

Italian (continuers)

2014 Chief Assessor’s Report

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## Overview

Chief Assessors’ reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio

There are three assessments for the folio: interaction, text production, and text analysis. Students should undertake all three assessments at least once.

It was pleasing to see many assessment tasks and topics that allowed students to extend themselves and demonstrate their knowledge. The stronger students produced work that truly reflected the performance standards. The best task designs gave students the opportunity to achieve at the A grade band of the performance standards. These assessment tasks gave clear and simple instructions.

Interaction

Students showed preparation and ability in this area. The stronger students were able to converse about topics, demonstrating preparation and a genuine interest.

Discussions between a student and a teacher usually reflected a true conversation and were very interesting and entertaining to listen to. The conversation flowed easily between the two speakers when questions were asked throughout the interaction, and students scored better when they were able to respond appropriately to unrehearsed questions.

If two students are conversing (rather than a student and a teacher), teachers have to make sure that both students are able to meet the requirements of the subject outline, including the time limit. At times, a more able student would take over the conversation leaving the other student struggling to converse for the required length of time.

Teachers need to be aware that this is not an oral presentation with a few questions at the end. The interaction should be a conversation, thus enabling the student to achieve according to the performance standards.

Teachers should check that the recording that is sent to moderation is clear and can be easily understood.

Text production

This year there were a number of relevant topics chosen, some quite pertinent to contemporary Italy; for example, Lammily, the anti-Barbie doll, and the film about young people growing up in Italy, *Notte prima degli esami*. There were a variety of responses in the form of letters, emails, articles, diary entries, and blogs. It was interesting to read the responses in the form of a blog. Blog entries allow students to provide informative responses, while diary entries limit students to personal reflections.

**Text analysis**

The majority of text analysis assessment tasks presented at moderation came from past examination papers. Many teachers selected texts for the text analysis with content that, provided students with the opportunity to address specific feature IR2, ‘analysis of the language in texts’. Past examination papers are a good source of appropriate texts, but again teachers must ensure that the questions give students the opportunity to meet all of the requirements of the performance standards at the highest level. Content-based questions alone are not sufficient to allow students to perform well in this section. Connected texts were sometimes used, as this allows students to do some comparison of the texts and to extrapolate major points.

Translations were also included as part of this section and they are not a requirement of this course. It is recommended that teachers look to the subject outline as a guide when setting assessment tasks to ensure that course requirements are met.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

There are three assessments of students’ in-depth study of a topic: an oral presentation in Italian, a written response in Italian, and a reflective response in English.

As usual, the topics in this area were very interesting and varied. There were great topics and a variety of responses this year. Some of the topics included the ‘brain drain’, the Mafia’s influence on southern Italy, racism in Italian soccer, the environment, education, or politics just to name a few. It is pleasing to note that there was evidence of moving away from topics that are too broad and do not allow for depth of treatment. Students’ responses were creative and demonstrated an enjoyment of the topic chosen and a real sense of having gained from the experience.

It is essential that a copy of the learning and assessment plan be submitted with the moderation materials. The assessment description of the three in-depth study tasks should show that they differ in content, audience, and purpose. This, again, has improved in the last couple of years.

The recording of oral presentations needs to be clear and in a format that is accessible during moderation. Teachers should refer to the subject minisite for information about the submission of electronic files, including appropriate file formats and labelling conventions that support student materials to be located and accessed quickly, as neededThere is no need to send in drafts of the assessment or notes.

The English reflection was well done. Each year this section seems to improve. Some students, not many, are still writing about the content of their research rather than reflecting on their understanding of cultures and values, learning, beliefs, and ideas and how these have changed or been enhanced through their learning. Please refer to the assessment design criteria for this assessment type.

General Comments

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades/marks should be evident on all student school assessment work.

Teachers are urged to ensure that the assessment tasks provide students with the opportunity to achieve at the highest level of the performance standards. The subject outline is clear in its instructions regarding word counts or time length for some tasks, but moderators noted that some evidence presented departed from subject outline specifications for word limit and time length.

Teachers should also ensure that:

* all material included for moderation is clearly labelled
* each student's material is organised by assessment type; that is, Assessment Type 1: Folio and Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study
* a complete set of assessment task sheets for Assessment Type 1 and Assessment Type 2 is included with moderation materials
* all work of students nominated for moderation is included in moderation material.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Oral Examination

Conversation

Success in this part of the exam is dependent on how well students were prepared.

Generally familiar topics were approached with confidence and expression was quite accurate.

The stronger students showed evidence of preparation and confidence in their interactions. They coped well with all of the questions, including extended questions, and provided elaboration with ease.

There were some students, however, who were not fully prepared for this section of the examination. The conversation with these students was very stilted and did not flow smoothly. Students were also easily thrown when the questions differed even slightly from the sample questions.

Some students struggled with the accuracy of language, resorting to simply using infinitives or English. There was also some incorrect use of infinitives; that is, verbs were not conjugated correctly.

Students should try to use more connectives in Italian (e.g. *anche*, *dunque*, *beh*, *allora*, etc.), rather than simply responding *si* *si*.

Discussion

Most students coped well with the discussion and showed a certain degree of preparedness. Well prepared students had good expression and were able to convey information accurately. However, it was often the depth of treatment of the topic that was lacking.

Some students were only able to talk minimally about the discussion points that they presented to the oral examiners. To score well, students need to be able to discuss the topic in more depth.

Stronger students were able to make personal connections with their chosen research and initiate discussion confidently. They were confident with content, resources, and tasks completed, as well as reflecting on the in-depth study undertaken. They were thus able to elaborate with significant knowledge and draw comparisons.

The stronger students selected interesting and more challenging topics that involved more technical and specific vocabulary, thus allowing them the opportunity to elaborate.

The more confident students were able to reflect on the resources they used. Students are required to access a minimum of three difference resources, in Italian, for their research. If the resources are from the Internet, students should be able to talk about the website(s) that they used.

Some students found the discussion difficult due to a lack of preparation, and their limited vocabulary and expression related to the topic limited their ability to discuss the topic in any depth. These students struggled in particular with the reflection questions such as *Come ti ha ispirato questo personaggio?* or *Ha cambiato il tuo modo di pensare?*.

Some common language errors in the discussion were basic errors of agreement, verb choice, verb conjugations, tense, incorrect indefinite articles, prepositions either omitted or incorrect. Some students also had problems with pronunciation, accenting the wrong syllable in words such as *yusato* and *yutile*.

A few students brought objects to support the discussion and, generally, those who did so were able to talk about the object and use it appropriately to support the discussion.

Written Examination

Section 1: Listening and Responding

While the listening and responding section of the exam is usually the most challenging part, most students attempted to answer all questions for each text.

Text 1

Most students found this telephone conversation easy to understand and were able to extract the correct details to answer the questions: Daniele and his mother clash as she doesn’t like loud music (1 mark) and Elisa’s proposal includes: going to the Justin Timberlake concert in Rome on the 20 of January, tickets cost 98 euro (four details, 2 marks). Not all students were able to extract all four aspects of the proposal. Some also included that Elisa was going to stay in Rome for the weekend and this could have been included as one of the four details.

Text 2

This advertisement promoting a trip to Venzone in Friuli Venezia Giulia for the Lavender Festival was challenging for some students. While the town of Venzone was difficult to extract, many were not familiar with the region of Friuli Venezia Giulia and incorrectly wrote that the festival was in Venice (Venezia). A few students were not familiar with the word *lavanda* (lavender), thinking it was something to do with washing.

Many students who were successful in answering Question 2(a) were also able to answer Questions 2(b) correctly, stating that perfume, soap, bath salts, and candles were items created from the product highlighted in the text.

Question 2(c) was more challenging and required students to mention techniques such as addressing the listener directly and the use of rhetorical phrases (e.g. ‘Why not visit the town of Venzone?’, ‘Think about it!’) and descriptive language (‘wrapped in the scent of lavender’, ‘beautiful lavender fields in bloom’, ‘great hospitality of the bars, restaurants, farmstays, and hotels’, and ‘colours and fragrances’) for 2 marks.

Text 3

For this text, an interview with an Italian who is visiting Australian on a Working Holiday visa, Question 3(a) was well answered with most students identifying that the high unemployment rate of young people (40%) in Italy or the work crisis in Italy was the contributing factor for the new trend. Some, however, misunderstood the question and wrote what the trend was, that young Italians are migrating to Australia.

Question 3 (b) required students to hear that the conditions of Alina’s Working Holiday visa included: applicants had to be between 18 and 30 years of age and the visa is for 1 year, one cannot stay with the same employer for more than 6 months, and, to apply for a second year, the applicant has to work on farms or in the mines for 3 months. It was not easy for many students to identify all three aspects of the visa.

Question 3(c) was tackled with more confidence with most students answering correctly that by saying *sto molto bene qui*, Alina meant that she felt comfortable here in Australia (1 mark), because it is satisfying to feel useful and earn money, it allows her to be independent and to improve her English, and that Australia is a land of opportunities (at least three explanations for 3 marks).

Text 4

Student responses to this text were varied; 75% scored between 4 and 6 out of 6, reflecting a good understanding of the topics covered. Most students were able to write that the ‘great opportunity for Italy’ was the hosting of an expo (to be held in Milan) on ‘Feeding the planet, energy for life’ and that it would bring many visitors to Italy. Both of these pieces of information were required for 2 marks.

Many students were able to identify at least two of the seven major themes of the expo:

* how to ensure healthy food and drinking water for everyone in the world
* preparing food using today’s technology that is consistent with people’s cultural and ethnic origins
* how to improve the taste, conservation and distribution of food
* how to eliminate hunger, thirst, and the death of children through malnutrition that affects 850 million people
* how to prevent new diseases such as obesity, tumours, and epidemic
* how to educate children, teenagers, the disabled and the elderly to prepare food to guarantee a healthy diet
* how to educate young people about the origins and traditions of food and its cultural and ethnic importance.

Students needed four themes to achieve 4 marks. Overall, 66% of students were able to achieve 11 or more out of 20 and 45% of students scored in the A and B grade bands.

Section 2: Reading and Responding

Generally, this section was successfully completed, with many students achieving good results. Successful students were able to identify the correct information from the texts and were able to support this with relevant evidence that was quoted in Italian and then paraphrased in English.

Part A

Text 5

Question 5(a)

The majority of students were able to answer this question correctly, stating the purpose of the article as ‘informing the reader about the meaning of “Made in Italy”’. A few students misunderstood the term *mobili* as either mobile phones or cars, and this misunderstanding tainted their answers. It is essential that students check in the dictionary to clarify the meaning of words and to ensure they make sense of the text as a whole.

Question 5(b)

Many students answered this question correctly, with the best answers incorporating direct evidence from the text to support their ideas. The 1950s were significant because the products of that time were recognised for their originality, design, and practical functionality (*la loro originalità, il loro design, e la loro funzione pratica*). They were part of a global expansion that saw Italian products become popular around the world as symbols of style and elegance. Examples included the Vespa, as a symbol of the ‘good life’ and freedom, the FIAT 500 which became the symbol of the economic boom, and the Moka Bialetti which changed the way coffee was made at home. Finally, Alessi began producing homewares in the 1950s that are now considered pieces of art.

Question 5(c)

Many students answered this question successfully, with the best responses incorporating textual evidence correctly. Some students only gave this evidence in Italian, and therefore did not gain marks for that information. Students are reminded that the direction given was to answer all of the questions in this part of the exam in English, so textual evidence must also be translated from the Italian. The majority of students correctly identified that the author of the article is very proud of the ‘Made in Italy’ tradition. This is supported in the text by the use of positive language, such as ‘decorative’, ‘unique’, ‘innovative’, ‘style’, ‘elegance’, ‘originality’, ‘pieces of art’ etc. The examples of products and brands mentioned in the article (FIAT, Vespa, Bialetti, and Alessi) are still known today around the world, indicating pride in the lasting tradition of the quality of such products. These products are so iconic they are copied, which further indicates their desirability.

Text 6

Question 6(a)

The issue of counterfeit products and their effect was correctly identified by the majority of students. A few carried over the incorrect idea of Italian car manufacturing from the previous text, and this caused some confusion, while others referred to ‘mimic’ products. While the intention was clear, this is not how we refer to fake/counterfeit products.

Question 6(b)

Students were able to identify that Laura uses a range of linguistic devices to convey her message about the damaging effects of counterfeit products. It is a letter to the editor so the use of the first person voice shows her own thoughts on the issue. She addresses the reader directly (*Vi supplico* — ‘I beg you…’) and uses inclusive language to show that we all need to work together to thwart the counterfeit industry (*Tocca a noi* — ‘It’s up to us’). She presents examples of what will happen to the Italian economy (cause and effect), using emotive language to evoke fear about the consequences (*gravi rischi per la nostra economia*). Finally, Laura uses punctuation to further highlight her anger about the issue (*NO, alla contraffazione!* — ‘NO, to counterfeiting’ and *DITE NO AL FALSO!* — ‘SAY NO TO FAKES!’). Some students simply listed the techniques used by Laura, but examples from the text should have been used to illustrate these.

Question 6(c)

Again, many students were successful with this question, identifying the key information that Laura gave to support her case: counterfeiting damages the economy and puts jobs at risk, and it exploits the creativity of the original designers’ work. Laura also informed readers about what they could do, giving the example of blocking the websites that sell fake Ferragamo products.

Question 6(d)

For some students this question was more challenging. The title translates as ‘Too good to be true?’, and the rhetorical question invites the reader to consider the negative consequences of buying fake products. The buyer may think they are getting a bargain, but the product lacks quality and undermines the value of the original.

Part B

The task design gave students the opportunity to do well; however, the majority of students struggled to meet the minimum word count. Students were able to address the text type quite well, adhering to the tone and appropriate style of a blog. Revision of basic grammatical knowledge and application might help some students to correctly express themselves.

Students responded to the cues in the text and expressed some original ideas with credibility; however, some did fall into the trap of duplicating lengthy sections from the text in their responses. There was an obvious attempt at using colloquial, informal language, and an attempt to meet the word count.

Markers made the following comments:

* Very simple ideas with very simple everyday examples.
* Sentences were very simple.
* Students struggled with the conjugation of the present tense, especially with *avere*, *essere*, and *andare*.
* Often verbs were used in the infinitive.
* Students also struggled with agreements of adjectives and articulated prepositions.
* Generally students used the present subjunctive very well.
* Very few students were able to use a variety of tenses.
* It was common to read literal translations.
* More consideration must be given to word choice when sourcing unfamiliar vocabulary from the dictionary.
* Students need to spend time checking their work as there were a tremendous number of careless spelling errors (e.g. *il miei genitori*), and gender errors (e.g. *mia papa*).
* Students do not know where to place the *non* to negate a verb; often it was placed after the verb.
* The modal verbs *potere* and *dovere* did not follow with an infinitive.
* Generally students had no idea where to place the direct object and indirect object pronouns. Students need to learn how to use the verb *piacere* confidently.

Section 3: Writing in Language

One hundred and nineteen students sat the 2014 Italian (continuers) examination paper.

There was a fairly even selection of the three set questions, with Question 9 — the letter to *L’ambasciata Italiana* — being slightly more popular.

The stronger students were able to cope very well with their chosen question, producing a piece of writing in Italian that was relevant to context, purpose, audience, and topic, whilst providing interesting and engaging stories/discussions/letters. These students understood the task completely, were able to write in a logical and sequential manner, and were able to meet the word length requirements. They were able to creatively and maturely expand on the detail, ideas, information, and opinions to provide an increased level of interest to engage the reader.

The weaker students did not always interpret the question/task requirements correctly or completely. For example, part of Question 9, required students to write about what they had done or how they had contributed to the Italian community in Australia. Instead, some students chose to write about what they wanted to do while they were in Italy. Also, Question 8 required students to write about three specific points and some students only managed to address two points.

Although the stronger students were able to create very original pieces of writing, it was evident that some students had included in their writing, work that they had memorised. If this is done without making appropriate adjustments to make the work relevant to the prescribed task, then ideas, information, and opinions can be quite restricted and may limit students’ ability to achieve at a higher grade band.

Students are encouraged to learn an array of language structures, vocabulary, and expressions, but must learn how to apply their knowledge appropriately to fulfil the requirements of the writing task.

Students are encouraged to practise reading questions for understanding; identifying the purpose and audience are essential for any piece of writing. It may be useful for students should try to reuse the text of the examination question in Italian in their responses to ensure that they are adhering to its requirements and conveying the relevant information.

Question 8 seemed to provide the greatest scope for creativity; students were able to provide depth of ideas, information, and opinions by the use of appropriate examples or explanations to support their point of view.

It was very pleasing to see a range of language structures being used; in particular, the stronger students implemented a variety of grammatical structures. There was a variety of tenses, in particular present, present perfect, imperfect, future, and conditional. Pronouns were also used correctly. Also, the stronger students attempted to use the subjunctive. In addition, there was a very good selection of idiomatic expressions and conjunctions incorporated where possible to add cultural authenticity to the creative writing pieces. This was particularly the case for Question 10.

Students must be careful to write negative sentences with the *non* in front of the verb, rather than after it. For example, *non capisco il problema* rather than *capisco non il problema*.

In responses to Question 9, it was evident that some students struggled with the cultural appropriateness of the opening and closing of the letter. *Ciao*, *Caro*, *Scrivimi* *presto*, *Saluti* are not appropriate greetings for this type of letter.

Students are reminded that punctuation and paragraphs remain essential components of language expression. Many students did not observe the conventions of paragraph writing and therefore their information and ideas were not conveyed in an organised manner.

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