

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
in Italian (5IN04/01)
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 candidates 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 candidates fulfilled the requirements of this paper and produced at least 200 words as an answer to a given stimulus. All candidates, even the less able, tried to cover all the given bullet points. Many were able to successfully write more than this and scored at least in the 10-12 band for Communication and content. Some candidates gave very detailed responses and scored very highly as a result. The majority of candidates though had some lapses in terms of communication. Some weaker candidates wrote shorter passages and many of these candidates did not communicate well.

Most centres used tasks set by Edexcel (they can be downloaded from the Edexcel website at: <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/mfl/italian/Pages/default.aspx>) At times they adapted them slightly. The most popular Edexcel tasks this year were Task 1, 3, 5 in the Travel and tourism section.

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, school, environment, a celebrity interview and a film/book review.

Many candidates' 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. At all levels most candidates were familiar with the terminology.

Responses to tasks 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 candidates were familiar with such terms as 'pollution', 'global warming', and the 'greenhouse effect'.

However, the knowledge and understanding of these terms was sometimes incomplete.

There were some very good responses to questions relating to creating advertising material, often in the form of a blog, on a variety of topics, including film and book reviews, showing a good grasp of modern high tech communication together with the ability of being able to condense the main requirements of the task in an effective and concise style as well as a pleasant response to read.

The "school" task was also very popular and at times candidates produced a very interesting and varied piece of work, while less able candidates produced rather repetitive and pedestrian scripts.

Many centres set their own tasks. As mentioned above, popular choices were holidays, school, daily life, family and a film review. Most tasks chosen by teachers were appropriate; however on several occasions centre devised tasks were not too well designed. They did not give candidates scope to develop their writing at times while some tasks were clearly beyond the ability of the candidates.

Some of the tasks were more challenging than others and some weaker candidates 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 candidates wrote a review of a film or a piece about the environment or healthy living, which require more complex structures and topic specific vocabulary. On the other hand, some simple and straightforward tasks (for example family) did not lend themselves to achievement of high marks.

Some centres designed or used more than two task titles to accommodate the different abilities/levels amongst their students and to get the best result for both less and most able students.

Centres should bear in mind that candidates generally perform better when they are given a clear and detailed stimulus, with bullet points rather than just a generic title. This year again some centres provided just a simple title: this often makes it more difficult for the candidate and it also makes it more difficult for the examiner to evaluate the relevance of the piece. A list of bullet points will help candidates 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 inclusion of opinions and a variety of tenses).

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 candidates 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 candidate) and when only one piece is sent it would be helpful if the centre put in a note explaining why some candidates only submitted one piece. If candidates write more than two pieces the teacher should just send the best two.

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

The two tasks must be written in controlled conditions, i.e. candidates 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 cannot provide any help or specific feedback.

The controlled assessment pieces should be the candidate's own work. This year again there were quite a few instances of extremely good pieces where all candidates within a centre had written 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 candidates 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 candidate's own work. Candidates 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 candidates were duly rewarded. On the other hand, candidates 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 candidates 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. However, most candidates were able to write successfully using at least two tenses, with many displaying a good use of past and future tenses and conditional. The most common errors in terms of language were cases of misspelling (including omission of accents) and incorrect use of auxiliary verbs in the perfect tense (e.g. *siamo fatto*). There were also many inaccuracies with articles, adjectives and gender agreement.

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 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 candidate's work should be accompanied by the Candidate Mark Sheet for Unit 4 (CM4) which also includes the authentication signatures from both the teacher and the candidate, and when applicable the CA4 note form. If no CA4 form has been used centres should send a note stating so. Candidates 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 holiday', 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 be labelled with the candidate's name and number and preferably the centre's name and/or number, so as to be identifiable by the examiner. Each candidate's submission should be clearly separated from the others, ideally using staplers/paper clips. They should be arranged in the same order as on the register.

The register filled in with the candidates' marks must also be forwarded to the examiner. The top copy should be sent to the address written on the left-hand side of the form, the yellow copy to the examiner and the green copy must be retained by the centre.

In addition to this, it is essential that all centres adhere to the controlled assessment receipt deadline of 15th May. Many controlled assessments this year were sent well after the deadline.

As a final point, candidates are again reminded of the importance of clear and orderly presentation. They really need to consider that work which is illegible is very difficult to assess.

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 website:

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/mfl/italian/Pages/default.aspx>

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>

