

Advice and guidance to candidates

Paper 1 Speaking

Please bear in mind, in both Parts, that the Examiner is not trying to catch the candidate out. S/he is only interested in finding out what level each candidate has reached, in terms both of language and knowledge of subject.

Part I Discussion of an article and related themes

The task of reading and discussing a text is not one about which candidates need be apprehensive. The texts themselves are there to serve as a springboard, and are chosen to avoid excessive difficulty in structure or vocabulary. In choosing which text to prepare for the examination, candidates are recommended to consider whether they have something to say about the topic, rather than worrying whether they will be able to understand the text. Familiarity with the format of this part of the test is important: candidates may prepare by practising short spoken summaries and spontaneous speaking, and by acquiring the language used to express opinions about relevant topics.

In the test itself, candidates should:

- use the preparation time fully
- plan a short overview of the text content
- consider the issue in question and their own reaction(s) to it
- be prepared to take the lead in the discussion
- give their reactions to the ideas and information in the text
- be prepared for discussion of broader issues relating to the general heading on the card.

Part II Prepared oral topic

In Part 2, the choice of topic is very important. It should be neither too broad (which can make it hard to cover the topic or to say anything concrete) nor too narrow (there may not be enough to say).

The best conversations often occur when an element of controversy or debate is brought into the presentation. This could be implicit in the title (e.g. *Was Dalí a great artist or a charlatan?*), or it might be introduced under one of the sub-headings (e.g. *The battle of Verdun: [point iv] the tragic aftermath of a great victory*). Candidates who go beyond the purely descriptive and who express personal views can expect to be rewarded, as long as they are able to support their opinions in the discussion.

In preparation for this section, candidates are recommended to:

- avoid trying to find an 'impressive' obscure topic
- choose a subject which genuinely interests them
- be clear about which aspects of it they wish to discuss
- focus in depth on a few aspects of the topic rather than try to cover it all.

In this Part, candidates should:

- fill in the oral form correctly
- present their introduction 'naturally', even if pre-learnt
- be ready to lead the discussion and talk freely about their topic
- show interest in, and personal engagement with, their topic
- show evidence of research
- support opinions with evidence.

They should also expect to:

- be interrupted
- be asked to support, clarify and justify statements
- answer unexpected questions
- give examples
- be stretched to their linguistic 'ceiling'.

Advice and guidance to candidates

Paper 2 Listening and Reading Comprehension

What skills are required?

- inference – candidates have to work out the answers from what is read or heard
- manipulation – candidates may be expected to change language so the answer makes sense
- explanation – candidates may need to give reasons for their answers
- synthesis – points of information may need to be combined in an answer
- writing with accuracy and sophistication: quality of language in answers should be high.

Answering target language questions (Reading and Listening Exercise 1)

Candidates are advised to:

- remember that full sentences are not required – although all the required information must be given
- highlight the key words in the question, so that it is clear what information is needed
- note how many marks are awarded for each question (e.g. if 2 marks are available, two separate points are required)
- try to use their own words and avoid reproducing the language of the texts word for word
- practise building a wide vocabulary in the target language, so that they are at ease with finding synonyms for words in the passages
- remember that their answers must make sense.

Answering English questions (Reading and Listening Exercise 2)

Candidates should:

- write their answers in correct English and check spelling
- beware false friends (words that look alike in the target language and English, but have different meanings)
- realise that some target language words can have more than one meaning. They should choose the correct meaning (e.g. in Spanish *local* can mean 'local' or 'place', depending on the context)
- find the appropriate English word, not necessarily one that looks similar to the target language word (e.g.: *velocidad* in Spanish or *vélocité* in French is usually translated as 'speed' in English, not 'velocity')
- make sure the answer sounds like real English and makes sense
- make sure that they give all that is required, while taking care not to omit any essential points.

Advice and guidance to candidates

Paper 2 Listening and Reading Comprehension

Reading Exercise 3 Translation from English to the target language

Translation involves moving material from one language to another. Good translation is a real art that needs much practice, which is often neglected. The ideal is a translation that reads well and that conveys accurately the sense of the original.

In this exercise, candidates are recommended to:

- study the original text in Reading Exercise 2 carefully: it gives vocabulary and structures that can be used and re-worked
- read the English passage carefully to understand what is required
- study the setting, context and tone of the extracts
- use sensible and intelligent guesses where vocabulary is not known
- avoid leaving gaps
- think carefully about the grammar of the sentence being translated. (candidates often encounter problems in translating tenses correctly, spotting adjectival agreements and linking pronouns with the nouns to which they refer.)
- beware literal translation: the result can easily be a meaningless text
- beware paraphrasing, and not stray too far away from the original (but, on the other hand, not be afraid to change word order, parts of speech, etc.)
- remember that accuracy is more important than creativity.

Listening Exercise 3 Summary skills

Writing a good summary is a matter of regular practice and also of acquiring the correct technique. An unsuccessful attempt at a summary may be due to lack of understanding of the original text but, more often than not, it is the way the exercise has been tackled that is at fault.

To write a good summary, candidates should:

- listen to the passage carefully until they have a good idea of what the whole text is about
- not start summarising (or even translating) every sentence. (They will not discard the less significant details, and will quickly run out of words.)
- make rough notes rather than a full draft on the question paper. There may not be time to write out a full draft version of the summary and then write out a clean copy.
- remember that it is not necessary to know the meaning of every word in the text
- remember that this is a summary – an exercise in selection – it is impossible to include every piece of information
- make sure that all the bullet points are covered
- spread the words: it is a common error to say too much about the first half of a passage and too little (or nothing at all) about the second half
- 'prune' written summaries, removing unnecessary words without deleting the main points that must be conveyed
- stay within the word limit – 100 words must not be exceeded.

Finally, candidates should check that:

- all the bullet points have been covered
- the gist of the passage has been understood
- there is detail and it is well selected
- the material is expressed concisely
- the summary reads well and is informative
- there is no incorrect information.

Advice and guidance to candidates

Paper 3 Writing and Usage

Part I Writing

When choosing a title in the examination, candidates should:

- spend some time reading all the titles
- think carefully about what each topic is and what is being asked in the title
- think about whether they have something to say in response
- consider whether they possess vocabulary in the topic area
- make a very rough plan before choosing a title
- decide what they think and write an essay plan.

When writing the essay, candidates are advised to:

- use the plan to construct a real argument
- write an introduction, discussion and a conclusion
- keep the essay title in mind throughout
- check whether the points made are relevant
- avoid repetition
- write in paragraphs, making a clear, relevant point in each one
- try to use a variety of language and demonstrate linguistic ability
- write complex sentences when appropriate, but without losing the thread of the argument
- remember to try to interest and/or persuade the reader.

Part II Usage

In this Part, the three tests of verbal knowledge, structural manipulation and other aspects of usage cover a wide range of structures, but should not present major difficulty to candidates who have broad experience of the language and an awareness of the need for accuracy in writing. It is useful to be familiar with the format of the tests: this will help candidates to be aware of the type of knowledge required. Intelligent, careful reading of texts in the target language, attention to personal linguistic development in terms of structures, and experience of working through similar tasks can all help in preparation for this section.

In this Part of the examination candidates are recommended to:

- read each question carefully and make sure they understand the sense of the sentence
- avoid leaving any questions unanswered
- use their experience of and 'feel for' the language as well as their knowledge when deciding on an answer (e.g. ask themselves 'Have I heard or seen a similar sentence?')
- proofread carefully their answers to Exercises 1 and 2.

Advice and guidance to candidates

Paper 4 Topics and Texts

In both Parts, candidates should:

- read the question with care, and think about what they are asked to do
- plan their answer and organise their material with close relation to the question
- define the terms of the question in the introduction
- keep the question in mind throughout
- support any assertions with close references to the text and/or film
- make sure quotations, if used, support the argument
- make sure all quotations are accurate
- use paraphrasing and allusion as an alternative to overlong quotations
- take care to include analysis and argument, and avoid narrative
- demonstrate knowledge by using it as supporting evidence for the argument
- exclude information that is irrelevant to the question.

Part I: Cultural Topics

Candidates should:

- make sure that they learn the necessary vocabulary to write about their topic, when preparing for this Part
- remember that the rubric requires reference to only two of the works. Writing about all three may lead to a lack of depth
- try to demonstrate their knowledge of underlying themes, and mention comparisons and links between the two works
- proofread carefully after writing, paying special attention to verb forms and agreements.

Part II: Literary Texts

In context questions candidates should:

- make sure they analyse the extract showing how its content is related to the rest of the work
- avoid using the passage as a springboard for a general essay
- be careful to analyse, rather than re-tell the story of the extract.

ITALIAN – PRINCIPAL COURSE

Paper 9783/01
Speaking

General comments

The Discussion of the article is only present in the Principal Course and represents a freer and more challenging exercise than in the Short Course (SC), in which candidates can demonstrate the ability to engage in an “unpredictable” discussion within the parameters of the Topic heading. **Part II** is the same exercise as is required for the Short Course (SC) speaking test. The mark grid for **Part II** is interpreted and applied in the same way as for the SC: candidates performing at the same level will obtain the same mark.

The two parts of the examination differ in that the first is less predictable, and therefore harder to prepare for, than the second. However, candidates were able to maintain their level of performance over the entire examination, and performances for the two parts were well balanced, with only a marginally higher mean mark for language in **Part II**, as might have been expected.

Comments on specific parts of the examination

Part I: Discussion of a newspaper article and related topics

Candidates could choose a stimulus card from

- 1 Education
- 2 Environment
- 3 Law and order
- 4 Travel and tourism

Card 2 was by far the most popular, as candidates appeared to be at ease discussing the broader theme of the environment.

Candidates are not asked specific questions to test their understanding of the article in detail, but they do need to understand the article well enough to be able to engage in discussion on the issues raised. They coped with this part of the exam very well. They were able to outline the main theme of the article, discuss the issues it raised and broaden the conversation to the general theme.

Part II: Prepared topic discussion

It was pleasing to note that the candidates, all of whom happened to have taken the Short Course exam in 2009, had prepared a different topic for their Principal Course. Their choices ranged from literary texts to film and in one case, an Italian painter.

Presentations were generally well timed and well articulated, leading naturally to discussion. In most instances the Examiner adopted the position of the “interested layman” acknowledging that the candidate was the “expert”. This ensured spontaneity of discussion and elicited from candidates the ability to adapt their prepared material to respond to the Examiner’s questions. Candidates were able to present a good range of pertinent facts, had the ability to analyse them in an interesting way and were to express their opinions in a naturally flowing conversation with the Examiner.

Language (range and accuracy)

The majority of the candidates were able to use complex structures and a good range of vocabulary. As could be expected, scores for language were slightly higher for **Part II**, but only marginally so, and still ranging from good to very good, as they were for **Part I**. The most common mistakes remain the use of prepositions, some influence from other foreign languages and some lack of control over agreements, gender and occasionally over verb endings.

Pronunciation and Intonation.

Candidates at this level had gained a mastery of the sounds of Italian, in spite of the occasional misplaced stress or mispronunciation of double consonant or some vowel sounds.

Conclusion

These candidates had fully understood the requirements of this component, were well prepared and performed well. For the Examiner this was, once again, a pleasant experience.

ITALIAN – PRINCIPAL COURSE

Paper 9783/02

Reading and Listening

General comments

The demands of the paper were appropriate to the level, and this year's cohort was thoroughly prepared and, on the whole, rose well to the challenges posed.

In some cases, a tendency to include too much information in responses to the comprehension questions left Examiners in some doubt as to whether candidates had truly understood which piece of information was being targeted. This was also the case when candidates had lifted language directly from the passage, and the specific question was not quite addressed.

Comments on specific questions

Part I: Reading

Reading text 1

The questions here were generally well answered. The one common area of confusion was on **Question 3**, where some candidates confused action and consequence, or failed to say *how* students should improve their behaviour.

Reading text 2

Common issues in answering the questions on this text were as follows:

In **Question 12**, some candidates failed grasp that public reactions have been mixed.

In **Question 14**, some candidates did not appear to know the word *divisa* and therefore answered too generally, e.g. 'see it as a negative thing'.

In **Question 16**, some answers included the idea of 'volunteering' (erroneously drawn from *volantini*) or repeated 'against the idea' from the question, e.g. 'leaflets have been distributed against the idea'.

Reading text 3

The translation exercise was accurately completed for the most part. Common issues were as follows:

Few candidates translated 'welcomed' as ...*accolta in modo positivo* (it was generally translated as simply '*ccolta*').

'Now' was generally rendered as *ora* or *adesso* rather than *ormai*.

Part II: Listening

Listening text 1

Common mistakes were made in questions 18 and 20:

In **Question 18** some candidates gave their own opinion of Marco's decision rather than justifying it with reference to the text, e.g. *non era una buon'idea*.

In response to **Question 19**, many candidates included *la comparsa al Metropolitan* in their answer rather than sticking purely to what he had done before (*prima di entrare...*).

Listening text 2

The majority of candidates performed well in answering questions on this text.

Listening text 3

Again many candidates performed very well on this question, and the word count was well observed.



ITALIAN – PRINCIPAL COURSE

Paper 9783/03
Writing and Usage

General comments

The candidates showed for the most part a very good grasp of the higher registers of the language, both in the essay and in the exercises which required some complex manipulation of language. Some of the questions in these exercises were intended to discriminate at the top end, but the vast majority of candidates coped very well with them. On the whole the paper proved effective in discriminating between candidates of differing abilities, with some relatively straightforward questions and some much more difficult ones.

Comments on specific questions

Part I: Discursive Essay

Candidates are advised to read the question carefully and to ensure that their response is both carefully planned and fully relevant. The quality of candidates' responses to the questions was impressive, with all candidates able to understand the key issues and many able to offer sophisticated and coherent arguments. All questions except **1(c)** had at least some takers. Linguistically, almost all candidates demonstrated the ability to write fluently, clearly and largely accurately, and all candidates seemed to be familiar with the more advanced grammatical features of the language as well as with some idiomatic language.

Part II: Usage

Exercise 1 Questions 2–6

All candidates found at least some elements of this exercise accessible, demonstrating a good grasp of verb tenses such as the imperfect subjunctive and the pluperfect; in **Question 4** *da ragazzo* seemed to throw some candidates, who did not see the need for a past (imperfect) tense.

Exercise 2 Questions 7–11

Again, candidates showed a good grasp of some complex grammatical features, such as the present subjunctive and the passive; **Question 11** proved the most challenging, but even here many candidates scored a mark.

Exercise 3 Questions 12–32

Despite a high level of complexity in some areas (vocabulary, idiom, grammar etc.), candidates seemed to have a very good understanding of the text and were thus able to choose the correct answer in most cases; the three most difficult questions were **Question 16** (where *altrui* was not known by many candidates), **Question 25** (where many chose *cresciuta* rather than *salita*) and **Question 32** (where some candidates missed the need for the singular verb).

ITALIAN – PRINCIPAL COURSE

Paper 9783/04
Topics and Texts

General comments

Candidates chose exclusively the questions on Topic 5, 'Dopoguerra e miracolo economico', and on Text 9, *La luna e i falò*. The general standard of response was at least competent, with candidates writing coherent and intelligible answers in both languages, and some candidates provided evidence of individual flair and reflection. In writing their answers to the topic questions, candidates tended to refer to all three stimuli (texts/films). Whilst this showed breadth of research, the quality of some answers was compromised by a corresponding lack of depth in discussing particular works. This was the case, for example, in some discussions of *Racconti romani* where a number of stories were referred to but nothing very substantial said about any of them.

Comments on specific questions

Part I: Cultural Topics

Question 5

- A** The few candidates who chose this question provided evidence of knowing the texts and the film and gave answers in line with the indicative content – the contention that Antonio is mistreated by the authorities through their indifference to the loss of his bicycle was perhaps a little severe.
- B** Again, candidates showed a pleasing familiarity with their material but many showed a reluctance to consider that dreams and aspirations might signify more than just making ends meet and finding food to put on the table every day. As a few candidates showed, *Racconti romani* is a rich source of information concerning the search for ways to break free, in one way or another, from the oppressive routine of just getting by. Candidates did recognise, however, that Marcovaldo is looking for an alternative reality underneath the concrete and clay of the city. Generally candidates considered that, apart from simply surviving from day to day, not many dreams and aspirations were realised.

Part II: Literary Texts

Question 9

- A** Only a few candidates answered this question and their answers, like the answers given for **Question 9B**, showed generally competent knowledge of the text. However, these answers were sometimes inexact in the details used to construct arguments and allowed the essay title to shape their answers in predictable ways, not necessarily supported by the text. The walnut trees have gone; though he has stayed in the valley Nuto desperately wants things to change. The rather sinister side of 'plus ça change', i.e. the same people (*i prepotenti*) are in power after the creation of the republic as were there before, was ignored.
- B** As with **Question 9A**, candidates showed generally adequate knowledge of the text but details were remembered inexactly and this occasionally compromised their points of view. Writing about the use of symbols in literature is no easy matter: personal responses should not force the text into a predetermined mould. Candidates referring to the moon in California as evidence that Anguilla felt estranged from American society because it was not the same moon forgot that it was the stars he was talking about as there was no moon that night. Answers generally followed a similar and predictable pattern – the moon signifies the cyclical, seasonal rhythm of country life as well as exclusion and belonging; the bonfires signify destruction and regeneration. Answers were

therefore generally competent but their rather schematic treatment of the symbols turned them into something more mechanically allegorical. The use of the belief or not in these ‘symbols’ to delineate the complex and ambiguous relationship between Anguilla and Nuto, and the contradictory elements within each man, was left out of account and other frequent and haunting symbols, like train whistles and the town of Canelli, were not mentioned. The sombre final image of the remains of Santa’s funeral pyre was universally referred to but no one mentioned that she was burned to prevent her corpse being violated.