

Oral component

Students who were well prepared demonstrated their abilities and proficiency in Italian. In contrast, students who were insufficiently prepared lacked confidence, particularly in the discussion.

Some students expected to be questioned only on what they had read and/or heard, not reflecting on the material studied and the links between the texts. The focus of the discussion in Section 2 of the examination is *to discuss and explore the sub-topic and aspects covered in the texts studied*. By using and referring to the texts studied, students should be able to discuss and explore ideas and opinions related to their sub-topic and should relate this to Italian speaking communities. It was expected that students would make links with Italy and/or Italians in Australia.

It is essential that in the introduction to Section 2 (up to 1 minute) students state concisely, in Italian, the theme of the detailed study and the sub-topic chosen (including any particular aspect if applicable), and the titles of at least 3 (three) different types of texts used in their research. The introduction gives assessors an indication of the areas for discussion. The texts should be used to support, expand and explore the sub-topic and not merely as a basis of a recount.

It is important that appropriate materials and sub-topics for the discussion are selected. An example of an appropriate sub-topic might be the Italian contribution to Australian society whereas an example of an inappropriate topic used in 2002 was *'I passatempi dei giovani'*.*

As stated in the Italian Study Design, the texts selected should vary depending on the type of text, its density and level of complexity. In order for students to be able to explore their sub-topic in sufficient depth, it is suggested that a range of at least three different kinds of texts are selected.

Texts studied should not be in English, nor should texts be fabricated. This includes personal diaries and journals kept by the student, or 'my mother' as the oral text. Students must come to the oral examination having prepared authentic Italian texts ensuring that they will have been exposed to the key vocabulary related to the sub-topic. Students need to mention the title of the texts studied, not just say that they studied an article. Students should be aware of what constitutes a text (therefore, a CD, the Internet or an Internet site are not text types). Students should say that they have studied, for example, a particular article from an Internet site.

*Please note this sentence has been amended (12/08/03) to omit *'in Italia e in Australia'*.

Section 1 – Conversation

Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

Performance in this criterion directly related to the level of preparation of the student. Those who were well prepared were able to advance the conversation and link with assessors effectively. It was very obvious when the students were not sufficiently prepared. In particular, students who memorised chunks of information for their general conversation were less able to converse.

As Section 1 of the oral examination no longer requires conversation about three topics, the basis of the conversation for the whole 7 minutes of this section could effectively be on one topic. Students therefore must be able to go beyond obvious answers.

Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

Students should approach this part of the examination with a willingness to **interact** with the assessors. Students who were well prepared were able to develop more than one aspect of a topic. They were able to add breadth and depth to their conversation and were able to support and elaborate on their statements.

Students who had not reflected adequately on the areas for general conversation found it difficult to extend beyond the obvious and relied on repetition. These same students were too passive and found it difficult to venture away from rehearsed statements, offering only the predictable. In these cases, it was difficult to maintain a conversation for the whole 7 minutes.

Section 2 – Discussion

Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

In this part of the examination, students should be prepared to interact and discuss their topic with the assessors. Well prepared students were able to maintain and advance the discussion. However, many students were unable to go beyond their introduction. Students who memorised whole chunks of answers in monologue style were not able to demonstrate an ability to maintain an exchange appropriately and effectively with the assessors.

Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

Choice and number of texts used to research the sub-topic of the detailed study is extremely important. Students who studied a variety of texts such as films, articles, novels were generally better equipped to present, support and elaborate a range of information, ideas and opinions. When students had extracted enough information from each of the texts, they had little difficulty with the discussion. When their preparation was limited, students penalised themselves, as they did not have enough to say.

The study design recommends that students study a range of at least three (3) different kinds of text. Many students mentioned three texts but were unable to discuss them for various reasons. For example, students had not finished reading a novel or watching a film, while others could only present untitled articles. Some, while mentioning three different texts, were unable to use them to support their discussion. When appropriate texts were chosen, students found it easier to substantiate their comments. In contrast, students whose texts were not varied, unsuitable, too narrow (e.g. a painting) or too general (e.g. the Internet) found it more difficult to link their texts to the discussion.

The choice of sub-topic for the detailed study is vital. Some topics do not allow for adequate discussion – they are either too narrow (e.g. art, with the study of only one painting) or too broad (e.g. healthy eating, which students discussed in a general way and did not relate to ‘Italian speaking communities’). It is advisable also to avoid the topics listed for Part A of the examination as assessors will usually explore these in the first half of the examination and, where the detailed study topic is related, will usually find that the areas for discussion have already been covered.

Those students who choose to support their discussion with an object must realise that the object is for support and not the focus of the discussion and it may not be used. Cue cards, pictorial or written, are not permitted.

Given the amount of time devoted to the detailed study, it is not unreasonable to expect some sophisticated ideas, opinions and information which are appropriately elaborated and supported by the texts.

Criteria specific to language

Six of the ten criteria used to assess this examination directly relate to the student’s use of Italian. Hence, it is imperative that students master their Italian grammar and vocabulary skills in the areas of accuracy, variety and clarity.

There was a strong correlation between well prepared students and their ability to use grammar and vocabulary accurately. There were students who were able to use the variety of language, tenses, structures and vocabulary, appropriate to the context, purpose and audience of the task that should be evident at this level.

Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

Use of English in relation to general areas of conversation such as the names of subjects being studied or career choice increased, while use of dialect decreased. The lack of knowledge of key vocabulary related to the sub-topic chosen for the detailed study was a cause for concern as was the poorer linguistic ability of students in general in the discussion. Common errors were speaking in the infinitive, incorrect conjugation of tenses (including the present tense), wrong agreements, incorrect use of auxiliary verbs and articles, use of ‘*essere*’, incorrect word order, object pronouns, etc.

Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Students required a more extensive range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Examples might have been use of idiomatic expressions where appropriate, expressing ideas and opinions in more depth and a knowledge of suitable vocabulary related to the detailed study.

Clarity of expression

The most serious problems related to students memorising whole sections of material. When students were interrupted there were gaps in the flow of conversation, with incorrect phrasing and tempo. The result of this was the production of stilted language.

Written component

In 2002, many students did not accurately read and/or understand the questions given in English. An example of this was Question 5 where students could have given a number of answers based on Loretta’s response ‘*Life is beautiful and worth living*’. However, many students answered the question ‘*Based on her philosophy of life, what type of person is Loretta*’ with the statement ‘*Life is beautiful*’, obviously an incorrect response. Most papers were quite mediocre, with only a few exceptions.

In the Listening and Responding section of the paper, many students had difficulty with some of the more common idiomatic expressions such as ‘*sei sicura che faccio una bella figura*, or ‘*a buon mercato*’. In Text 4, many students read the words ID card and proceeded to give this their own interpretation, not listening to the text and therefore not realising that this was an ID card for cows to provide consumers with information about the origins of the meat and hence protect them against ‘mad cow disease’.

Students also misread or did not understand questions in the Reading and Responding section, particularly those questions related to Text 7. The amount of space provided for students to answer a particular question is a good indicator of how long the answer should be. Therefore, 1 to 2 lines indicates a short answer; several lines indicate that a longer answer is required; bullet points indicate the number of answers to a question as do the marks generally. Responses given by the student should answer the question and should not simply be a translation of a sentence/paragraph given in Italian.

Some students did not read the instructions closely, and answered in the wrong language. Given that there are many tasks, students must read carefully and understand what each section of the examination requires of them before attempting any questions. Students’ use of English was often and incomprehensible. It is important that answers can be understood; therefore, students must write in clear and precise English and not ‘waffle’.

Students are asked to write legibly and **in ink** in all parts of the examination, write their answers to questions in the spaces provided, and not write their final answers in the note-taking spaces. It was extremely difficult to assess papers where handwriting was illegible or scribbled.

Before submitting the examination paper, students should read over their responses in all sections, checking for accuracy, logic and coherence. In preparing for the examination, students should develop strategies for memorising grammar and vocabulary. While there is no formal grammar section in the examination, a range of grammatical, linguistic and lexical features are evident through students' responses to comprehension questions and in their writing pieces.

Section 1 – Listening and Responding

The capacity to convey general and specific aspects of texts

Students should spend more time developing better listening comprehension skills. Constant practice of this very important skill should begin from the very first year of their Italian studies as this skill is not strong. Students need to be encouraged to develop their listening comprehension skills in a variety of contexts and situations. Constant revision of vocabulary and grammatical structures enables students to perform better in this section of the examination.

Students found Text 2 to be more difficult as it was evident that many were unable to identify the holiday destination and the reason for choosing that destination. Idiomatic expressions proved to be difficult for many students with '*farai una bella figura*' being translated as having a good figure/looking after one's figure.

Part A

Text 1

Question 1

In her 40s.

Question 2

- repairs
- change zips
- shorten/lengthen trousers/skirts
- makes good quality silk shirts

Question 3

- being with friends
- embroidery

Question 4

- in Australia, lunch is a roll/sandwich
- in Italy, lunch needs to be cooked/prepared

Question 5

A person who believes that life is beautiful/worth living/happy/content/enthusiastic/optimistic.

Text 2

Question 6

They've already been to Paris/Egypt is hotter.

Question 7

- Luigi has never been there before
- it's cheap

Question 8

- gives in/agrees to go to Spain
- Luigi 'owes her'/it will be her choice next holiday

Text 3

Question 9

He needs a recipe for a quick dessert.

Question 10

Biscuit-type cake base.

Question 11

Fregolotta will crumble.

Question 12

Fresh or pre-packaged.

Question 13

Tip for decoration.

Question 14

He wants to make a good impression/wants to know if he made the right choice.

Part B

The capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts

The capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately

In Part B, students are expected to give responses in Italian. Students are advised to check the language in which they must respond. The standard of Italian responses was mediocre. A number of students simply wrote down, word for word, what they had heard in the listening text. Questions 16 and 18 were difficult questions, with the former asking about the text type and the latter asking for a comparison between Italy and Australia. Only very successful students successfully made the comparison, even though the answer was in the text.

It is clearly stated in the study design (p. 32) that a range of comprehension skills will be assessed. Students should expect to find a range of questions, from the easier and straightforward to the more challenging. Students should note that Part B of Listening and Responding is worth 10 marks; 5 marks for comprehension of both texts (in this case Texts 4 and 5) and 5 marks for use of language, incorporating such criteria as accurate and appropriate grammar and vocabulary, cohesiveness of extended response (Question 18) and accurate spelling.

Text 4

Question 15

Identify the origin of the beast, thus avoiding purchasing beef from 'mad cow' contaminated areas.

Question 16

A news item on radio, TV or in the newspaper/flyer/at the butcher's or market, etc.

Text 5

Question 17

Her parents decided because, in those times (the 70s) many immigrants returned to their homeland.

Question 18

- people are better mannered in Australia
- food and clothes/cost of living are cheaper here
- life is better here

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Capacity to understand and convey general and specific aspects of texts

Most students were able to adequately complete the activities related to the Reading and Responding passages. As with the Listening and Responding section, students should ensure that they know in which language to answer. They must ensure that they read and understand the questions and use a dictionary where necessary to check the meaning of unfamiliar words. Students should not spend a large amount of time translating the passage (as was done in 2002) into English. Students should also be advised on effective use of a dictionary. As for the Listening and Responding section, it was also noted that poor English expression led to unclear answers. Students must write clearly in English even though this is an Italian examination. If answers in English are unclear, they are marked incorrect.

Part A

Text 6

Question 19

- surrounded by walls
- majestic castles
- green hills
- beautiful monuments
- main square has gigantic chessboard

Question 20

Untouched by pace of city life.

Question 21

Encourages them to go to Italy to see the real chess match.

Text 8

Question 22

To decide who would marry Lionora.

Question 23

He didn't want one of the warriors to die in the duel.

Question 24

He recalled a law from the past.

Question 25

- a chess game
- favoured by the nobility of the time

Question 26

- holiday
- in the square in front of the castle
- winner would marry Lionora
- loser could marry Taddeo's sister

Question 27

- parade of the chess pieces
- fireworks
- warriors called the moves of the game

Question 28

- the warrior who Lionora loved won the game
- we know because the square was lit up by a white light

Part B

Capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts

Capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately

It is important that students are aware that they are not always required to write a letter for this part of the examination. Many students wrote either a letter or an email to Signorina Tac when the task very explicitly stated that the students were to complete a *journal entry*. Many students completed a diary rather than a journal entry. Students must be aware that there is a slight difference in these text types. For a journal entry, students were required to enter a date and write in prose with an introduction, body and conclusion. A journal entry does not begin with *caro diario* nor does it end with *devo andare adesso*. Five marks were allocated to the text type for use of language and text-type where some of the features expected in responses were correct conventions, as well as correct register, structure and coherence of the text, grammar, range of vocabulary and correct spelling.

Generally, Part B of the Reading and Responding section was handled well. The writing in this section was generally better than the writing in Italian (Section 3). Most students were able to address 5 of the 6 bullet points they were asked to write about; however, students should note that marks will not be allocated if they simply reiterate what is said in the passage. Many students find it very difficult to remain within the word limit (also the case in the Writing in Italian section) which resulted in being penalised in both the content criterion and the language criterion. It is important that students learn to stay within the required word length and realise that there is a skill involved in this.

Question 29

- impressions on arrival in Italy (e.g. age of buildings/overcrowded/pollution)
- Italian habits at mealtimes (e.g. times/type/order)
- school life (e.g. hours, days, homework)
- getting around (e.g. vespa, walking, traffic)
- social interaction (e.g. *passeggiate*, meeting in bars)
- fashion of peers (e.g. designer jeans)

Section 3 – Writing in Italian

Relevance, breadth and depth of content

Appropriateness of structure and sequence

Accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

The 15 marks for this section were divided in the following way: 5 marks for content; 5 marks for correct text type, including register, cohesive devices; and 5 marks for writing in Italian, range and sophistication of vocabulary, grammar and correct spelling.

Students did not favour one topic more than the other. All four topics received close to equal attention from the students. No matter which task students chose, there were careless grammatical errors. Incorrect conjugations of both regular and irregular verbs, poor spelling, incorrect agreements, possessive adjectives, articles, relative pronouns and articulated prepositions. Students were often not able to conjugate the present tense, and when using the *passato prossimo*, the wrong auxiliary verb was used. Some students also incorrectly attempted to use the subjunctive.

On the other hand, some students were able to demonstrate their knowledge of Italian by writing a piece which was cohesive, varied in vocabulary and sentence structure and which addressed the topic in a logical and coherent manner, providing a well-planned and well-written piece of Italian which was a delight to read.

Students who chose to write a story about a migrant (Question 30) were expected to detail at least three difficulties and how these were overcome. Most students were able to do this; however, some concentrated solely on difficulties such as *housing, language problems, inability to find work*, and ignored the way migrants overcame these problems. As for the text type, most students were aware that they needed to include title, author and content as well as links and consistent and appropriate register in order to complete this informative and/or evaluative piece successfully.

Question 31 required students to write the script of a speech in which they presented their findings about the effects of computers and Internet on the youth of today. Some of the findings presented were: *non-authenticated material, ease of research, access to pornography and gambling and credit card theft*. For the computer, students listed *sore eyes, lack of exercise and ease of completing homework tasks* as some of the pros and cons. For the text type, a greeting, an introduction of self and the topic, an opening comment with an evaluation and conclusion and thanks were all required, together with appropriate and consistent register and cohesiveness, to complete this informative task.

In order to write the article on the topic 'there is too much sport on television' (Question 32), students were required to offer four reasons to support their opinion. Some reasons were that *all stations transmit sport; it dominates viewing on many nights; limited choice of programs; dominates prime time; people should be outside playing sport rather than watching*. This article should have been a persuasive piece, including features such as a title (and possibly a sub-title) along with author, introduction and conclusion as well as links and consistent and appropriate register.

Question 33 required that a report be written on the changing roles of men and women in modern society. While many students who completed this topic were able to offer a balanced opinion citing examples such as *men working at home; women going to work; equality of men and women; men and women sharing the responsibility for the children; il mammo; women in high-paid jobs; men and especially women in fields previously inaccessible to them (e.g. female mechanic)*, other students concentrated either on just the man or the woman and many others incorrectly wrote about aspects such as the traditional family and the effects of divorce on the children, which were inappropriate for the topic. In order to write the informative report, students should have included title, author and introduction, body and conclusion as well as cohesive devices and consistent and appropriate register.