

**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Italian

46304

(Specification 4630)

Unit 4: Writing

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

In this the first year of the new specification for Italian, the majority of students responded well to the demands of the new controlled assessments. Many teachers used their own assignment titles rather than those provided in the AQA bank of tasks, thus exploiting fully the knowledge and skills of their pupils, allowing them to write confidently on the contexts which interested them and for which they had thoroughly prepared.

Some students lost marks for Content because they did not respond fully to the title of their task. For example, if the title is 'Past and Present Holidays', the student is required to write about both in order to score maximum marks for Content. It is better to leave the title more open, such as 'An account of a holiday', so that a student is free to interpret the task as he/she wishes.

The work was generally of a very high standard, students were well prepared, and aware of the assessment criteria they needed to meet to access the higher mark bands. Most students responded fully to the tasks set and justified ideas and points of view. A minority of linguistically able students responded fully to the task set, but did not justify points of view or ideas so were unable to score well on Content. Students should be encouraged to give lots of opinions and to justify them. It is helpful if the task is designed so that the bullet points require them to give and justify opinions.

Most students used a minimum of two tenses giving them access to the higher mark bands, and many used more than two tenses. Students should always be encouraged to use as wide a range of language as possible, including tenses, in order to enable them to score well on Range of Language. Accuracy was generally good with errors being minor, that is, not preventing communication taking place. Popular titles were: 'Holidays', 'My Life as a Celebrity', 'Am I Fit and Healthy', 'Advertising My Area' and 'Advertising My School'.

Centres are reminded that teachers should not annotate the students' work. Only original, unannotated copies of the work should be submitted for moderation.

Advice to teachers

Choosing your task

- Choose tasks which are accessible to your students.
- When devising tasks, refer to the assessment criteria so that the bullet points you include help students to structure their response and to elicit the requirements. For example, students should be provided with opportunities to give opinions and to develop them: e.g. a bullet point such as *Say if you like your school* is not as helpful as one which elicits opinions and justifications e.g.: *Say what you think of your school and why*.
- Bullet points are suggestions only and students are not penalised for failing to refer to them all, as long as their response is relevant to the title. However teachers are advised to provide bullet points that encourage students to use a range of tenses, structures and vocabulary in order to access the higher mark bands in Range of Language.
- Ensure that the bullet points and the task title are written in English and not in Italian.

- Provide a logical sequence of events in the bullet points and encourage students to follow that sequence; this should ensure a well organised structure to the response.

If in any doubt about the suitability of a task, please contact your Controlled Assessment Adviser. Your school will have been provided with the e-mail address of your adviser; this can be sought at mfl@aqg.org.uk if you are not aware of your Controlled Assessment Adviser's details.

Preparing your students

- **Task Planning Forms (TPF)** – Students may write up to 40 words on their Task Planning Form and refer to this while writing up their task. The Task Planning Forms presented this year were mostly suitable and helpful. However, sometimes conjugated verbs were used. Students should be advised that examples of conjugated verbs on the TPF which are subsequently used in the actual assignment cannot be credited in the assessment process and this can lead to a break down in communication. Also, if more than 40 words are written on the plan (in any language), the additional words cannot be taken into consideration when they appear in the assignment. Any language in the assignment deriving from 'codes' on the Task Planning Form will always be rejected by Examiners. Codes are not permitted. It is important that teachers ensure their students know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable when writing their TPF. Please check your students' TPFs and ensure any unacceptable material has been thoroughly crossed out, before they begin Stage Three.
- **Criteria for Assessment** – Students should be made aware of the assessment criteria so that they know how marks are awarded. It would be helpful if they were aware that they need to convey as much **relevant** information as they can as **clearly** as they can; that it is important to give opinions / express ideas and points of view and to develop these – usually by providing reasons for their views; that they will be rewarded for a variety of vocabulary and structure and for attempting more complex structures; that the use of more than one verb tense will be required to reach the top band under Range and Accuracy of Language.
- **How much to write** – Guidance is provided in the specification: 200-350 words across both tasks if aiming at grades G-D; 400-600 words across both tasks if aiming at grades C-A*. Students should be aware that a very short response can make it difficult to achieve the upper bands of the assessment criteria for Content, and, therefore, for Range and Accuracy of Language.

Sending materials to the examiner

Teachers are to be congratulated on their professionalism and hard work in preparing their students for the controlled assessments in writing tasks. Administration by schools was generally good. Most schools sent all the relevant documentation with the students' work, providing for each student:

- a Candidate Record Form (this should be signed appropriately and you should indicate whether or not the student has used a TPF),
- a Task Planning Form for each task (if used),
- a copy of the task sheet for each task, making the title clear and providing the bullet points used,

- Two pieces of work (if for some reason you are only able to submit one piece of work for a student, please make this clear).

Guidance Notes for Examiners

The following guidance, provided to examiners during the examining period, is reproduced below for information.

Assessment issues

1. Task Planning Forms (TPF)

If more than 40 words have been used, examiners will ignore when awarding a mark, the parts of the student's response (i.e. the phrases or clauses) which use words noted on the TPF beyond the first 40.

If a conjugated verb appears on the TPF, examiners will ignore the clause(s) where that verb is used when awarding a mark for Range of Language and Accuracy. If the sentence (with the conjugated verb discounted) still communicates, then it may be counted towards the mark for Content. The same applies to the use of codes.

Visuals on Task Planning Forms were permitted for the last time in June 2011 and must not appear on Task Planning Forms in June 2012 and beyond.

2. Exactly what do examiners mark?

- They mark the student's response **to the title**.
- They do **not** mark a response to the bullet points which have the status of guidance. The student may choose to ignore the bullet points completely.
- The response must be relevant to the title.

Please note that if the examiner is unable to see a title for a piece of work, that piece of work cannot be marked and the student will be awarded zero.

3. Must the title relate directly to the Contexts defined in the Specification?

No. The title can be anything.

4. How do examiners identify the title?

- The title is the task.
- The task and the scene-setting may seem blurred or merged together. The focus is the task.
- See examples in *Additional Exemplar Tasks: Controlled Assessment Writing and Speaking* on the AQA website within the Teacher Resource Bank for Italian at <http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/newgcse/languages.php?id=11&prev=10>, where the task and scene setting are clearly separated

5. What is a relevant response?

- The response must be relevant to the task.
- Students are not penalised for not responding to the scene setting details.

6. And what if there is a significant amount of irrelevant material?

- It would affect the mark for CONTENT.
- Only the material which is relevant should still be assessed for RANGE OF LANGUAGE and ACCURACY.

7. What if a student has omitted an entire aspect of the title?

A student with the task 'Home, local area and special occasions' who writes nothing about their local area, for example, would be considered to have completed two thirds of the task. The piece would therefore be eligible for the 10-12 band for Content, assuming the piece fulfils the criteria for that band in other ways. This would still allow the student access to all mark bands for language.

8. What if there is a significant duplication of material across the two pieces of work submitted?

- The same material cannot be credited twice.
- Incidental and occasional overlap do not count as duplication.

9. What if it is clear that the student's entire response is identical (i.e. exactly the same, word for word) to model answers in a textbook or to the wording of tasks from other students at the same centre?

The work would be referred to AQA's Irregularities/Malpractice Department.

10. Does the number of words affect assessment?

- The quality not the quantity of work affects the assessment outcome.
- 200-350 words across both tasks if aiming at grades D-G, 400-600 if aiming at grades A*- C, is for **guidance** only.
- Obviously, the shorter the assignment, the more difficult it becomes to meet the upper bands of assessment criteria for CONTENT (and therefore other categories).
- There is no *upper* limit on the number of words. The whole piece will be read and marked by the examiner.

11. How does the CONTENT mark affect the marks for RANGE OF LANGUAGE and ACCURACY?

Content Mark	Maximum Mark for Range of Language	Maximum Mark for Accuracy
0	0	0
1-3	1-4	1-2
4-6	1-6	1-3
7-9	1-8	1-4
10-12	1-10	1-5
13-15	1-10	1-5

12. The criteria for assessment

(a) CONTENT

The criteria for CONTENT refer to ideas, points of view and, in the 4-6 band, opinions. In terms of assessment, how are they viewed?

They are all viewed as one notion. Ideas, points of view and opinions are the same for assessment purposes. In terms of evidence, there must be more than one instance of this feature.

How do examiners decide between the 3 marks available for CONTENT in each mark band?

If the descriptor fits the piece exactly, then the examiner will award the middle mark in the band. If there is strong evidence of the descriptors and the examiner had been considering the band above, the highest of the three marks would be awarded. If there is just enough evidence and the examiner had been considering the band below, then the lowest mark in the band would be awarded.

13-15 marks

- Students provide a **fully relevant** and **detailed** response with **almost all** information conveyed **clearly** and **developed**.
- They must offer ideas / opinions / points of view (minimum 2) and at least two of them must be explained or justified.
- The piece should have a well organised structure, i.e. a sound ordering of ideas but **not** necessarily a formal essay structure or an introduction, conclusion, etc.

10-12 marks

- The response will be **mostly** relevant and **a lot** of information will still be provided and conveyed **clearly** and will **generally** be developed.
- There is a requirement to give **and explain** ideas / opinions / points of view (minimum 2)

7-9 marks

- The response will be **generally** relevant with **quite a lot** of information conveyed **clearly**.
- There will still be evidence of an ability to **develop** ideas.
- There is a requirement to give opinions / points of view (minimum 2).

4-6 marks

- The response is **limited** but **some** relevant information will be conveyed.
- There will be **some development** of basic ideas.
- There is a requirement to give opinions (minimum 2). These could be very simple, e.g.: *‘Mi piace il francese. Mi piace l’italiano. L’Italia è bella.’* = 3 simple opinions.

1-3 marks

- The response is **very limited** with **little** relevant information conveyed.
- There will be **no real structure**.

0 marks

- No relevant information is communicated in a coherent fashion. If zero is awarded for Content, zero must also be awarded for Range of Language and Accuracy.

(b) RANGE OF LANGUAGE

- A present tense verb with a future time marker (e.g. *Domani vado a Firenze...*) or an expression indicating a future time frame (e.g. *ho intenzione di andare in Italia, spero di andare a Firenze*) do not count as the future tense.
- The present subjunctive does not count as a separate tense from the present indicative.
- A construction using the present tense to refer to the past (e.g. *Suono il piano da due anni*) counts as the present tense.

9-10 marks

- A variety of **tenses** must be used **successfully**. This means two or more tenses and a minimum of one instance of a tense use which is other than the default tense used. The tenses could come from the same time frame (for example the perfect and the imperfect) but a greater range of tenses will add to the complexity of the language used. An overall judgement needs to be made as to whether “verb tenses are used successfully.” There needs to be evidence that the student can communicate messages successfully in more than one tense. There may be minor spelling errors, but, provided they do not prevent communication, they can be credited.
- The use of different tenses is not necessarily a ‘passport’ to the 9-10 band.
- There must be evidence of **successful use of complex sentences**. This could be:
 - use of subordinating conjunctions (but this is not an absolute requirement)
 - use of adverbial phrases (*dopo aver bevuto... etc.*)
 - use of infinitive constructions after a preposition (e.g. *senza guardare*), after an adjective (e.g. *è facile farlo*) or after a verb (e.g. modal verbs: *vorrei viaggiare, preferisco andare etc.*)
 - a range of different structures leading to longer, more varied sentences (e.g. *non ho intenzione di* rather than *voglio...*)
 - use of pronoun objects
 - use of adverbial conjunctions (e.g. *quindi*) or prepositional phrases (e.g. *invece di ...*)
 - regular use of connectives to form longer sentences.

However, this is GCSE so even in the highest mark band examiners are not necessarily looking for use of the subjunctive or similar grammatical structures.

- There needs to be a **wide range of vocabulary**. This means that students will not be too repetitive in the words they use.

7-8 marks

- **Mainly successful** use of complex sentences. The note above about what constitutes complexity for the 9-10 band will also apply here.
- No specific requirement to use more than one tense but the use of different tenses may constitute evidence of ‘more complex sentences.’
- There must be a **good range** of vocabulary, so students in this band will again be trying to avoid repetition of the more common words.

5-6 marks

- There will be some attempts made at longer sentences using appropriate linking words. At this level this will often mean repeated dependence on simple connectives such as ‘e’ / ‘ma’ and ‘perché’ will also be found fairly frequently when students attempt to explain ideas and points of view. Use of other forms of complex sentences will often not be wholly successful.
- There should be **some variety** of vocabulary, though students will generally be using a more basic range of vocabulary than in the higher bands and there may be more repetition.

3-4 marks

- Language will be basic, with **short, simple sentences**. Attempts at longer sentences and more difficult constructions will usually not be successful.
- Vocabulary will generally be appropriate to the basic needs of the task but will be **limited**, with a lot of repetition and overuse of a few common verbs such as *essere, avere, piacere, andare*.

1-2 marks

- Little understanding of language structure shown with just the occasional short phrase which is correctly used.
- Vocabulary will be very **basic**, with only isolated words correctly used. Vocabulary will often be anglicised.

(c) ACCURACY

For ACCURACY, is there an implicit requirement for different tenses to be in evidence?

No. Range of tenses is assessed under RANGE OF LANGUAGE. The range of tenses is not considered when assessing Accuracy.

There are 5 marks available to cover the whole range of ability (i.e. 8 grades). This means the mark awarded could represent quite different performances. Moreover, a mark of 5 will not be used only to represent an A* performance.

5 marks

- **Largely accurate.**
- Major errors only usually appear in complex structures.
- There may be some minor errors (e.g. gender).
- Verbs and tenses are **secure**.

4 marks

- Errors occur but the piece is **generally accurate**. Mistakes made will not generally impede communication.
- Verbs and tenses are **usually correct**.

3 marks

- **More accurate than inaccurate**, though there will often be fairly frequent errors.
- The intended **meaning is clear**.
- Verbs and tenses are **sometimes unsuccessful**.

2 marks

- **Many errors.**
- Mistakes **often impede communication**.
- Verbs are **rarely accurate**.

1 mark

- **Frequent errors.**
- Mistakes **regularly impede communication**.
- **Limited understanding** of basic linguistic structures.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Convert raw or scaled marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion.