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Examiners' Report

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AS Unit 1 : Listening and Writing

Candidates are required to listen to authentic recorded target-language material, to retrieve and convey information by responding to a range of mainly target-language questions and by producing a guided summary in English. They are also required to provide personal responses in the target language.

Assessment principles

Up to 26 marks are awarded positively for correct information retrieved and conveyed in response to target-language questions (questions 1,2, 3 and 4). The quality of language is not relevant unless it impede communication.

Up to 4 marks are awarded for content and 4 for quality of language for each of the two personal responses to questions 5 (a) and (b) according to the relevant grids, for a maximum total of 16 marks.

Up to 8 marks are awarded positively for a guided summary in English showing the ability to understand the gist and details, infer ideas, select information, transfer it and communicate it concisely. No marks are awarded in this section for answers totally or partially in Italian.

Candidates' responses

Candidates were not aware that their paper would have been electronically marked, therefore did not make any effort to write their answers in the allocated spaces. Tidy presentation is always recommended but they should be made aware that untidy writing is even more difficult to read in scanned form.

Candidates showed understanding of the requirements of this unit and performed generally well. As intended, questions 1 and 2 proved to be accessible to the majority of the candidature, with most candidates scoring well over half of the marks available. Questions 4 and 5 produced a wider range of performance, allowing to differentiate between candidates. The difference would have been even greater if we awarded marks only for answers in correct Italian rather than using comprehensibility by a sympathetic native speaker as a parameter. Candidates scored higher on question 6 this year than they did in previous years. On the overall paper this is balanced by a greater difficulty encountered with question 3, making the general standard comparable to previous years'.

Questions 1 and 2 were clerically marked, therefore the comments are derived only from the PE's allocation of about 100 items

Question 1 (Select the 4 correct statements)

The passage, a short item on "edicole", appears to have been generally well understood and most candidates provided at least three correct answers.

Question 2 (gap filling, with numbers)

This was based on an article about Valentino Rossi. The expected answers were one or two digit numbers, the millions having been given in the text to be completed. Some candidates went over the top and wrote the six noughts as well. For this there was no penalisation unless the wrong number of noughts was entered, or the word *mille* rather than *milioni*. Apart from this and the odd instances of confusion between 60 and 70, this was answered correctly by most candidates.

Question 3 (gap filling, with words from the text)

This is based on the same passage as question 2. This question proved to be more challenging than it was intended to be. Only the very top candidates were able to identify *spot* as the word to place in front of *pubblicitari* and went instead for the word *aziende*, which was the nearest word to *pubblicitari* in the text. *Televisivi*, *cresciute*, and *abbigliamento* were often wrongly spelt and a degree of unequivocal approximation was accepted. There was a last-minute decision to accept *scooter* as an alternative to *portachiavi* or *bandane*, given the high incidence of such responses, which after all could be a plausible answer for 3d.

Question 4 (target language questions and answers)

The passage was about tourists behaving badly. Able candidates provided excellent responses. Weaker candidates showed difficulty in selecting and handling information. Questions (d), (f) and (h) were answered correctly by the majority of candidates. Most candidates scored at least one point in q (a) though a disappointing number of answers were a rough approximation (e.g. *lascono le tine di birra*, *paquetti di cigarette* and the like), which, with the benefit of hindsight, should perhaps not have been credited. Stricter marking with an adjustment to the grade boundaries might not make a lot of difference in term of grades, but would rightly reward, at least in term of marks, those who prove to be able to spell correctly. Likewise *hanno metto*, *i mane* and *le vetre* were all too common on the part of the candidates who managed to answer the second part of the question. Question (e) was reasonably well answered, on the whole. Although "*a mollo*" was generally poorly transcribed, most candidates seemed to have got the right idea of what it meant. For question (g) the same could be said as for question (a). The marking may have been excessively lenient in accepting rough approximations of *muretto*, the correct version of which was really a bonus. The final comment "*Pranzano proprio*" has often been misinterpreted. Candidates who answered "*non pranzano proprio*" obviously took it to mean that the tourists were not eating properly and they met the woman's disapproval as they should be eating in a cafe or restaurant. This misunderstanding was then evident in question 5 where they stated that a responsible tourist should eat inside. Question (i) was answered well by stronger candidates.

Questions 5 (a) and (b) (personal response)

There were a few very good answers to both questions. This year there were fewer instances of massive crossing out of redundant sections in order to keep responses within the word limit. Short answers, on the other hand, were more frequent than in the past.

Question 5 (a):

Although most candidates understood the requirements of the task, the answers were on the whole rather dull and consisted mainly on lifting from the text with very little personal contribution both in terms of language and contents. Among the more "personal" responses, many were not specific enough, hardly referring to the stimulus, but commenting on an ideal universal tourist who must show respect and treat the foreign country as they would their own. The wording of the question encouraged the use of the conditional construction, thus limiting variety at some extent, but candidates could obviously not be penalised for this.

Question 5 (b)

Some good answers provided a balanced argument, putting the behaviour in context, referring to the consequences of such behaviour and their bearing on their own point of view. However, many candidates were again not specific enough and did not refer to any type of behaviour or didn't state their point of view or didn't substantiate it. Thus, many lacklustre responses and lifting, eg. *i comportamenti descritti nel brano siano terribile*. The subjunctive was often (as in the previous example) misused (also - *secondo me, sia...*) or not used when it should have been or badly conjugated. There were many instances of a lack of infinitive in modal constructions, eg. *dovrebbe rispetto*. *Piacere* was often used incorrectly; repetition of reflexive pronoun, *non si dovrebbe comportarsi*. There were lots of lexical problems apart from the ones mentioned in 4:

regoli fondamentale, sporci, domenticare, rispettare, non è basta, disrispettoso, invalutabile, traciare (to trash) showing no real attempt to paraphrase.

A general point common to 5a and 5b: A considerable number of candidates fell well below the word count, even in sound responses.

Question 6 (guided English summary)

The trend of moving away from its intended purpose of being a guided English summary was even stronger this year, possibly because some of bullet points lent themselves to be answered in very few words. Consequently, word count was not, for once, the main obstacle to gaining full credit. Although a number of candidates still managed to use up the 60 words before they got to box (d), more marks were lost there for wrong answers rather than word count. Only the stronger candidates were able to make the link between luxury goods and higher prices, whereas there was much mention of having to import ingredients or of the effects of the introduction of euro. Boc a,b and c were answered correctly by most candidates

As usual, a handful of candidates answered this question in Italian, this losing any credit.

Advice and Guidance

It was pleasing to note that candidates appeared to be generally better trained for the exam, but there is of course no room for complacency. Questions requiring inference remain a problem for a large number of candidates and there is obviously a need for more training. Personal responses (questions 5 a and b) appear on the whole to be more concise, at times too concise, but the need remains to read and understand the question properly. Question 6 this year did not allow much redundant information, but candidates should be made aware of the need to be selective as any irrelevant information included may cause relevant information to be supplied beyond the word limit and therefore not credited. .

Unit 2 - Reading and Writing

In this paper candidates are required to read authentic texts in Italian and to retrieve and convey information given in the texts by responding to a range of question types mainly in Italian. Candidates are also required to write 140-160 words in Italian based on a short printed stimulus and a list of 4 bullet points in the target language. The paper this year consisted of five texts of varying lengths. Reading tasks were set on the first four passages and in the final task candidates were required to write a letter in Italian in response to a few extracts from a newspaper article.

The paper produced a good range of marks and it is pleasing to be able to report that a good number of candidates scored 60+, which is a very good performance on a paper than requires candidates to perform a variety of tasks.

Assessment Principles

Candidates were awarded marks for Q1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 as shown in the Mark Scheme. If certain details are underlined in the Mark Scheme then these formed an essential part of an answer. The quality of the Italian in the answers to Q4 is not assessed as the marks are allocated for the correct content, unless of course the quality of the Italian is so poor as to render an answer incomprehensible. This was often the case with the very weak candidates. It was encouraging to note that most candidates now realise that they are not allowed to copy their answers verbatim from the text and they made every effort to respect the instruction in the rubric to this question. Inevitably it is usually the weaker candidates who lack the linguistic skill to do other than copy. In answer to question 4(a) *si sente imbarazzante* was a fairly frequent response to the first part of the question where *si sente* was part of the question itself and *imbarazzante* was copied from the text. An indication of how little on occasions a candidate has to change is the answer to the second part of this question, where *non sa come affrontare una situazione imbarazzante* was perfectly acceptable. It simply required the candidate to change *so* to *sa*. A small percentage of candidates wrote mini-essays in response to some questions, 4(h) being a case in point. The answers to most questions are quite brief. It is worth reminding candidates that they are not expected to find synonyms for every word but they are expected to re-phrase some part of the original text. The written task, Q6, was marked for Content (20 marks) and Quality of Language (20 marks). There are still candidates who put their own interpretation on *Devi scrivere fra 140 e 160 parole in italiano* and seem to write *fra 1400 e 1600 parole*. Unfortunately for these candidates their efforts go unrewarded. In fact they often end up by being penalised quite heavily under Content, as within the 160 word limit only one bullet point has usually been addressed. The message is the same as it ever was. Respect the rubric.

Candidates' Responses

The first three exercises are intended to be a 'gentle introduction' to this paper and, in the main, the results bore this out. The very good candidates often scored the maximum 18 marks. The less able also coped quite well. Those who performed poorly in these initial exercises usually struggled with the remainder of the exam, given that the level of difficulty increases in Q4 and Q5. Unless someone fails to answer Q6 then it is extremely unlikely that a candidate does not gain some credit for both Content and Language. Having said this, Q6 certainly discriminates between those candidates who respond appropriately and fairly accurately to the bullet points and others whose level of accuracy is such that they are barely able to string a couple of words together accurately.

As already mentioned most candidates coped well with the first three questions. It was rare that a candidate got less than three out of four for question 1. Q2 should now be very familiar to those who have worked on past papers and it seemed that this year there were not many candidates who wrote out a chunk of the text instead of the one word required for every question except (e). (c), (d) and (g) were the questions that caused most problems. Q3 was generally very well done.

Q4 The questions were carefully devised to ensure that candidates could not just lift their answers verbatim but there are always some who manage to do so and pay the price. Perhaps the one question that left the gate open a little bit was (d) where candidates lifted *per la consegna delle chiavi*. This answer was given 0. The questions (a) to (e) were quite straightforward and (f) to (h) imposed a few more demands on the candidates.

For the first part to (a) a number of answers which expressed some kind of feeling or emotion were accepted e.g. *è preoccupata/imbarazzata/nervosa/infelice* and the second part of the answer required an appropriate reason such as *non sa cosa fare*. A common mistake that candidates made in their answer to (b) was to say that *la cugina presta la casa ogni anno* or *da alcuni anni/qualche anno*. This was factually incorrect. It is possible that these candidates did not fully understand the significance of *parecchi*. Many candidates avoided using *parecchi* in their answers, coming up with *da tanti/molti anni* instead. (c), (d) and (e) were overall very well answered. For (d) the occasional *per scambiare/ritornare le chiavi* cropped up, neither of which was acceptable. It did not augur well if a candidate failed to answer (e) correctly. It was fairly common to mention the fact about 'cleaning the flat' but this was usually followed by 'dà un regalo alla cugina'. However there was some confusion at times between Susanna and Luisa. When this did happen Susanna figured in a few of the other answers as well. In the answer to (f) it was essential to mention who the cousin intended to buy the skis for. They were not meant for Luisa of course nor Luisa's husband but the cousin's husband. One answer was perhaps a reflection of current society, *regalare il marito a Luisa*. Perhaps the candidate in question had been watching Wife Swap or even Husband Swap on the evening prior to the exam! The expected answer to (g) was something on the lines of *non potrebbe avere la casa (di Luisa)/andare alla casa di Luisa*. However, many candidates came up with a whole range of answers and if they adequately reflected the context of the passage they were of course accepted. For (h) it was again expected that candidates would say that Luisa was right not to talk about her idea with the cousin and then go on to say that *non ha ancora deciso* etc. A number of candidates took the opposite stance and provided that their answers were entirely convincing they were duly rewarded. In fact there were some excellent answers to this question, unexpected but excellent nevertheless. One candidate must have become tired of repeating the word *cugina* at this point and opted for *cucina* in its place. This goes to show that candidates cook up all sorts of answers.

Q5. This question gave ample opportunities to candidates across the ability range to gain some marks. However it was rather amazing how some candidates failed to understand basic words that should feature regularly in the GCSE programme of study. A classic case in point was the answer to (h) where *esperimenti di fisica* took on a new meaning 'physical experiences'. The spelling of 'physics' of course also took on a variety of forms, as did a number of other words e.g 'privalidge'. Poor communication in English inevitably led to a loss of marks where answers became incomprehensible. On a positive note there were many candidates who demonstrated a good understanding of the relevant details of the text and provided very good, clear answers.

Most candidates were able to obtain one of the two marks allotted to the first question. A common error in (b) was the failure to mention that there are more summer/school camps. Candidates said that there are camps that they can take their children to and this was insufficient to gain the mark. Some of the answers to (c) were interesting although incorrect, such as 'artistic stamps' and 'artistic stamping'. 'Naturalistic' also figured prominently. A number of candidates failed to understand the requirements of this question, the key word of which was to 'describe'. To gain full marks candidates had to refer to the arts and provide one example and then say that the other deals with nature and give one example. Candidates who wrote 'painting and dancing' scored 0 whereas those who gave one example from each category e.g. painting and making butter did get one mark. As regards question (d) the meaning of *centinaia* was often conveyed incorrectly - 'a hundred' or 'about a hundred'. The second part of the question was not easy and a fairly common answer was 'the number of camps has doubled' instead of 'the number of those attending has doubled'. For (e) 'efficient' was not enough to gain the mark. Candidates had to come up with 'very/highly/most efficient'. They should have recognised *-issimo* and have been aware of the difference in meaning when this is attached to the end of an adjective. Perhaps it can be put down to a lack of attention to detail! Questions (f) and (g) certainly served to discriminate between the more able and less able candidates. To answer (f) candidates had to understand the meaning of 'reddito' and not many did. Some of the most common answers to (f) were 'It is a school of science / They do scientific experiments / The offers are more scarce or a translation of *Ogni settimana ospita cento bambini divisi in gruppi di età*. For (h) candidates had a choice of three possible answers and they had to come up with two of them. However, only the first two answers were accepted. Thus if their response was ' They do scientific activities and build a camera or a microscope' no marks were awarded. An answer such as 'they did experiments with light/physics experiments and made a camera or microscope' was worth one mark. 'They can do experiments with the moon' was quite an innovative answer but gained no marks. The reference to 'physical experiences' has already been mentioned. Some candidates came up with 'obscure camera' or 'pinhole camera'. A small minority did know that *camera oscura* was in fact 'a dark room', a flash of inspiration if ever there was one. 'Camera obscura' was of course accepted.

Q6 A high percentage of the candidates now seem to realise the importance of answering this question within the stipulated number of words. (The appropriate letter format is not counted in the maximum 160 word limit). There were some really excellent answers to this question. It was good to see so many candidates who dealt with the four bullet points in the order in which they were presented, refrained from irrelevance and waffle, and scored very high marks under Content. Those who clearly expressed their opinion on the comments, gave an example of their personal experience of a punishment they had received and their reaction to this and then answered the final point appropriately gained full marks as long as for each point there was some development. Given the limited number of words available, an in-depth explanation is not expected nor required to answer a bullet point fully. A clear example of insufficient development is when a candidate, in answer to bullet point 3, writes *ero molto triste o non ero contento*. The best answers were those that included their reaction and also explained the positive or negative aspects of this experience. The top mark was also accessible to candidates whose quality of language was rather average but comprehensible. It was a pity that some very able candidates needlessly sacrificed a lot of the content marks by going way beyond the word limit and therefore covering one or two points at the most.

The content of the question did seem to appeal to the majority of candidates. Some did go off on the wrong track, as they seemed to latch on to *la vecchia scuola* to write about school life. However, the points expressed might still have had some relevance to the question and would have been given due consideration.

As far as Quality of Language is concerned the outcome was much as expected. There were some excellent candidates who displayed a good range of structures and vocabulary and made very few errors. A written task that has just a few errors can be awarded maximum marks and there were candidates who reached this pinnacle. The middle-of-the road candidates tended to use a limited number of tenses and structures and the variety of vocabulary was lacking. The very weak candidates had very little inkling of the basic rudiments of the language. At this level you would expect any candidate to be able to write a simple sentence with a certain degree of accuracy. This is a brief sample of some of the delights that were on offer:

- *Gentile Radiatore* (nothing to get steamed up about I suppose)
- *dobbia/dobbiano* (from the verb *dovere*)
- *puniziare*
- *improvare*
- *stritta* (a rendering of 'strict')
- *bambiani* (formerly *bambini*)
- *improvare*
- *rimangito* (= *rimasto*)
- *la pranza* (formerly *il pranzo*)

Many of the structures that the weaker candidates attempted to use were rather anglicised. Other weaknesses included: adjectival agreement; incorrect endings of regular verbs in the present, future and conditional; incorrect use of the definite and indefinite articles; incorrect use of the auxiliary with frequently used verbs e.g. *ho andato*.

Advice and Guidance

The advice and guidance is no different from that suggested in previous reports. As regards the rubric for each question, it seems that this year the majority of candidates complied with all the necessary instructions. It is always worth reminding candidates of the need to answer the final written task within the word limit as failure to do so can result in a lot of marks for Content being needlessly lost. It is always a good idea to draw candidates' attention at frequent intervals to the various strategies that can be employed to guess the meaning of Italian words, of particular importance for questions 4 and 5. In this year's paper candidates should have been able to guess for example *esperimenti*, *microscopio* to mention but a few. In order to develop a good range of vocabulary candidates need to be exposed to a variety of texts and have ample practice in different exercise types to be able to deal competently with the first three questions. All candidates require a good deal of classroom practice in re-phrasing and manipulating the language of the original text to be able to cope adequately with Q4. For Q5, spelling and the inability to communicate answers in English will remain a problem if candidates do not spend sufficient time reading in their native language. It is not an easy task to find the most appropriate expression in your own language to convey the meaning of a phrase or expression in a foreign language. It would at least be useful if teachers concentrated on parts of a text they are using in class and got their students to express the meaning of certain expressions in English. Training in time-management and reading techniques such as skimming and scanning should also form an integral part of exam preparation. Candidates should always be reminded of the fact that 50% of the marks for this Unit are allocated to the Writing Task (Q6). They would be well advised to devote an appropriate amount of their time to this activity and ensure that it is well planned so that all the bullet points are dealt with appropriately. All candidates need regular practice in the art of getting the essential parts of the message across in a concise way. In a Writing task that imposes a maximum word limit of 160 words there is no place for irrelevant passages.

Unit 3 - Prepared Oral Topic

Candidates are required to prepare a topic dealing with an aspect of Italian society or culture or of an Italian speaking community. They are expected to research their chosen topic and undertake extended reading from a variety of sources. They may freely choose the topic in consultation with their teacher but research and development should be personal. In advance of the examination they must complete the oral form with the topic title and 5-10 headings (in Italian): the form is used for reference during the test both by candidates and by the Examiner.

The Unit 3 oral test is devoted entirely to the prepared oral topic. Candidates must first present the topic for up to 2 minutes, then they must provide information and opinions on the topic in discussion with the examiner and thereby demonstrate **knowledge and understanding (K/U)** of an aspect of Italian society, Italian culture or of an Italian speaking community. Examiners are expected to test candidates on their ability to engage in a conversation that goes beyond the target-language headings but remains within the chosen topic area.

Candidates' Responses

There was a wide range of wisely chosen topics, which produced excellent performances. Even when the level of language is not particularly high, it is still pleasing to listen to candidates who have thoroughly prepared their chosen topic and are able to present a good range of pertinent facts, have the ability to analyse them in an interesting way and in so doing expressed their opinions in a spontaneous discussion. Some candidates demonstrated up-to-date knowledge of Italian politics (with *Berlusconi* topping the list, but there were also instances of interesting analyses of the recent general election). Literary subjects are becoming increasingly popular and the range of films studied has widened to include more recent ones.

The importance of spontaneity must be yet again. Apart from the stage-managed performances, which make a mockery of the exam, there are still some candidates and their examiners who are unable to draw a line between preparing a topic and rehearsing the exam. This is often done in complete good faith but lack of spontaneity limits severely the marks for response and the repetition of language often far above the candidate's real level of competence can only result in very poor levels of accuracy.

There was a welcome drop in the number of candidates choosing *la cucina italiana* or *la dieta mediterranea* for the wrong reason, and those who did dealt with these topics more appropriately.

Again, a word of warning for topics like *I giovani in Italia*, *La donna in Italia*, *I cambiamenti nella famiglia italiana* and the like: they are perfectly acceptable topics for unit 3, but all too often candidates tend to produce sweeping generalisation and irrelevant material unless the topic is solidly rooted in the Italian context. When a candidate fails to do that, it is up to the TE to encourage as much reference as possible to the Italian context during the discussion in order to salvage the exam.

Fewer candidates made the mistake of choosing to base their discussions on comparison between the situation in Italy and UK with respect to a particular topic but, regrettably, some TE insisted on eliciting it during the discussion.

Unfortunately, a handful of candidates failed to relate the topic of their choice to the Italian context and scored zero.

Performances in terms of linguistic criteria did not differ from the previous exam series: the range was wide and well distributed, from very good performances - not infrequently above specification requirements - to moderate but still commendable extension of linguistic skills from GCSE. Control over agreements, gender and often over verb endings remains a problem even with otherwise able candidates and errors in word stress remain frequent. The range of lexis was often good or even very good, but structures were often limited and repetitive, with a large number of candidates not attempting any subordinate clauses. In the case of scripted material, structures were often too complex for the candidates' ability and resulted into farcically flawed regurgitation.

Teacher Examiners (TE)

The exams were generally better conducted and most 'old' examiners appear to have taken on board the recommendation made on previous years' oral forms. However, some still insist on eliciting regurgitation of pre-learned material, testing specific knowledge rather than encouraging discussion, excessive TE contribution, failing to introduce unpredictable questions, eliciting excessive comparison with UK situation, keeping the discussion within the level of factual knowledge. Some new examiners proved to have prepared conscientiously for their task and were able to elicit the best performance from each of their candidates whilst others need to pay more attention to the exam format. There are still examiner's that do not appreciate the difference between discussion and chat and often ask questions eliciting totally irrelevant material. Pre-arranged "unpredictable" questions do not gain any credit and the only effect they are likely to produce is vexing the marker who, quite rightly, does not like to be made a fool of. Another counterproductive technique is deflecting the discussion at the candidate's slightest hesitation: not being given the opportunity to respond is certainly not in the candidate's best interest.

Administration

It was pleasing to note that misuse of oral forms was less frequent this year, but those who insisted on using them as a prompt should be aware of the adverse effects. No credit can be given for information that may have been just read. When prompts are written instead of headings (e.g. *Il 25% dei giovani italiani....; nonostante tutto ciò...; Il governo dovrebbe....*) no indication is given of how the topic has been developed. This makes it difficult to identify the unpredictable elements and it is a clear giveaway of the not spontaneous nature of the discussion. In fact, no examiner would be able to develop a spontaneous discussion on the basis of headings like the above.

There were still problems with the timing. (one particular examiner examined her candidates for anything between 7 and 18 minutes). It must be reiterated that candidates are not likely to gain anything from a longer exam. If they are able they can demonstrate their ability in the time given. If they are not so able, they are more likely to show their weaker points as the exam goes on. Shorter exams are self-penalising because they do not offer opportunity to show the required amount of K/U and the ability to sustain response and quality of language.

Finally would all Centres please ensure that the recording equipment is in good order so that recordings can be made that are of good quality. It is extremely difficult, nigh impossible at times, to try and assess the accuracy of the language used by the candidate when one has to struggle with grinding noise or loud hissing or when the candidate is barely audible. Sympathy for the candidate has to be balanced with fairness and it is not always fair to give the benefit of the doubt.

This year some exams could not be marked and others could not be given full credit because of bad recording. It is recommended that the quality of recording is checked at the end of each exam.

Advice and guidance

Advice and guidance can be derived from the comments made in the reports. In particular:

Candidates should chose a topic of personal interest, making sure that

- it is related to the culture and/or society of Italy or an Italian speaking community.
- they have enough material to acquire all relevant knowledge
- it does not only involve factual knowledge but lends itself to analysis, evaluation and opinion.
- it allows them to demonstrate their full potential

Candidates should plan and prepare their two-minute presentation carefully and be ready to discuss the topic thereafter.

Teacher examiners should elicit discussion and not test for knowledge only.

Not all the subheadings need to be discussed, but the bulk of the exam is to be based on them

Refrain from eliciting anecdotal material, which gains little credit, or engaging candidates in extensive comparison with UK situation.

Make sure that the topic is unambiguously focused on Italian context, and steer the candidate towards it when he/she strays away.

Ask a few, genuinely unpredictable questions related to the chosen topic.

Even when a candidate is hesitant, give him/her a chance to respond. When a response is not appropriate do not just pretend it is and carry on. It may be more in the candidate's interest for the examiner to rephrase a question and give the candidate the opportunity to answer to the point

For further advice and guidance please see also Unit 4 report.

Unit 4 - Oral Discussion of Issues

Candidates are required to choose and prepare an issue on which they must adopt a stance. In advance of the examination they must complete the oral form with a brief statement, in Italian, of their issue and the stance adopted.

The test begins with the candidate outlining his/her stance for about a minute. The examiner then challenges it and the candidate must defend it in discussion for 3-4 minutes.

For the remaining 9-10 minutes the examiner conducts a free-ranging discussion, **moving away from the chosen issue onto unpredictable areas.**

Candidates are expected to express and justify opinions, argue a case, discuss problems or current controversies etc. **as these arise naturally in spontaneous conversation.**

This test is assessed positively using the revised grid: **Quality of Language 20 marks (10 for Accuracy and 10 for Range), Response 20 marks, Issue 5 marks, Justification and Debate 15 marks.**

Candidates' Responses

It would be inappropriate not to acknowledge the number well conducted exams, allowing candidates to perform freely and spontaneously. Most students seemed genuinely interested in their chosen issue and were motivated to discuss it intelligently. Similarly, most teacher examiners were excellent in opposing the candidates' views and eliciting good debate. Alongside some well-worn issues, which may not offer scope for much originality, there were some fresher ones, like Mohammad's cartoons, the Italian involvement in Iraq, climate changes, the importance of keeping dialects alive, globalisation, self-defence and many more.

However, in order to improve future performances, emphasis must be placed on the possible errors than limit the candidates' success with this unit.

Many candidates do not seem to appreciate that an "issue" has controversial elements which help to create meaningful debate as opposing views clash. *"La storia della chiesa cattolica"*, *"Il pontificato di Giovanni Paolo II"*, *"La scena Metal in Italia"* *"Roma, la capitale d'Italia"* are not in themselves issues, nor are "Mafia" or "Immigrazione" if they are dealt with purely in terms of informative account.

A clear stance is essential for meaningful debate to be developed. When there is not a clear position to outline, a candidate is likely to trot out some facts, possibly demonstrating some degree of knowledge but not necessary the grasp of the issue. On the other hand, even an interest in the late Pope could be easily channelled into a useful Unit 4 issue if a clear stance is taken. A stance like *"Il Pontificato di Giovanni Paolo II ha impedito al mondo cattolico di restare al passo con i tempi"* would enable the TE to prepare counterarguments and elicit the expected level of debate and would rule out any irrelevant biographical information.

From the language point of view, there were a number of excellent performances from students (not necessarily native speakers) whose level of language allowed them to display excellent debating skills and to cope coped admirably with unpredictable questions and displayed excellent debating skills. At the other end of the range, a small number of candidates were obviously out of their depth at this level: they lacked the necessary vocabulary and structures to produce any meaningful debate.

The degree of accuracy, as one would expect, was better than for unit 3 but control over agreements, gender and verb endings remains a problem also at this level.

Teacher Examiners (TE)

Candidates' success in Unit 4 is even more reliant on a good conduct of exam than Unit 3 and, unfortunately, too great a number of candidates only have their teachers to thank for their poor performances.

Whilst thanking the many examiners who were very good in conducting the exams and managed to bring out the best from their candidates, I would like to highlight examples of less successful conduct for the benefit of the (not so small) minority of TE who are in need of improving their skills.

The title itself states that this exam is an Oral Discussion of Issues. The candidate's stance on the issue should be clearly stated on the oral form and TE, who get sight of the oral form before undertaking the conduct of the oral, should remind candidates if they have failed to indicate their stance. Once the TE is aware of the stance he/she should prepare valid counterarguments.

The debate commences after the candidate has been allowed about 1 minute to outline his/her position.

The debate should last for about 4 minutes. For the debate to be interesting, the counterarguments must be well focused. The all too frequent "*Cosa ne pensi? Sei a favore o contro?*" (often even when the position is clearly stated in the form) is likely to produce nothing more than a wishy-washy debate.

After about 5 minutes the teacher-examiner should initiate a **spontaneous** discussion in which a minimum of two further issues are covered. Correct timing is of the essence. The chosen issue serves as a springboard for further, unpredictable issues. If excessive time is spent on the chosen issue the candidate will not be able to demonstrate his/her ability to discuss unpredictable issues. If a teacher-examiner covers just one issue then the mark for justification and debate is drastically reduced.

Although TE are not required to take the opposite view from the candidate's in the unpredictable issues, the exam is still about justification and debate, which is certainly not elicited by inputs like "*Adesso cambiamo argomento. Che cosa sai su.....?*" The role of the examiner is not to ask questions to elicit factual information. The candidate might well refer to some factual information, which however is only rewarded in so far as it helps to support and justify a point of view.

It should be remembered that the issues discussed after the one selected by the candidate are supposed to arise spontaneously. This means that the candidates are not informed beforehand or rehearsed to the point of nausea. If able candidates are trained regularly in the art of debate and discussion, they will almost certainly do well anyway and run less of a risk of being penalised for lack of spontaneity. By contrast, a few TE were stuck for issues to discuss and there were some awkward silences.

More successful examiners introduced current issues, which worked well because candidates could respond spontaneously, without searching their memory for the right chunk of pre-learnt material.

Some TE made the mistake of introducing too many issues without allowing any in-depth discussion. It is perfectly acceptable to move on if a candidate is really floundering and might handle another issue better, but a string of issues only just touched upon is not likely to show the candidate's ability to sustain the debate.

Some TE seem to believe that after the debate of the initial issue the exam can be turned into a cosy chat and even state the fact "*Adesso passiamo alla seconda parte dove possiamo parlare in maniera più rilassata*". This generally means that the debate is over and two thirds of the exam are spent on irrelevant material.

For the comments on admin, timing and quality of recording, please refer to the relevant section of Unit 3 report.

Advice and Guidance

Advice and guidance can be derived from the comments made in the reports. In particular:

The issue must be clearly stated and a stance taken.

Teacher's examiners should

- make sure that the issue is clearly stated and a stance is taken;
- prepare challenging counter-arguments so that a high level of justification and debate can be elicited;
- debate the chosen issue for the time required, but no longer;
- Introduce further issues, without undue concern about exposing their students to genuinely unpredictable questions. Well trained candidates cope with genuinely unpredictable questions extremely well and gain credit for it;
- exploit all the potential of subsequent issues before moving on to another one, but make sure that at least two further issues are introduced;
- refrain from being too confrontational;
- keep the debate going;
- remember that eliciting knowledge or involving candidates in chatting about personal experiences is a waste of time and opportunity.

Candidates should be made aware of the following:

- There is a clear distinction between the Unit 3 **topic** and the unit 4/1 **issue**;
- It is very important to select an issue that is of genuine personal interest;
- they must adopt a stance, clearly state it on their Module 4/1 and be ready to defend it;
- after approximately 4 minutes they will be engaged in a free-ranging discussion of further, unpredictable issues for the remaining 9-10 minutes.

Unit 5 - Topics and Texts

Assessment Principles

All answers were marked according to the mark grids in the syllabus and each was read once for language and once for content. The mark grids make it clear that five essential aspects of the work are being evaluated:

- knowledge of the text and/or topic
- the ability to use and analyse that knowledge
- coherent and persuasive organisation of material
- logical sequencing and development of ideas
- accuracy and sophistication of written Italian

Candidates' Responses

With this being the first year in which all A2 candidates sat this paper (the coursework option having been removed), a greater breadth in the quality of candidates' responses was anticipated, and indeed this proved largely to be the case. There were more limited or very limited responses than in the previous two or three years, as well as more responses in which the candidate failed to address the question set. Having said that, there was also a significant number of excellent responses showing the ability to analyse in depth. Many candidates wrote substantially over the minimum of 250 words, and most candidates proved to be comfortable answering in Italian.

Candidates are reminded of the importance of indicating clearly on the front of their scripts which questions they have attempted. Moreover, they should check that the answer they write matches the question number - there were, once again, quite a few instances this year of candidates writing, say, 7(b) but actually answering 7(a).

Candidates were as keen as ever this year to quote from the texts they had studied. Although in some cases these were correctly transcribed and relevantly used, there were many examples of candidates misquoting. Quotation is not seen as a necessary element of a successful answer on this paper. Use of example to substantiate the points made is necessary and desirable, but this need not mean quoting from the text directly. Moreover, candidates are advised to be sure that the names (and spellings) of characters or places to which they want to refer in their answers have been learned reliably - there were many instances this year once again of candidates misspelling the names of characters or texts, which does not create the best impression!

Although word limit is only a guide, some candidates who exceeded it excessively tended to produce essays that 'went off the boil' by including irrelevant information that went beyond the parameters of the question. On the other hand, those that wrote too little obviously penalised themselves by not providing enough evidence of knowledge and understanding.

Candidates' ability to plan and structure their essays was increasingly evident this year. There were still some candidates, however, who had not planned their answers before writing them, with the result that the organisation of their essays was often illogical or rambling, and the development of ideas often patchy or unambitious.

There was a slight increase in the popularity of the *Italia anni 2000* topic this year, perhaps a consequence of the move over from coursework by a large number of centres. Q1(a) was the more popular choice. Answers on the whole were disappointing as the majority of candidates failed to understand the scope of the question and very few actually touched upon social problems and the role that the church plays in addressing these issues. Many simply used this as an invitation to talk about the history of the church. More successful attempts focused on the links with politics and policy making, citing the recent referendum on stem cell research as an example. Candidates tackling Q1(b) tended to be more successful. There were some very good answers which looked in detail at specific reforms such as the Moratti Law and devolution and evaluated their impact on Italian society. Less successful answers were mainly narrative and charted Berlusconi's success as a businessman, without focusing on the most important moments of his political career. Many cited reasons for his success as being a 'man of the people', promising what electors wanted to hear, use of his mass media empire etc. Better candidates identified both positive and negative impacts: positive - bringing stability to government, raising international status of Italy; negative - accusations of corruption, embarrassing gaffes and failure to fulfil promises.

There were very few answers on the *Risorgimento* this year, and even fewer successful ones.

The region continues to be a hugely popular topic, providing a broad range of ability and some very weak answers. Q3(a) proved more popular than Q3(b). In response to the first part of the question about the main physical characteristics of the region, most candidates cited plains, rivers, lakes, the coast, hills, and mountains, but also climate. Unfortunately, some candidates seemed happy to talk about cities, art history or industry without obvious link to the region's physical characteristics. The main economic benefits were perceived to be agriculture (allowing export), fishing, energy (especially hydro-electric), and particularly tourism: some said tourism was both an advantage and a disadvantage. The effect of the region's physical features on the development of road and rail links was also touched on by some candidates. Most agreed these characteristics were beneficial to the region's economy. In response to Q3(b), there were some extremely detailed and knowledgeable descriptions of buildings themselves that wouldn't have looked out of place in a guide book, but very few candidates were able to explain how these buildings were protected or evaluate how successfully they were protected. Unfortunately, most candidates only dedicated a sentence or two to whether or not the expense was justified. The most popular buildings mentioned were il Colosseo, il Forum, la Scala, il Duomo di Milano, La Galleria Vittorio Emanuele.

The mafia continues to be a popular topic, although many candidates who study it seem to struggle to provide enough relevant detail or analysis in their answers to score very highly. Having said that, there were some good answers this year in response to Q4(a). These were able to identify the Ndrangheta as the Calabrese mafia, and show that its areas of interest were the traffic of drugs and arms, money laundering, protection rackets etc. The most commonly cited difference from the other criminal organisations was that members are tied by blood in general so there is less chance of *pentiti*; this makes it more difficult for the government to combat. Candidates also mentioned the horizontal rather than vertical structure. In response to the second half of the question, most agreed that government success has been limited. Slightly fewer candidates attempted Q4(b), and the quality of their responses was more uneven. More successful answers were able to argue that after the killings of Falcone and Borsellino, the mafia was more 'visible' and publicly defied than ever; this led them to take a lower profile, trying to change their structure (revealed by *pentiti*) and build economic strength through links with business and politics. Most candidates thought it weaker, especially due to its higher profile and changing public opinion; some worried that it would return stronger, arguing it has had to adapt to survive in the past.

The Fascist-era texts continue to be a popular option despite the volume of reading to be done, and many candidates this year demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of the texts they had studied. In response to Q5(a), there were some good essays on the psychological impact of fascism on the characters. The points made depended on the texts studied, but some more able candidates demonstrated that although fascism was very much a background theme in the texts, its impact is felt by the characters. Some argued that life under fascism gave the characters opportunities or insights they wouldn't otherwise have had, and hence it was a good thing. Rather less popular was Q5(b), where there were also some fairly successful answers on the whole. Most candidates came to the conclusion that the texts were a mixture of fact and fiction and could be interpreted as both literary texts and historical documents. Better candidates considered *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* and *Il giardino dei Finzi Contini* as being the most worthy of being called historical documents as both contain elements of fiction set against a backdrop of historical events.

Once again, Q6 produced some very good answers, suggesting candidates continue to enjoy this story in its two versions. In response to Q6(a), the main characteristics of this society were thought to be fear of the police state, violence, censorship, anti-semitism etc. Most thought these came across better in the film, with the benefit of images etc but also because of directorial 'additions'; some argued that the book was more obviously concerned with Pereira's evolution, the film with the historical background. Q6(b) was a little more popular, and equally well done. Many examples of the presence of death were offered: Pereira's dead wife, his fear of his own death and reflections on the resurrection of the flesh, his job writing *necrologie*, his interest in Monteiro Rossi's article on death, various deaths in the story, including Monteiro's own etc. There were some good answers to the 2nd half of the question - some argued that the presence of death draws attention to Pereira's journey away from death and towards life.

NB This topic is being replaced in the 2007 paper.

The Cardella text proved to be very popular once again this year, and once again it elicited some weak (predominantly factual) answers. However, the examiners were also pleased to note an improved ability on the part of the candidates choosing this text to analyse rather than simply retelling the story. For once, both questions were reasonably popular. In response to Q7(a), the better candidates were able to list key differences between the two girls and recount important episodes from their relationship - how they met, the visit to Angelina's house etc; answers were less impressive on the whole on the importance of this relationship for Annetta: some were able to demonstrate that this is an uneven relationship, that Annetta needs it more, but there was not much analysis of what Angelina gets from it. There was some consensus that Annetta learns that there are different roles for women in society apart from the one imposed on her, and that this helps in her quest for liberty and the *pantaloni*.

Some of the candidates who attempted Q7(b) were not able to identify convincingly the role of the family, and restricted themselves to brief portraits of the members of Annetta's family. Most candidates agreed that the family had a negative influence on Annetta - preventing her from realising her dreams, abusing her physically and mentally, failing to offer love and support etc. More able candidates saw the family as a way of maintaining a social status quo that suited the men.

There were virtually no responses on the Celati text this year.
NB This text is being replaced in the 2007 paper.

There were rather fewer answers on Dante this year, with the majority of candidates choosing Q9(a). Candidates agreed that horror could be found in the landscapes, the *contrappassi* and the infernal guards. This horror was felt to be used to terrify the reader, to keep us on the right moral path, to expand the role of Virgil as Dante *personaggio's* guardian, to highlight the difference between Dante *autore* and Dante *personaggio*, and as evidence of divine justice. Q9(b) led to some excellent answers. Natural phenomena listed included wind, fire, rain, landscape, plants and animals. Many candidates agreed that these natural features make hell more accessible to readers, but Dante transforms them into unnatural elements eg rain of fire, which adds to the horror.

There were a few essays on the Fo text this year, almost all of them of a high standard. In response to Q10(a), various characteristics of Fo's language were mentioned: *grammelot* and dialectical language, comic language, rude or grotesque language etc. The effects of this language were various: it links Fo to the medieval *giullare*, allows him to relate to his audience more effectively, and provides entertainment and humour to facilitate the communication of his political and social message. In response to Q10(b), the most commonly mentioned episodes of violence were *Rosa Fresca Aulentissima*, *Nascita del Giullare*, and *Strage degli innocenti*. Some candidates were able to point out that different kinds of violence - comic, tragic etc - were used for different ends; most mentioned that including these violent episodes helped Fo draw attention to the injustice, brutality or hypocrisy of the *classe dominante*.

Once again, the Ginzburg text proved quite popular, although the quality of the answers seemed a little more uneven this year. Q11(a) proved the more popular, but many who did this question restricted themselves to short pen portraits of the female characters without considering the broader question. The main preoccupations and ambitions of these female characters were perceived to be a good marriage for themselves or their daughter (Elsa's mother), a secure financial future, social acceptance, and an interest in the business of others. With very few if any exceptions, life doesn't seem to give them what they are looking for, perhaps because these ambitions are too selfish and vain to start with.

Answers to Q11(b) were more successful on the whole. Many candidates agreed that the war is a dividing line between the golden era and the post-war depression that affected many families. Relationships are affected by consequent changes in the personality of the characters, time spent apart, feeling weighed down by the past, lack of *carica vitale* etc.

The Moravia text continues to be popular, and continues to attract some impressive responses, although this was another text where the quality was a little more uneven this year. The majority of candidates chose Q12(a), and almost all candidates used the examples of Luca's discovery of his parents' safe behind the sacred picture and his decision to bury his money in the park after selling off all his possessions. There was some successful analysis of his relationship with money and material possessions - they tie him to a world he doesn't want to be a part of, they symbolise his parents' lack of genuine affection for him etc. Some candidates thought money was the cause of all the evils on the society, but many mentioned other things, particularly his parents' lack of affection and his own adolescent instinct for self-destruction. Q12(b) was slightly less well done, with very few candidates successfully addressing the symbolism of emerging from the tunnel as going from dark into light, emerging from illness and going towards being healthy, calm and healed.

Once again, Pirandello proved hugely popular this year, and here too the standard was generally high. Q13(a) was marginally the more popular of the two questions. The main elements of the character of the *Madre* that were mentioned were her pain, sadness etc. There was some good analysis of her role in the piece: the only one who doesn't recognise a reality outside that of their tragedy, the character who makes the story tragic, and who binds together the other characters, a vehicle for Pirandello's philosophy about lack of communication and the multiplicity of identity etc. In response to Q13(b), there were some interesting and inventive answers showing a willingness to engage creatively with the text, and others which revealed only a slight understanding of fiction and reality as used in the play. A common conclusion was that the deaths are either fiction or reality/both fiction and reality depending on the standpoint. Some candidates pointed out that in the context of the story being told the deaths are certainly real, but that in any future representation of their story the characters would again be alive at the beginning; the confusion was thought by many to come from the fact that we - and the *attori* - are unaccustomed to seeing characters in the 'real' way in which these ones present themselves.

Unit 6a - Listening and Writing

Candidates are required to listen to authentic recorded target-language (TL) material, to retrieve and convey information by responding to a range of TL questions and by producing a summary in English.

Assessment principles

For part one, up to 15 marks are awarded positively for correct information retrieved and conveyed in response to TL questions. The TL must be unambiguously understandable but its quality does not form part of the assessment

For part two, up to 15 marks are awarded for English summary skills, showing the ability to understand the gist and details, infer ideas, select information, transfer it and communicate it concisely. Up to 5 marks are awarded for GPS.

Summary and GPS are marked using the relevant grids printed in the current Specifications.

Candidates' responses

The vast majority of candidates scored over half the marks available for part one. Candidates appear to have understood most of the text and when the question required to identify a straightforward piece of information it was normally well answered. But as soon as a little manipulation or interpretation was necessary the performance dropped dramatically

In part two, a large number of candidates were not concise enough to include sufficient essential detail in the word limit and GPS was not always good even with candidates for whom English is the dominant language. Summary skills and standard of written English have proved to be more of a problem than the comprehension of spoken Italian.

Part one

Question (a) was generally well answered, in spite of some difficulty with "allagato" which was often either wrongly transcribed or avoided.

Question (b), and (d) were also generally well answered.

In question (c) the omission of the reflexive pronoun caused loss of marks. There was also some unsuccessful attempts to transcribe without comprehension (*alto denuciati* or similar).

In question (e) a number of candidates failed to make it clear that it was police interrogation. The word *interrogazione* on its own in a school context can only lead to ambiguity.

A full answer to question (f) required three elements. Most candidates managed to convey the idea of "doppi turni"; a large proportion of candidates stated that only one floor was available but fewer went on to mention how many were not, even though they may have understood.

Question (g) was well answered for the first part. The second part required candidates to state that similar facts went unnoticed as they happened in schools not so well known as Parini. Candidates who were satisfied with lifting "*il Parini è un liceo rinomato*" lost marks.

Question (h) required some manipulation to turn *bruciavamo* to *bruciavano*, unless within quotation marks, as it was in the text. This proved too difficult for weaker candidates. *Bruciavano* was also frequently spelt wrongly as *brucavano*, and could not be credited because of ambiguity.

Most candidates scored at least one mark for question (i). The main reason for loss of marks with this question was failing to quote *Istituto tecnico* or to convey in any way the idea that Prof Lodoli is teaching the same age group.

As for the quality of language, problems with gender, agreement and even spelling were not infrequent, but these did not affect the assessment except for cases of ambiguity or impaired communication and when they were a clear indication of lack of comprehension.

Part two

To gain full credit in the English summary candidates had to cover all the bullet points in the question, and provide most of the details listed in the mark scheme. These however, only served as a checklist and no strict numerical correspondence between points included and marks awarded for summary was established. The mark awarded reflected the quality of summary skills as shown in the relevant grid.

Most candidates showed good comprehension of the text, but not all of them had the necessary skills to select the appropriate information and communicate it concisely. Instead, many made unnecessary preambles or supplied excessive detail on earlier bullet points, thus exhausting the word limit before they could tackle the last ones. Some candidates did not understand "gesto" but could get round it without losing marks, Not so for the many who failed to understand "sciocco" and qualified the students' action as shocking rather than silly or foolish. The idea of repentance was often omitted from bullet point 4.

Sadly, there was the usual handful of candidates who scored zero because they wrote their summary in Italian.

The majority of candidates scored at least 3 marks for GPS, and excellent performances clearly outnumbered very poor ones.

Advice and Guidance

Teachers are strongly recommended not to neglect the development of the skills and strategies that are necessary for a successful completion of this Unit, in particular a careful reading of the question and the ability to identify and select relevant information and manipulate it in a way for it to be consequential to the question.

For part 2, as the English summary outweighs the TL question and answers, teachers and candidates alike must be aware that good summary skills and English GPS are essential in order to access the top range of marks.

Unit 6b – Reading and Writing

In this part of the paper candidates are set two questions. In the first they are required to read an authentic text in Italian and respond to a number of target language questions. In the second they are required to translate an English passage of approximately 80 words into the target language. It is important to bear in mind that the passage revolves around the same topic as that used for the first question.

Assessment Principles

For Q1 there are 15 marks available, 8 for answers that contain the correct factual information and 7 for quality of language. If the way in which the factual content is expressed in Italian is so poor as to render the answer incomprehensible then of course no marks can be awarded. Answers that are lifted verbatim from the text without the slightest attempt to manipulate the language gain no credit. As regards the quality of language it is essential that candidates make every effort to express their answers in their own words as stated in the rubric. The more language they use from both the text and the questions themselves the less they will be rewarded under this category. Obviously this does not mean that they are expected to find synonyms in every case and it is perfectly understandable that they incorporate into their answers a small percentage of the words from the passage. The remaining 10 marks for this paper are allocated to Q2, the transfer of meaning exercise. As happened last year, this short passage is divided up into 30 assessable elements and a mark is given for each correct element. The final total is then divided by 3 and rounded down or up accordingly. This system worked well again this year, proving to be much fairer to students across the ability range and ensuring greater consistency of marking. Teachers should remind their students that a limited number of words/phrases from the Italian text can be used in this transfer of meaning exercise.

Candidates' Responses

The principle underlying the first question is no different from that of the same question type used in the AS paper. Every effort was made to ensure that the questions were put in such a way as not to allow candidates to lift their answers verbatim from the text. It seems now that this message has got through to most candidates. The very good candidates usually take the opportunity to demonstrate their variety of structures and vocabulary in their answers. The weaker candidates almost inevitably lean more heavily on the text, as they do not have the linguistic skill or command of the language to do otherwise. Candidates are awarded the mark(s) for content provided that the answer is comprehensible and unambiguous.

As already mentioned candidates are not necessarily expected to find synonyms for every word e.g. *manutenzione*, *maleducazione*, *appartenenza*, but of course the better candidates will replace the nouns with verbs and show the linguistic flexibility that is going to be best rewarded under the category of Quality of Language, the grid that you will find on page 40 of the Specification.

The overall response to Question 1 was satisfactory with a good number of the candidates showing the ability to extrapolate the required information from the passage and express it in their own words. The downside for a number of answers was the quality of language - the inability to use more complex structures, idiomatic language, the incorrect use of auxiliary verbs in compound tenses and, almost inevitably nowadays, spelling. Unless candidates do have a particular problem then it is rather disappointing to see the misspelling of words that are actually in the text. The questions that proved the most difficult were (b) and (f), for the reasons explained below.

(a) A high percentage of the candidates coped well with this question.

(b) This question caused problems simply because too many candidates were unable to make a clear distinction in their answers between the role of *il Comune* and that of *i cittadini*. They used the plural verb *potrebbero* from the question and gave a kind of blanket response without mentioning the town council or the citizens. The answer required the candidates to say what the town council could do and what the response of the citizens should be. Even many of the good candidates lost a mark because they failed to do this.

(c) This question was generally well answered as basically the candidates only had to come up with either *abbandonano il giornale alla fermata del tram* or *parcheggiano in seconda fila*. The better candidates were able to convey the required content by using some very good, appropriate expressions. An answer such as *lasciano la spazzatura negli spazi pubblici* was deemed to be rather imprecise and was not awarded the mark. Some candidates let their imagination run wild and produced answers such as *abbandonano il giornale nel treno*, a mode of transport that was not mentioned in the text. It may well be that they were trying to avoid using *alla fermata del tram* or they had just lost their train of thought!

(d) Candidates had to express an 'attitude' to gain the mark for this question. Although well answered in the main, some candidates went off the track by explaining the reasons for the citizens' behaviour rather than what their 'attitude' was towards the city.

(e) Apart from the candidates who started to express ideas such as other cities are more beautiful/appealing etc., which was not the required answer of course, a high percentage of candidates were able to produce *sembra fredda*. The better candidates came up with words such as *accogliente* and *poco amichevole* and these are usually the candidates who access the top box for quality of language.

(f) This question produced a range of expected and unexpected answers. The expected answer was that the candidates would start by explaining that *abbiamo motivo di essere pessimisti* and then go on to focus on the fact that the right attitude is completely lacking and it would require ages to change this. That is the real crux of the last paragraph. The candidates who were able to provide this information were rewarded with the 2 marks. Those who took the opposite stance and produced a reasonably convincing answer scored one. It was felt that they had not fully understood the meaning of the last paragraph and consequently did not merit full marks for this question.

Q2 As this transfer of meaning exercise is divided up into 30 assessable units it does allow the weaker candidates to score some marks particularly for *la qualità di vita, ogni giorno, è importante che* etc. It has already been mentioned that some of the words/expression appear in the passage for question 1. Most candidates are able to lift and re-use these appropriately. There are always some candidates who fail to do this however and write *atteggiamento* for example with a single 'g'. The misspelling of words that appear in the text for question 1 is not rewarded. In fact, one of the requirements for this task is a high degree of accuracy. A typical example that illustrates how candidates sometimes lift the wrong expression is *gli spazi pubblici* to convey *la proprietà pubblica*. Candidates who omitted to put the accent on *proprietà* were not penalised but *e* in place of *è* was not acceptable.

There were some excellent translations by candidates who not only adapted or lifted accurately the vocabulary that appeared in the text in Question 1 but also had the ability and linguistic competence to cope well with the 'unseen' elements. The more able candidates did occasionally lose marks by trying to be over-ambitious. In their endeavour to modify the original passage unnecessarily they sometimes omitted essential words or oversimplified some of the structures. Having said this, however, the intention is to mark as positively as possible in these situations and give credit where it is due.

In the main, candidates did make an effort to write something or paraphrase as best they could rather than leave gaps. At times their version might have been acceptable but on others not, but nothing ventured nothing gained! One of the most testing bits of this exercise was the translation of 'to do nothing but' but some candidates were able to get around their lack of knowledge of *fare altro che* and express this point with *vogliono solo/soltanto*, which was accepted.

Here is a taste of some of the errors, many of which were fairly common, others perhaps should have been rewarded for their originality!

- *Nell'anni recenti*
- *majorità*
- *citte*
- *improvato*
- *un qualità del vita / la qualità di viva*
- *dei abitanti / dei suoi abitanti* (the use of *suoi* for *loro*)
- *inhabitanti*
- *behavioro* (Is this *un falso amico*?)
- *risare* = to rise
- *molti genti / tanti personi / molti genitori / molti gentili*
- *sente / sentono* rather than *si sente / si sentono*
- *minacciata* without *più*
- *ogni giorni*
- *sopratutto*
- *gli vecchi / gli anziende* (a blend one presumes of *gli anziani* and *le aziende*)
- *propertà pubblica*
- *cerciamo*
- incorrect preposition after the verbs *continuare, cercare, provare*
- *volono* - a recent development for the more traditional *vogliono*
- *destruire* = *distruggere*

Advice and Guidance

The advice and guidance for Q1 is no different from that which applies to the same question type in Unit 2 at AS. It is always worth reminding candidates that they are expected to answer the questions as much as possible in their own words, although most candidates seem to be aware of this now and make every effort to comply with this requirement. Some answers obviously require less manipulation of the text than others. Candidates should change whatever they can without going overboard and producing answers that become incomprehensible because they lack the grammatical expertise to write with any degree of accuracy. As for Q2 teachers should point out to their students that they do need to stick as closely as possible to the original passage and try and avoid translating too loosely or freely. For those teachers who may be preparing candidates for the first time here are two possible suggestions on how to approach this part of the examination: 1) find a suitable text from an original source - newspaper or magazine - that deals with the same topic that you have been working on and adapt it to your needs by changing/simplifying if necessary some of the structures and vocabulary; 2) translate into English a part of an Italian text you have been working on with your students and get them to translate it back into Italian. However, do not make the English passage an identical translation of the Italian one. Make some structural changes and alter some of the vocabulary. Inform your students that they will find some of the vocabulary in the Italian text they have been reading. This at least will serve to simulate an exam situation. This kind of activity will help students to focus both on points of grammar and vocabulary acquisition.

Unit 6c - Writing in Registers

All the questions set elicited some answers, with answers being well spread across the three registers. The Discursive Essays were the most popular choice, followed by the Task Based Assignments and then by Creative Writing, which however is now chosen by an increasing number of candidates.

A wide range of abilities was demonstrated. Linguistic standards varied as usual but they appeared to have leveled out, pointing to a general improvement. The best answers were obviously those which fulfilled the three main criteria as indicated by the four mark grids.

Section A - Creative Writing

There seemed to be even more responses to the creative questions this year, especially for the story.

Q.1 (story based on a train journey) had to be written in the first person and had to be rooted in the stimulus paragraph. Candidates had to explain the reason for the train journey and the reason why the narrator is so thrilled. Candidates also had to consider the possible consequences of this journey. As usual with this type of question, much was left to their imagination. The stories often involved meeting a long-lost relative or the person they loved. Some even wrote about the excitement of going to Berlin to see the football World Cup! Some more unimaginative stories about traveling around Italy/Europe by train were often simplistic descriptions of places visited and plans for future travels. The first person format of the question did not pose any problems but some candidates made little reference to a train journey while many omitted the consequences of the journey. Some candidates wrongly interpreted *emozionato* as a negative emotion. A few candidates showed an ability to write very accurately using the past historic, although it wasn't requested, and were duly rewarded.

Q.2 (the photograph with *mascherine antismog*) had to be written in the form of a dialogue between the two women in the photograph and had to make some reference to the picture stimulus and the quality of air/pollution in the city. There were some excellent responses incorporating environmental issues in an everyday dialogue but some produced an essay about the environment rather than a dialogue. Others wrote a story with some conversation taking place between the two women. Most candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary and an awareness of the environmental situation in Italy, with references to *targhe alterne*, *domeniche a piedi* and other initiatives against smog. Candidates used many good conversational expressions and displayed a good command of the spoken register.

Q.3 (taxi for animals) the journalistic option, was not so popular as last year. Most candidates covered well the first two sections (how the idea of the service was born and how it worked) but many omitted the third section explaining why it was so successful. A few thought that Oscar was the name of the creator rather than the name of the taxi company but they were not penalised for that. Not many made use of the information provided in the stimulus about Giacomo Ferrara previously being a volunteer of *Lega Antivivisezione*, although a few used it to discuss animal rights. Many candidates displayed a good journalistic style including interviews.

Section B - Discursive Essays

Q.4 (tourism and the environment) was a popular question which allowed candidates to express their views on tourism linking it to environmental issues. Many referred to agriturismo, ecoturismo and abusivismo edilizio, while other wrote more general essays about the damage caused by tourists versus the revenue they bring to a place. Some candidates spent too long outlining the current problems that mass tourism provokes and did not develop suggestions to reconcile tourism with the protection of the environment. On the whole candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary.

Q.5 (globalisation) was the least popular of the discursive essays. Some candidates demonstrated a good political or economical knowledge but others had no idea what globalisation meant and debated more communication and technological matters, such as mobile phones, rather than focusing on commerce/Third World/multinationals or MacDonaldis, which was mentioned by many. A few candidates found it difficult to take a stance on the question in the title and produced rather confusing responses with little organisation of ideas.

Q.6 (womens' emancipation/crisis of the family) was very popular. Most responses dealt with divorce, abortion and the impact of work and careers. Many candidates wrote about the history of female emancipation or the current state of women's rights and many also made references to the situation in Italy, such as the low birth rate or the diminishing role of the Church. This was clearly a topic they had studied, which was reflected in the quality of the lexis. However only the best candidates, if disagreeing with the statement in the title, looked at other possible reasons behind the crisi della famiglia.

Q.7 (TV) was the most popular discursive essay and also the one that produced the weakest answers. Some candidates produced superficial responses about how much we watch television without delving into the addiction aspect. Many discussed the advantaged and disadvantages of having a TV without imagining what life would be like **without** one, which was the question in the title. On the other hand there were many good balanced answers that mentioned advantages, such as access to world news, relaxing, keeping the children occupied, entertainment, and the disadvantages, such as obesity/fitness, lack of social life or lack of communication (although some pointed out that if you didn't have a TV you would not be able to talk about the programmes you watched and therefore you would be a social reject!).

Section C - Task Based Assignments

Q.8 (TBA on newspaper advert and jobs of the future) produced standard answers. Candidates wisely didn't dwell too much on the first bullet point (personal details) and kept it at a reasonable length. The point about jobs of the future was not always developed as much as it might have been although candidates did give reasons as to why they thought these jobs would be popular. Suggestions included mainly teaching, journalism, medicine and technology. Weaker responses as usual failed to expand on the last bullet point requesting further information. As in previous years many candidates are able to answer questions and provide details but they often lack the ability to exploit the stimulus material to ask questions, especially in a formal register. The register was generally appropriate, with only a few *tu*.

Q.9 (TBA on *agriturismo* complaint) was quite well done in that the complaints were dealt with and many candidates addressed more than one. Compensation was usually in the form of money, a replacement holiday or a discount. A number of candidates were unsympathetic about the festivities at *Ferragosto*, considering that they were something that couldn't be helped and visitors would have to put up with it, thus demonstrating good knowledge of Italian way of life! Most candidates used appropriate business letter formulae, some more accurately than others, with only a few confusing *tu/Lei/Voi*. Most seemed familiar with the appropriate opening and closing expressions for formal letters.

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 cannot gain marks. They are also reminded that they have to answer only one question out of the whole papers; there are still some who answer more than one.

Language

Accuracy

Although accuracy tended to be variable, the examiners noticed a general improvement in the overall levels of accuracy, especially in the use of the subjunctive imperfect/conditional but often alongside basic errors in more straightforward language. Wrong verb endings and agreements are still the most common errors, together with a widespread misuse of prepositions and articles.

Manipulation of language

The examiners commented positively on the degree of attempted manipulation of language, with many candidates displaying good use of the conditional tense and hypothetical sentence structure, including the imperfect subjunctive. However, the subjunctive in general was often misused, being applied even when it was not required.

Range of lexis

Most candidates used an appropriate and fairly varied range of lexis, with stronger candidates again displaying a very good knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary, especially in the Discursive Essays section. Spelling was generally quite accurate, although, as usual, some candidates still make minor errors even in the spelling of rather common words, such as *mama*, *cui* for *qui*, *doppo*, and misplaced tonic accents such as *vità* or *comè* or the opposite (mainly *è*, from *essere*, without an accent). In other cases candidates created anglicised words such as "improvare", "develloppamento" or "il suo sposato" instead of *marito*.

Statistics

Unit 1 Listening and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	37	33	29	25	21
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 2 Reading and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	80	58	52	46	40	35
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Unit 3 Prepared Oral Topic

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	45	40	35	30	25
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 4.1 Oral Discussion of Issues

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	44	39	34	30	26
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 5.1 Topics and Texts

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	90	63	57	51	45	39
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6 Listening and Writing, Reading and Writing & Writing in Registers

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	71	64	57	50	44
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

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