



Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

In 2005 students generally performed well in the Italian oral examination. Those who were thoroughly prepared were able to communicate with confidence and advance the exchange effectively. Conversely, those who were less well prepared found the task more difficult.

It is imperative when preparing for this examination that students are familiar with all components of the examination criteria used for assessment, as well as the correct form of address to use when speaking to the assessors. Many students made use of dialects in their responses; however, this is not acceptable, nor is the use of English for unknown Italian words.

In both the Conversation and Discussion sections of the examination, language proficiency is assessed separately. In order to score high marks for this criterion, students are expected to use an excellent, accurate and appropriate range of vocabulary and grammatical structures, as outlined in pages 14–16 of the *Italian VCE Study Design*. Carelessness in responses resulted in lower grades. Some students demonstrated an inadequate knowledge of basic grammar, particularly agreements, conjugation of verbs and the use of tenses.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

This section of the examination consists of a general conversation of approximately seven minutes about the student's personal world; for example, school and home life, family and friends, interests and aspirations.

Good preparation for this section of the examination allowed the conversation to flow naturally. Students who had explored the topics thoroughly were able to effectively link with assessors, and express and expand their information and ideas. However, there were still some students who had not prepared adequately and could not elaborate on their responses or expand the conversation. They could only give very limited answers and therefore did not perform well.

Rote-learning slabs of information is not advisable. Students who relied solely on memorised material found it difficult to continue the conversation when assessors interacted with them. These students were more likely to give irrelevant responses as they relied solely on their pre-prepared materials in response to any question asked. A conversation is an interaction between two or more people and cannot be learned.

Section 2 – Discussion

The focus of this discussion is to explore aspects of language and culture, with reference to texts studied for the Detailed Study. Students are given one minute to clearly and briefly introduce the sub-topic and the texts chosen for the Detailed Study before the Discussion begins. Some students assumed that they would be allowed to present an extended monologue of their topic and were surprised when assessors interacted with them.

The choice of topic was often an important factor in determining students' success in the Discussion. Topics needed to be broad enough to allow for a discussion, but not too difficult in content and vocabulary requirements. The texts chosen for study needed to be substantial and offer a range of ideas from which the student could draw upon. It is suggested that at least three different kinds of texts should be selected. When selecting the sub-topic, it is advisable to avoid topics covered in the Conversation section, as many students merely repeated what had already been covered. If the topic studied is related to a theme covered in the conversation, then it is important to provide a clearly different focus.

Given the class time allocated to the Detailed Study, it is expected that students should have a wide range of information to discuss. Students who devoted adequate time to their preparation were able to effectively support and elaborate on their ideas, information and opinions while referring to the texts studied.



Some students displayed a lack of understanding of their texts and very limited knowledge of their topic. These students were inadequately prepared and were therefore unable to support, elaborate or give any opinions. Others were able to re-tell the contents of a studied text; however, they experienced difficulty in exploring and relating the text to the topic.

Rote-learning slabs of information is an inappropriate way to prepare for the discussion. Students who did this were not able to answer the questions asked and insisted on returning to their memorised material. In order for a discussion to take place, students need to freely link their information with the questions asked by the assessors.

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

In general, student performances ranged from mediocre to excellent. During the 15 minutes of reading time it is important for students to thoroughly familiarise themselves with all sections of the examination. They need to read the questions carefully in order to ascertain the information required in their responses. Students should make use of English translations to check that they have correctly understood the questions asked. Responses should be concise and of the correct length. Furthermore, students need to be aware that Sections 1 and 2 the examination paper clearly state that 'All answers **must** be based on the text.' This means that no prior knowledge should be included in the answers.

It was disappointing to note that answers were sometimes given in the incorrect language. As clearly stipulated on the examination paper, responses in the wrong language received no credit. A few students lost valuable time re-writing responses that had been written in the wrong language.

Some students were careless with English spelling and structure or had illegible handwriting. In cases where the answers were unclear, marks could not be awarded.

As a range of grammatical, linguistic and lexical features are tested throughout the various sections of the examination, it is advised that, when the paper has been completed, students should carefully check all their answers to ensure that they are accurate, coherent and logical.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A

In order to be adequately prepared for this section of the examination, students must spend more time practising their listening comprehension skills. Effective use of the dictionary would also aid students in this task.

While the texts were not overly challenging in themselves, careless errors were evident this year. For example, many students did not interpret '*piccole ore*' as early morning, and basic elements of the language, such as numbers, were misunderstood by many students. Instead of writing 'cash' for Question 9, many students wrote 'not cash' or 'cash and credit cards'.

Text 1

Question 1

digging to build a pool

Question 2

to open the chest, because the lock was rusted

Question 3

Matthew could lose the house.

Text 2

Question 4

- The menu is by famous chefs.
- An Italian band is performing their latest hit song.

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Question 5

early morning

Question 6

They must come in fancy dress.

Question 7

- even nights – 15% discount on drinks
- odd nights – free desserts for children under 12

Question 8

- it is seasonal
- it changes monthly

Question 9

cash

Part B

In Part B students had to respond in Italian prose. Ten marks are awarded for comprehension of the texts and five marks for the use of language. Many students gave incomplete answers, although they appeared to have understood the information presented. It is important that students clearly understand the information required and then convey this using grammatically accurate sentence structures. They must read the questions asked on the examination paper carefully and check that their responses address the questions asked.

Text 3

Question 10

- Having experience in the field will help his entry into medicine.
- He is not sure whether he wants to continue his studies the following year.

Question 11

His:

- understanding and experience with the elderly
- first aid certificate
- knowledge of required languages.

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Part A

Given that the texts are printed on the paper in the Reading and responding section, students need to be more careful when reading the questions asked and the relevant sections of the text. Better use should be made of their dictionaries so that relevant, logical and accurate answers are provided. A few examples of careless answers were: 'secretary' or 'carbon card' as the answer to Question 20, 'she doesn't need liposuction' or 'she is thin' for Question 17, and 'a nuclear bomb went off' or 'Sombero was there' for Question 19. A quick check of their answers should highlight any responses that are obviously wrong.

Text 5

Question 12

He is reluctant/negative, because he says he is being dragged/forced.

Question 13

seeing the ticket inspector because he forgot to buy the tickets

Question 14

- He was pushed out of the way.
- People jumped the queue.
- Some got in first because they knew someone on staff.

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Question 15

- He feels the trip was wasted because the exhibition he wanted to see was closed.
- Nothing of interest came from the trip.

Question 16

- There is too much concentration on famous people.
- Equally valid contributions/works by lesser known people are not highlighted.

Question 17

She is obese.

Question 18

- Fermi died in America.
- Maiorana continued his studies on atomic energy.
- Maiorana disappeared.
- Maiorana did not feature in the museum exhibition.

Question 19

- attracted by exhibit
- inadvertently triggered a silent alarm/something
- swooped upon by four security guards

Question 20

carbon paper

Part B

Some students copied large slabs of information from the text provided rather than using the information to demonstrate their comprehension. No logical coherence to such answers was evident. Other students did not answer the questions asked. Given that the question was asked in both Italian and English, students should have understood what was expected of them.

Some responses were written with such poor grammar that understanding was severely hindered. Students must remember that their language skills are also being tested in this section. It is important that students read over the text provided a few times, keeping in mind the question that needs to be answered. Once again, all answers are to be based on the text; therefore, more care is needed in unpacking the text given and ensuring that dictionaries are used effectively.

Text 7

Criteria

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

Question 21

Any three of the following points:

- summer camp for the children of employees in the company's hotels
- preferential booking of the company's hotels for employees with families
- childcare facilities available for employees with families
- a small number of part-time jobs are reserved for employees with pre-schoolers.

Question 22

Any two of the following points:

- a change in working hours (8 am to 4 pm)
- use of company hotels for holidays
- overseas professional development course.



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. In all tasks, many careless grammatical errors were made. These included incorrect agreements, verb conjugations and auxiliary verbs, pronoun use, prepositions and adjectives. Spelling was also a cause for concern. Overall, students were not proficient with the use of tenses; the present tense was generally well handled, but knowledge of other tenses was lacking. Students need to be familiar with the linguistic requirements of this examination, and should be able to go beyond using only basic vocabulary and structures.

Question 23

Students were required to write an imaginative article for a youth magazine discussing their ideas of an ideal community. Those who attempted this question generally wrote well and were able to include five ideas for their community that were thoughtfully explained. Responses might have included a community that is 'welcoming', 'friendly', 'safe', 'supportive', 'environmentally aware' and has 'good infrastructure'. The text, an article, was usually appropriately structured, with very few students forgetting to include a title or the author's name.

Question 24

As a member of a local conservation group, students were required to write a letter to their cousin highlighting three of their thoughts and feelings about the native flora and fauna and at least two activities they had been actively involved in. Possible points that could have been used in responses included 'national treasure', 'ozone protection', 'natural equilibrium', 're-vegetation', 'lobbying authorities', 'animal counting', 'publicity', 'education', 'fund-raising', 'sponsorship', 'orphaned animals' and 'petitioning'. Once again, students who wrote on this topic covered the content well and were able to apply the conventions of an informal letter.

Question 25

This question was the most popular one in Section 3. Students were asked to promote themselves as the best candidate to represent Italy in a foreign exchange program, based on their knowledge of Italian style and good taste. The majority of students who attempted this question ignored the information asked for in the question and wrote about what they had studied at school. That is, they listed Italian foods, or discussed the fact that they studied Italian or knew about Italians without connecting the information to the question asked. They ignored the link to style and good taste. Possible points which could have been included in their answers included 'dress sense', 'eye for detail', 'refined tastes', 'sense of style in furniture', 'architecture', 'arts' etc. The text type, a persuasive letter to a selection panel, was not well handled. Many students did not demonstrate knowledge of the conventions of a formal letter and instead produced an informal letter.

Question 26

As a member of the Student Representative Council students were asked to write a public notice in which they were to inform students about changes that were to be implemented in their school. Possible changes could have included 'school hours', 'regulation of homework', 'facilities', 'rules', 'amenities' and 'student involvement'. Once again, those who chose to answer this question managed to include relevant changes and were able to elaborate on most of them. The text, a public notice, was also reasonably well handled.

Question 27

Students were asked to write a film review for a local paper that evaluated the reasons why a particular film would not be suitable for children under the age of 15. Most students who attempted this question managed to include and explain their reasons; however, some re-told the story of the film rather than addressing the issue of why it did not suit minors. Responses to this question might have included 'violence', 'language', 'content', 'music', 'acting style', 'story line' and 'age of film'. The structure of the review was generally accurate and appropriate.