
GCSE ITALIAN

8633/WH: Writing (Higher)
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The quality of work produced for this new examination was encouraging. The paper differentiated very well in that students were able to score marks over a variety of questions. The vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier. The quality of work seen in the overlap questions was of a higher standard than at the Foundation tier. The ability to use a range of tenses and more complex language was impressive and students were also able to express and justify opinions well. Where students failed to score marks, this was where inaccuracy caused a delay in communicating messages. This was mainly due to inaccurate verb formation or students writing extended responses far longer than the suggested word count, which created more scope for error. Another barrier to achievement was omission or misinterpretation of the bullet points in questions 1 and 2.

Question 1

For this question, there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 90 words in total, about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. The quality of work varied considerably, with many students able to provide extended responses which demonstrated their ability to develop ideas, express opinions and refer to different time frames. Where students were less successful, this was mainly due to misinterpretation or omission of bullet points.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Students need to be reminded that coverage of bullet points is key, as misinterpreting or omitting even one means that the award of a mark above 6 is impossible, given that for the award of marks in the range 7 – 10, all aspects of the task must be covered. In addition, although students had no difficulty in developing ideas and expressing opinions, there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as 'lapses') and this impacted on marks awarded. Each of the bullet points gave students scope to answer using three time frames and invited opportunity for an opinion. If information was given in relation to all four bullet points, but there were lapses in clarity and a lack of **two** opinions, students could not necessarily score a mark of 8 or 9.

Question 1.1

This was the more popular choice with students. It was a topic with which students are familiar, but it is important to remind students that this new specification requires them to use their knowledge to respond to the exact requirements of the task rather than just reproduce pre-learned language, which often was not relevant. The aspect of the task that was often not covered was bullet point 1 which required students to talk about the **type** of school they frequent. Some students responded well. However, there were occasions when students omitted stating the type of school attended or misunderstood the meaning of *frequenti* to mean how **often** they went to school. In bullet point 3, *com'era la tua scuola primaria*, it was not evident to some students that a reference to a past time frame was required. Students need to recognise that bullet points written in a particular time frame require a response in the same time frame. Where students omitted the task or did not relate the information required such as in bullet point 1 and 3, this impacted on marks awarded for Content. As would be expected, bullet points 2 and 4 were well covered, with many successful responses.

Question 1.2

Students were familiar with the topic in this question and produced extended responses, especially relating to bullet point 2. Bullet point 1 required students to state '*dove si trova la tua città*,' with most students giving the name of their town rather than say where it was. Bullet point 3 caused uncertainty and some omitted it completely. Students who were able to manipulate the rubric for bullet point 4 addressed it successfully, although many students misinterpreted the bullet point to state where their ideal city would be not **how** they envisage it to be.

As with question 4.1, students need to recognise different tenses in the bullet points requiring responses in the same tense or time frame.

Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy.

- Variety of language – the range of vocabulary used in response to both questions was appropriate and reasonably extensive. *Mi piace* and *preferisco* were quite often used to indicate liking or preference, but a fairly common error was the omission of the second verb in the infinitive eg *preferisco vado*.
- Attempts at complexity – there were some well worked longer sentences using a variety of connectives such as *e*, *ma*, *comunque*, *poi* and *però*. Negatives were also well handled but *no* crept in at times when *non* was needed.
- Time frames – most students were able to make an attempt at all three time frames and the bullet points were designed to encourage this.
- Accuracy – most students were able to write accurately in the present tense using the first and third person singular. There were however six common errors:
 - attempts at the perfect tense were the most inaccurate, often with either no auxiliary verb or an auxiliary verb with an infinitive
 - the use of a time marker with the wrong tense
 - the use of modal verbs with a conjugated verb
 - the omission of the accent on 'e' when required is a major error as it changes the meaning of the sentence
 - wrong use of : *a* /*ha* *o*/*ho*
 - incorrect conjugation of reflexive verbs: *vorrei rilassarsi*.

Advice to students

- Do not just copy the rubric – using the word '*menziona*' at the beginning of your response does not make sense, eg *menziona che tipo di scuola frequenti secondaria*.
- Aim to write roughly the suggested number of words. The emphasis needs to be on **quality** and not **quantity**.
- Mention **all** of the bullet points. Attempt to write *something* about them rather than omitting them. Tick off the bullet points in the rubric once they have been addressed.
- Identify which bullet points target the different time frames and check that your verb formation is accurate.
- Make sure you include at least **TWO** opinions as required by the task.

- In some cases, the language of the bullet points can be manipulated to help you write a successful response. For example, in Question 4.1, the second bullet point *le materie che **studi*** is easily adapted to produce *le materie che **studio sono...***

Question 2

For this question, there are 15 marks for Content, 12 marks for Range of language and 5 marks for Accuracy. Students need to write approximately 150 words in total, about two different bullet points. Both bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. The quality of responses was generally high with most students able to complete both bullet points in each question, showing good ability to express and justify opinions. Many students were able to produce fluent pieces of extended writing with few lapses and a variety of language. Again, the philosophy behind this new specification is for students to use their knowledge to respond to the exact requirements of the task rather than just reproduce pre-learned language. Where students were less successful, it was because they had misinterpreted the bullet points or wrote very lengthy responses, which increased the scope for error. As with Q1, centres are reminded that writing more than the suggested number of marks, does not mean automatic access to the top marks. This is evident in the work of students of Italian as a mother tongue. Furthermore, justification of opinions was not always evident in the work of these students.

The final bullet point on the front page of the question paper should have stated “In order to score the highest marks for Question 2.1/Question 2.2, you must write something about each bullet point. You must use a variety of vocabulary and structures and include your opinions and reasons”. At the end of this bullet point the words “and reasons” had been omitted. Manual checks were completed by the Lead Examiner in order to ensure no students were unfairly disadvantaged by this omission.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: relevance and detail (implicit in this is coverage of both bullet points), amount of information conveyed, clarity of communication and expression and justification of opinions. Students had no difficulty in developing ideas and expressing and justifying opinions, but there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘ambiguities’) and, again, this impacted on marks awarded. In this question, *è* with an accent was not always used correctly by students and it prevented examiners from acknowledging some opinions and justifications as the *e* without an accent changes the meaning of a sentence eg *mia mamma dice che guadagnare i soldi e molto importante*.

Question 2.1

This was a more popular choice with students but was less successful, mainly because of the misinterpretation of bullet point 1. Many students overlooked the rubric that mentioned *siti sociali* and interpreted the first bullet point as ‘the advantages and disadvantages of using ‘technology’ rather than ‘social media sites’. More successful students combined technology with the pros and cons of using social media sites which was fully relevant to the bullet point. In addition, a number of students were able to express views on one side of the discussion without mentioning the other and both are needed to cover the bullet point. The second bullet point was well addressed by practically all students, with most describing in detail how they used technology in the past.

Question 2.2

A less popular choice for students. Once again students overlooked the rubric *guadagnare dei soldi*. Many misinterpreted the meaning for what they do with the money as opposed to **how** they earn it. Others wrote about what other members of their family do to earn money, once again not answering the rubric, *quello che fai...*. Some students were able to make statements about the importance of earning money, thus giving opinions, many going on to provide detailed justifications of the ways money is important to them personally and in life in general.

Bullet point 2 was more successfully addressed by a majority of students as it was a more familiar generic topic where they were able to provide a great deal of information.

Range of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language and a confident ability to produce complex sentences. It is worth noting that reference is not made to time frames or tenses in the criteria, but the use of these would be considered to be attempts at complexity. In terms of variety of language, there was an impressive variety of connectives seen; *poiché, purtroppo, comunque, nonostante, anche se*. There were other successful attempts at complexity: *'da piccolo, spero di, dopo aver*, use of negative constructions such as *né...né,*' and the use of direct object pronouns and infinitive constructions. There was also a wide range of tenses, including the subjunctive. It is also worth noting that the criteria refer to style and register. This was not generally an issue with the quality of the work and there were instances of attempts to include idioms which complemented the pieces well.

Accuracy

The criteria for assessment focus mainly on verbs and tense formations and the type of errors that students make. It is to be noted that a 'major' error is one that interferes with communication, and a 'minor error', albeit still an inaccuracy, does not. The majority of students were able to produce work worthy of 3 marks and above. Common major errors included the inappropriate use of infinitives and poor formation of the perfect tense, a time frame with the wrong tense, eg *l'anno prossimo ho utilizzato*, the use of reflexive instead of indirect pronouns, prepositions in place of the verb: *a/ha o /ho* and the wrong use of vocabulary, changing the meaning of the sentence: *io salvo sempre i soldi, sopportare la mia famiglia*. A common error with near native speakers was *ciò* for *ci ho*. Minor errors included gender errors, inaccurate adjectival agreements and minor misspellings.

Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the number of words required. Writing way beyond the suggested word count can be counter-productive as you may start to make errors and become less relevant.
- Read the bullet points and the scene setting carefully, ensuring you know exactly what they require in terms of response.
- Ensure that what you write relates to the bullet points in some way.
- When including complex language, check that your verbs and spellings are accurate.

Question 3 – Translation

For this question, there are 6 marks for *Conveying key messages* and 6 marks for *Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures*. Given that the level of demand of the

messages was aimed at covering grades 4 to 9, the question differentiated well, with all students able to score some marks.

The passage was divided into 13 key messages, as in the table below.

Conveying key messages

	Message	Main Issues
1	I love the Christmas holidays	<i>Mi piace/ il giorno di Natale</i>
2	because I can get up late	<i>posso alzarsi in ritardo for tardi</i>
3	but, unfortunately,	Omission of one of the words <i>disfortunatamente /non fortunatamente/unfortunatamente/ malorosamente</i>
4	I must clean my room.	Paraphrasing eg <i>sistemare</i> for <i>pulire/ mettere in ordine/ riordinare</i>
5	It's very boring!	<i>e without accent/ omission of molto/veramente/davvero sono annoiato/sono noioso fastidioso /stressante instead of noioso</i>
6	Last year	<i>el ano pasato/la settimana scorsa/l'anno prossimo</i>
7	I went to a concert	Use of definite article/ <i>al concerto</i> or <i>in un concerto/ero andato</i>
8	with my sister	<i>con mi sorela/ la mia sorella</i>
9	where I sang and she danced.	The message was not conveyed in most cases/ <i>o cantato e a ballato/ avevo cantata/ use of imperfect or pluperfect.</i>
10	It was a lot of fun!	Widely unknown <i>Così divertente instead of molto divertente Ero instead of era divertente/ ero divertito</i>
11	Next year	Translated very well
12	I would like to visit	Use of <i>voglio</i> instead of <i>vorrei</i>
13	Father Christmas.	Surprisingly not known by a majority of students: <i>papa natale/padre natale/babo natale/ padre di natale</i>

Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

There were a considerable number of responses or part responses in Spanish rather than in Italian. Minor errors did not prevent marks being awarded for conveying key messages provided they were communicated. However, when awarding marks for application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures, inaccurate language was considered. For example, language such as *posso alzarmi tardi, ma sfortunatamente, o cantato* were often either incorrect, omitted or wrongly spelt, and this influenced marks awarded for application of grammatical

knowledge and structures. Although not exclusive, the vocabulary used in translations is largely taken from the vocabulary lists in the specification, therefore students do need to have a sound knowledge of these words.

Advice to students

- Practise high frequency words and phrases, especially connectives and prepositions.
- Check carefully that all aspects of the translation have been addressed accurately, particularly the little words.
- If you are not sure how to translate something, have a go as it may score you a mark. Leaving it blank will not.
- Check verb tenses and endings.
- Stick to translating the words that are in front of you. Do not add any words, nor paraphrase.

Most of the work seen was legible, however there were instances where students should have taken greater care in their handwriting.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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