard for discussion on the issues raised. The general level of response was very good and candidates were able to outline the main theme of the chosen article, discuss the issues it raised and broaden the conversation to the general theme.

Part 2 Prepared topic discussion

As has been the general pattern, many candidates chose a literary text or a film for their prepared topic. However there were a small minority who overlooked the fact the syllabus requires them to "research a topic related to the history, current affairs or culture of the areas of the world where the target language is spoken". This meant that there was a ceiling on the marks they could achieve in the Factual knowledge and opinions category.

Presentations were generally well-timed and well-articulated, leading naturally to discussion. In most instances the Examiner was able to adopt the position of the "interested layman", acknowledging that the candidate was the "expert". This ensured spontaneity of discussion and elicited from candidates the ability to adapt their prepared material to respond to the Examiner's questions. Most candidates were able to present a good range of pertinent facts, had the ability to analyse them in an interesting way and to express their opinions in a naturally flowing conversation with the Examiner.

In terms of language, there was a wide range of competence, from a small number of candidates who had struggled to master basic structures to others who were able to use complex structures and a good range of vocabulary. As could be expected, scores for language were slightly higher for **part 2**, but only marginally so. The most common areas of difficulty remain the use of prepositions, some influence from other foreign languages and some lack of control over agreements, gender and verb endings. Candidates generally mastered the sounds of Italian, with an occasional misplaced stress or mispronunciation of some vowel sounds or double consonants.

PRINCIPAL COURSE ITALIAN

> **Paper 9783/02**
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> **Reading and Listening**

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:
- focus only on the required information and communicate it precisely in their answers
- pay particular attention to conveying the required information to the examiner in unambiguous language.

General comments

In the Reading section, it was necessary for candidates to be able to target pieces of information as they arose in order in the text. Strong candidates were able to use a degree of inference where necessary. Strong candidates were able to identify where two pieces of information were required by the question, or if justification / expansion of an answer was necessary. Success in the translation question relies on keeping as close as possible to the original, and using correctly items that have already been present elsewhere in the paper.

For the Listening section of this paper, candidates needed to follow information sequentially, and use the material they heard selectively in order to answer the questions. Strong candidates gave succinct answers; candidates must avoid transcribing long chunks of material 'around' the answer. Success in the summary question is in part due to being able to keep to the word count – to produce a true summary, rather than a transcript of everything heard. The bullet points provide a framework for this.

Comments on specific questions

Part I

Testo di lettura 1

2   Successful candidates based their justifications firmly on evidence from the text rather than extrapolating to produce e.g. Italian employers would always support their government.

7   Again, as long as the response given was based on evidence from the text the candidate was likely to be successful in this question.

Testo di lettura 2

Candidates must ensure they answer in the appropriate language; no marks can be awarded otherwise.

Testo di lettura 3

Phrases that appear in an identical form in the previous reading passage must be copied accurately in order to gain the point. Successful candidates check agreements and genders rigorously.

Part II

Brano d'ascolto 1

17   Successful candidates were careful to fit their answer to the time frame of the question.

22   Some candidates struggled to clearly identify two points in this answer – she would do a parachute jump and pay for people to support her (not 'she is nervous / has a dream etc. – pieces of information that do not answer the question 'what would she **do**?').

Brano d'ascolto 2

Candidates must ensure they answer in the appropriate language; no marks can be awarded otherwise.

29   One point looks to the past, one to the future here. Candidates needed to identify the sense of challenge that excites him and keeps him planning the next adventure.

31   Overlong answers will be unlikely to gain full marks; the exercise aims to test candidates' ability to be concise. Summaries do not necessarily have to be written in prose. All five bullet points must be addressed – candidates need to do this in order to be able to gain full marks.

PRINCIPAL COURSE ITALIAN

> **Paper 9783/03**
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> **Writing and Usage**

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:
- in Part I, choose a title on which they have something to say and for which they have command of appropriate structures and lexis
- in Part I, plan their essay to produce well-structured and persuasive arguments
- in Part I, write complex sentences when appropriate, but without losing the thread of the argument
- in Part II, read each question carefully and make sure they understand the sense of the sentence(s)
- in Parts I and II, carefully proofread their responses.

General comments

A small number of candidates sat the paper this year, but there was quite a broad range of performance. At the top end, candidates showed an impressive ability to cope with the most sophisticated linguistic structures.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Question 1

In order to maximise their chances of a high mark on this section, candidates are advised to think carefully about which question they are best equipped to answer. Thereafter they should spend some time planning and constructing their argument before beginning the essay. It is a good idea to use some more ambitious and sophisticated language in the body of the essay, but candidates should also bear in mind the need to communicate their points clearly.

(a)   There was only one answer on this question.

(b)   There were no answers on this question.

(c)   There was only one answer on this question.

(d)   This proved quite a popular question. Candidates offered a range of views about the extent to which money and happiness were related, with some good arguments at the top end. Most candidates seemed to agree that happiness was possible without money.

(e)   There were a few answers on this question. The best essays looked at a range of relevant aspects (e.g. the role of religion in the modern world, the relationship between religion and politics etc.).

Part 2

Here again there was quite a range of ability evident across the small candidature. At the top end, candidates dealt impressively with even the more complex linguistic features, while at the bottom end candidates appeared to find even the more straightforward elements challenging.

Esercizio 1

Questions 2, 3 and 6 proved the most challenging.

Esercizio 2

This exercise proved a little more difficult than the first one, with **Questions 8** and **10** particularly challenging.

Esercizio 3

This exercise contained some more accessible questions and some more difficult elements. On the whole, candidates coped quite well with it, scoring on virtually every question (although the multiple-choice nature of the exercise makes it difficult to judge which correct answers were known and which were guessed). The only question that virtually all candidates found beyond them was **Question 20**.

PRINCIPAL COURSE ITALIAN

> **Paper 9783/04**
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> **Topics and Texts**

Key Messages

To score well in this paper, candidates should read the questions thoroughly and, if there is a second part to them, make sure that they give an adequate answer to it. A few minutes spent sketching out the general lines of each answer and thinking of the episodes in the books and films that they will use as evidence to support their views are minutes used well. References to the 'texts' should be relevant and in good number. Such preparation will help candidates avoid the temptation merely to recount the story, which gains them little consideration. While no doubt helpful in showing a candidate's knowledge of the text, quotations are best used when quoted accurately and illustrate particular points relevantly, rather than being included simply because they have been learned.

General comments

Questions were answered on two topics – *L'olocausto* and *Dopoguerra* – and two texts: Dante and Fo. The answers to the questions on the holocaust showed understanding of the questions. The more successful answers referred relevantly to the texts, although quotation was not always a help in the analysis, and the personal appraisal was adequately done. Less successful answers were hindered by lack of clarity, and occasionally by unintelligibility, owing to less well-developed linguistic competence and a rather simplistic reading of the texts. The topic of the *dopoguerra* produced answers that were relevant and well constructed, written in competent Italian. Less successful answers, while still generally intelligible, were not as relevantly organised and showed less solid knowledge of the detail of the texts.

The answers to the questions on Dante were more or less successful depending on candidates' understanding of the question, their ability to refer to the text relevantly, and the clarity of the organisation of their response. To score highly on the context question the passage itself must be the centre of analytical attention and not be used merely as the springboard to a general consideration of the work as a whole. The answers to the questions on Fo were all distinguished by good knowledge of the text, a sound understanding of the question, and clear organisation of the response. Relevant reference to the text and greater development of ideas were rewarded appropriately.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Question 4a

Poor Italian made the few answers to this question very difficult to follow. Where some meaning had been conveyed there was little content to consider other than generalities, which did not show any depth of knowledge of the text.

Question 4b

Apart from one answer which showed good knowledge of the text and was written in cogent Italian the answers to this question were characterised by poor linguistic competence and 'ad hoc' organisation of material. Details were examined but without any strong connection being made to an argument that was being developed and ideas were introduced without the development that would make them significant. The general impression was that candidates knew their texts but had not sufficiently considered the structure of their answer before beginning to write it.

Question 5a

The answers to this question showed considerable difference in quality. The good answer was well structured and used its references to the texts to illustrate a nuanced portrait of the city and its effects upon its inhabitants. The less successful answers, as those for 4b, referred to episodes and details in the texts without synthesising them into a cogent argument. Thorough knowledge of the text and appropriate choice of evidence are vital to the construction of a successful answer.

Question 5b

Answers to this question showed knowledge of the text but statements were made that were inaccurate or which lacked supportive evidence. Useful references were ignored and some choices of evidence, particularly of stories in *Racconti romani*, were not especially convincing. The quality of language was sufficient to convey meaning clearly.

Part 2

Question 6a

One competent answer to this question showed generally good knowledge of the passage. Later in the answer the passage for analysis was used to introduce more general considerations of the rest of the canto, a practice which should be avoided. Reference to other episodes in the text to illustrate features of the passage under discussion is good practice but the watchword, as ever, should always be: relevance. Other answers ignored, more or less, the instruction to comment on the passage, thus omitting vital details in a generalised and undeveloped discussion of the canto as a whole, and showed poor organisation.

Question 6c

One strong answer to this question showed good knowledge of the text and well-developed organisation of material. The candidate showed a good sense of the use made in the poem of the dual nature of 'Dante' and was aware of the significance of the various and particular placings of sins in Hell. Other answers were less analytical, more anecdotal, and one made the mistake of quoting the poem in English. To score highly in this sort of exercise simply relating what happens without using these references to construct a cogent argument is not a successful strategy. Similarly, explaining in general terms what is happening in a text without providing relevant illustration soon leads to lack of focus and a sense of arbitrariness.

Question 13b

The one answer to this question exhibited not only very good knowledge of the text but also spoke of the context in which it was written and the uses made of it in later times in other places. Thus the candidate showed that the political message of the play was indeed an important part of its success. However, as befits a good answer to this kind of question, the candidate did not forget that there are other qualities of the play that make it a successful work of art.

Question 13c

All the answers to this question were competent. Some degree of irrelevance and/or unevenness of structure took the shine off one or two essays as did the lack of relevant illustration and development of various points. It cannot be emphasised too much that an adequate answer to this type of question is soon made but that a good one needs to show that a candidate understands some of the complexities of the text, can integrate individual comments into a well-developed whole, and can chose relevant moments in the text to illustrate, and thus solidify, the points he or she is making.