



## Oral component

### GENERAL COMMENTS

Students generally performed well in the 2004 Italian oral examination. As in previous years, there was a strong correlation between the level of preparation and students' performances. Students who were well prepared presented themselves confidently and were able to draw upon their language and content knowledge appropriately and effectively.

In preparing for this examination, it is important that students have a clear knowledge of the examination procedure and criteria. It is expected that students will give extended, well thought out answers rather than responses consisting of only one or two words. When entering and leaving the examination room, it is important that students address the assessors using the formal 'Lei' form; *ciao* is an inappropriate form of address. Furthermore, the use of English in any part of the oral examination is also inappropriate.

In both the Conversation and Discussion sections of the oral examination, language proficiency is assessed as a separate criterion. Students need to be aware that both range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar are assessed. Hence, it is imperative that students polish their Italian grammar and vocabulary skills in the areas of accuracy, range and appropriateness.

In 2004, students who used an excellent, accurate and appropriate range of vocabulary and sentence structures received high marks for this criterion. In contrast, basic grammatical errors (including use of the incorrect auxiliary verb, a very narrow range of tenses and incorrect agreements) highlighted weaknesses in the preparation and performance of many students. When preparing for this examination, students should master a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures.

### SPECIFIC INFORMATION

#### Section 1 – Conversation

As there are no set questions for the oral examination, and given that the general conversation relates to the student's personal world (for example, school and home life, family and friends, and interests and aspirations), it is assumed that students will have explored these topic areas thoroughly and will be able to maintain a conversation with the assessors. Exchanges in which the student was willing to take the initiative and elaborate on answers by providing examples, reasons or evidence, resulted in higher marks.

On the other hand, it was very obvious when students had not prepared adequately for the examination. These students could not advance the conversation and relied on the assessors to prompt them. They were slow to respond and generally gave very brief answers, covering only basic content. Similarly, those who had memorised chunks of information tried to present it as a monologue. When interrupted, they usually found it difficult to continue with the conversation or merely returned to their pre-prepared speech, even if it did not relate to the new question asked. Other students needed a lot of support and occasionally needed to rely on English words to sustain the conversation.

#### Section 2 – Discussion

The choice of topic for the detailed study is extremely important. Topics need to lend themselves to discussion, opinions and ideas. In 2004 it was found that topics such as '*I passatempi*' and '*la famiglia e gli amici*', which were similar to the conversation topics, were generally poorly handled as they had usually been covered in the conversation section and therefore students found it difficult to present new opinions or move beyond a superficial and factual retelling of their ideas. On the other hand, more substantial topics such as '*il Palio*', '*l'immigrazione*' and '*il ruolo delle donne*' offered students more scope for discussion and the expression of ideas and opinions.

The Study Design recommends that students study a range of at least three different kinds of texts. These texts need to have substance and should differ substantially from each other. Choosing texts that provide different but relevant perspectives on their topic further assists students to engage in a more detailed discussion. For example, using a novel and film of the same title (for example, *Volevo i pantaloni*) may not provide an adequate range of ideas and students who did this usually had difficulty engaging in a lengthy or in-depth discussion. Similarly, a picture or a comic may not give students enough material to draw upon, compared with information, ideas and vocabulary presented in a film or an article. To adequately prepare the detailed study, students must go beyond covering just the basic concepts in order to



have scope and depth for a seven to eight minute discussion. When selecting texts, the ability of the student must also be taken into consideration. If the content is too difficult, the student may be unable to draw information from and refer appropriately to the texts studied. The texts chosen for the detailed study should be in Italian and allow the student to explore and compare aspects of the language and culture of the Italian-speaking community. Some students cited English texts and, when questioned about their resources, could not relate the information/ideas to the topic studied for the chosen detailed study.

It is important that in the one-minute introduction students state concisely, in Italian, the topic of their detailed study.

Once again, students must be aware that they need to prepare thoroughly for this section of the examination. Given the amount of time devoted to the detailed study, it is not unreasonable to expect sophisticated information, ideas and opinions that are appropriately elaborated on and supported by evidence from the texts studied. These texts need to be understood and used in support of the arguments, opinions and ideas. It is not sufficient merely to list the resources used or retell the contents of a text. The best performances in this section of the examination were those where the student discussed the topic studied by referring to the texts cited and using the information gathered from resources in support of their ideas or opinions.

In contrast, students who had only a superficial knowledge of their topic displayed areas of weakness. These students could only use a few key words related to their topic and were generally unable to express opinions or ideas. They could usually cite the names of their text resources and retell some of the content, but were unable to link the information effectively to their area of study.

## **Written component**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

In 2004, student performances ranged from mediocre to excellent. Students needed to use their reading time effectively so that they were aware of what was required in the examination. In particular they needed to read the requirements of each task in order to accurately understand what was being asked of them. Responses in all sections of the paper should be concise, answer the question asked and be of the correct length. An example of this was in Question 5, where students were asked to list three steps the Animal Protection Society had suggested in order to avoid the suffering of pets. The correct answers were 'keep them inside during fireworks', 'organise care for the holidays' and 'register your pets'; incorrect responses that indicated a lack of understanding of the English task requirement and/or carelessness included 'feed your pets', 'give them water' and 'lock them inside'.

Students' use of English was sometimes careless. Some wrote incoherent answers or repeated an answer for several questions. Poor English expression and illegible writing made some responses unclear and these were therefore marked incorrect. Students should write clearly, legibly and in pen. They must take care to not write answers in the note-taking section and adhere to the prescribed word limit.

Once finished, students should check over their responses to ensure that both their English and Italian answers are accurate, logical and coherent. In preparation for the examination, students should revise and master the grammatical structures listed in the Study Design. Many students seem to believe that, as there is no specific grammar section on the examination, grammar is not tested. In fact, a range of grammatical, linguistic and lexical features are tested throughout the various sections of the examination.

### **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

#### **Section 1 – Listening and responding**

##### **Part A**

##### **Text 1**

##### **Question 1**

- invitations
- flowers
- menu
- a gift.

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## Question 2

Because they are:

- planning a golden wedding anniversary party
- planning to send their parents on a cruise
- giving up her holiday and his car.

## Text 2

### Question 3

To be responsible pet owners during the holiday period.

### Question 4

During the Christmas holidays.

### Question 5

- keep pets inside during fireworks
- organise care for the holidays
- register pets.

### Question 6

A pet is a lifelong commitment.

## Text 3

### Question 7

When she was seven years old.

### Question 8

- concerts in world famous theatres
- concerts on TV
- a film about her life/career.

### Question 9

- her husband's support
- her children's support
- hard work
- dedication
- sacrifices.

More time and practise is required to develop listening comprehension skills. It was noticeable that few students took notes during the examination. Students need to learn how to take notes from aural input and use their dictionaries effectively when uncertain of vocabulary. When responding, students must ensure that they have accurately answered the question asked, using information from the text.

Whilst the texts were not challenging in themselves, many students failed to give accurate responses that answered the questions asked. For example, for Question 8, many students wrote generalised answers such as 'concerts', 'on TV' and 'starred in a film'.

## Part B

### Text 4

### Question 10

To give a progress report about the Australian trip.

### Question 11

The cost of special insurance because of the risk involved.

### Text 5

### Question 12

- living in the forest

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- studying and keeping records of animals
- seeing the newborn animals
- handling the animals.

## Criteria

- capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts
- capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately.

Students had to answer Part B questions in Italian. In this section, five marks are awarded for comprehension of both texts and five marks for the use of language. Language incorporates accurate and appropriate grammar and vocabulary, cohesive responses and accurate spelling.

Many students were able to write reasonably well in Italian, however their lack of understanding of the texts caused them to miss out on comprehension marks. It is very important that students expose themselves to as many authentic listening experiences as possible so as to master this skill. Once again, note-taking skills are invaluable in this section of the examination.

## Section 2 – Reading and responding

### Part A

#### Text 6

#### Question 13

Regardless of colour, skin reacts to environmental and hereditary factors.

#### Question 14

- prevents acne
- prevents wrinkles
- keeps pores clean and open
- prevents ageing of skin
- protects from sun damage.

#### Question 15

- smoke-filled rooms
- polluted environments
- air-conditioned rooms
- ultraviolet rays from the sun.

#### Question 16

- if checked, sun spots don't degenerate into tumours
- if detected early, sun spots are curable.

#### Question 17

AFLA knows skin best/they are experts in skin.

#### Text 7

#### Question 18

Applicants will need to:

- travel between two sites
- live in France
- be female.

#### Question 19

The new offices are in France.

#### Question 20

Three years' office or administration experience in a similar position.

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## Question 21

- initiative
- good public relations.

## Question 22

- two year contract, extendable by a further two years
- negotiable salary.

## Question 23

The company name means 'almost leather' and it makes leather look-a-like products.

Most students were able to adequately complete the activities in Part A of the Reading and responding section. However, there were many who did not read the questions accurately and provided information from their general knowledge or class studies. For example, in response to Question 16 many students wrote 'a healthy diet', 'exercise' and 'rest'. Another example of carelessness was in Question 23, where many students wrote that the company name meant 'almost skin'. A quick check in the dictionary would have given the students the correct word – 'leather'.

## Part B

### Text 8

#### Criteria

- capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts
- capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately.

Possible points to be addressed from the fax:

- English courses
- part-time work
- leisure activities for Gianluca and his parents
- skiing
- a unique Australian experience.

Most students produced a letter as instructed; however, the conventions of a letter were not always apparent. Five marks were allocated for the use of language and text type. The features assessed in responses were: correct conventions and style for the text type; structure and coherence of the text; range and accuracy of vocabulary and grammar; and correct spelling. Given that students have access to their dictionaries, spelling in Italian should not be a problem.

Part B of the Reading and responding section was generally well handled. Most students were able to address the five points listed; however, some students did not include activities for the parents or did not include a unique Australian experience.

## Section 3 – Writing in Italian

### Criteria

- relevance, depth and breadth 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:

- five marks for content
- five marks for structure and sequence (correct text type, including register and cohesive devices)
- five marks for the correct use of Italian, including range and sophistication of vocabulary and grammar, and correct spelling.

All topics on the examination paper were attempted.

## Question 25

Question 25 was a popular topic. Students had to write an informative report about the findings of a survey regarding the use of mobile phones among young people today. Students were generally able to present five findings, but the responses given often lacked variety. Students could have mentioned positive and/or negative findings. Possible



findings might have included 'health risks', 'costs', 'safety', 'fashion statement', 'vital communication', 'link with parents/friends' and/or 'able to be contacted'. The text type, a report, was generally handled well; however, some students omitted either the title or the author.

#### **Question 26**

Questions 26, community benefits from the conservation of water, received close attention from the students. The persuasive style of writing required by this task was generally well handled; however, many students found it difficult to effectively sequence and link their ideas. Responses might have included information on 'future water supply', 'low storage levels', 'changing climate patterns', 'educating young people', 'rain water tanks', 'recycling water' and/or 'salinity'. The text type, a magazine article, was generally well handled, and the conventions, content and style were usually appropriate to the task.

#### **Question 27**

Question 27, regarding issues of concern and possible solutions for young people, was also a popular choice. The evaluative style of writing required by this task was generally well handled; however, many students found it difficult to effectively sequence and link their ideas. Responses could have included information on 'cost of education', 'work', 'housing', 'leisure', 'state of the world', 'security', 'relationships' and/or 'health'. It was important in this question that students included at least one solution amongst their five points. The text type, the script of a speech, was generally well handled, and the conventions, content and style were usually appropriate to the task.

#### **Question 28**

Question 28, which asked students to write about aspects of future life, was the least attempted topic. This was an imaginative task and many who attempted it included interesting aspects of future life. Responses to this question could have included points about 'flying cars', 'technology', 'food', 'environment', 'clothing', 'space travel/stations' and/or 'entertainment'. The required text type, an imaginative story, was well handled, with the conventions and style generally appropriate to the task.

In all tasks, many careless grammatical errors were made. These included incorrect verb conjugations, agreements and auxiliary verbs. Pronouns, prepositions, and adjectives also caused problems. Some students seemed incapable of using tenses other than the present tense, and the past, future and conditional were poorly handled. Students must understand that range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammatical structures are assessed in this section. They should therefore go beyond merely using basic vocabulary and structures.