

Italian Continuers

2011 Assessment Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
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ITALIAN CONTINUERS

2011 ASSESSMENT REPORT

OVERVIEW

Assessment 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

OVERVIEW

Students' assessment responses generally were of good standard in the school assessment. Their Teachers designed assessment tasks that were interesting in content, relevant to the topics and drew upon the performance standards to elicit responses from students at the appropriate level. The better responses were of a high order of proficiency and competence, in spoken and written forms. Many students demonstrated excellent linguistic skills across the two assessment types and accompanied these skills with imagination and creativity where appropriate.

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Overall this assessment task was completed capably by most students. There was a wide range of responses both in language proficiency and in choice of topics and text types; however, most students showed themselves to be able to arrive a response that demonstrated preparation and some degree of language accuracy. Spelling was very good throughout the cohort of students and most were able to use a variety of tenses and forms. The better responses demonstrated accuracy in making agreements of number and gender, flexibility in manipulating and the correct use of moods, as well as greater control and range of vocabulary and variety in sentence structure.

Interactions, as indicated in the subject outline, are an exchange of information, ideas and opinions, and how competently this is done is measured by the relevance of the responses, the capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately, and the capacity to interact and maintain a conversation and discussion. Interactions are not scripted and are not speeches. Many students need and wish to make notes and use cue cards, and teachers need to manage the use of these so that the task is a genuine interaction. Limiting the number of cue cards and limiting the number of words on cue cards are strategies that can assist, as is gradually allowing fewer of both to be used.

In the production of texts in Italian, students did better when the task set was of an appropriate length to allow them to demonstrate their learning. The subject outline does not prescribe a word count; however, to give information, to express an opinion, to analyse and/or reflect, require writing of some length.

Teachers may consider providing the written texts used in written text analysis tasks and transcripts of aural text analysis tasks in the moderation package together with answer sheets. The assessment type grade allocated by the teacher may also be supported by the provision of a marks scheme/rubric for the tasks.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

Students presented a wide range of topics in the In-depth Study and the best responses were those in which the student had been able to hone down from a wide topic to a more specific aspect of the topic. The majority of the oral presentations and the written responses in Italian showed creativity in relation to purpose and audience and the form of the response. These were generally informative as well as imaginative. The students who performed best in the oral presentation were very well acquainted with their material and were able to speak at the normal speed of a person presenting, but not reading a speech. Students may choose to use cue cards; however, these should be a stimulus and should not be read.

In the reflective response in English some students produced a very high calibre of thinking about their own learning. However, this section of the In-depth Study was the least well done by a majority of students. The Reflection in English was treated by some students as a reflection on the process of research rather than a reflection on the research topic's influence on their own learning, their thinking and themselves. The most successful reflection tasks showed an ability to question their research findings vis-a vis their knowledge and how it had grown and changed, and the personal influence this in-depth study has had on their understanding of themselves.

Teachers and students are also reminded that the three assessments for the In-depth Study should differ in context, audience and purpose.

Students should be made fully aware of the need to maintain the time/word limits for the three assessments in the In-depth Study: oral presentation (3-5 minutes), written response in Italian (500 words) and reflective response in English (600 words).

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Teachers are reminded to include the learning and assessment plan together with the moderation sample. The learning and assessment plan addendum was used by several teachers. These are to be signed by the school SACE coordinator or the principal.

CD recordings of Folio interactions or the In-depth Study oral presentation must be clearly labelled on the disc. If one CD is used to record more than one student, then the order should be provided so that the individuals are correctly identified. When Folio interaction tasks involve more than one student, these should be clearly identifiable by the moderator, by, for example, the students giving their SACE registration number at the beginning of the interaction to allow the listener to identify the voices in the interaction that follows.

Many teachers created their own cover sheets for the different assessment types, which included both the assessment task and also a space for the teacher's comment and grade. Usually these were accompanied by the performance standards that were applied and these were highlighted and/or ticked to show how the teachers came to their assessment decision.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Examination

ORAL EXAMINATION

Most students were able to handle the questions with ease and were well prepared for both sections: the conversation and the discussion on the In Depth Study.

In the Conversation, examiners commented that many students were able to elaborate ideas without prompting, while other students' responses were a little rehearsed but were still successful. Students were familiar and comfortable with the questions and many were confident in their responses, some demonstrating a higher level of linguistic manipulation, even in less rehearsed contexts. Many students were able to use effective connectives to maintain the conversation.

Common errors were noticed in the use of possessive adjectives with family members, the verb 'piacere', especially in the past tense, auxiliary verbs, prepositions with cities, agreements of adjectives and subjects and verbs. A few students did not conjugate verbs and used the infinitive in some cases for example, 'io andare'. On the other hand, more students used the subjunctive mood in an accurate way to express opinion.

The Discussion of the In Depth Study is usually more challenging as it requires students to have researched in a detailed way and to have thoughtfully considered their texts/resources in Italian. Some students demonstrated genuine enthusiasm and a good knowledge of the aspects of their chosen topic. Some students were able to speak in detail about the nominated points on their proforma, and the purpose of these is to help students achieve their best. A number of students, however, found it difficult to speak about these points and their three resources/texts in Italian, and did not seem well prepared. Less confident students relied more on memorised information while the more successful students demonstrated the ability to interact and draw personal conclusions about their topic.

Students and teachers need to work closely together so that topics and texts selected are suitable and facilitate deep learning. It was felt that students needed to be better prepared to discuss each of the three texts used in more detail. It was noted that a few students did not use any resources in Italian as required by the subject outline and, while this did not impact on final marks, it did raise concern.

Examiners felt that while most topics were suitable, some, such as famous Italian cities, were very broad and did not allow students the depth of research for this section. Some topics were treated more like projects rather than research with analysis and personal reflection.

Overall, most students were able to engage the examiners and speak in general terms about their chosen topic. Some were very well prepared, able to handle unpredictable questions in an effective way and elaborate when asked, yet examiners felt that there was still a lack of real depth in some discussions. Those students who brought an object or photograph were able to speak about it successfully.

WRITTEN EXAMINATION

SECTION 1: LISTENING AND RESPONDING

Although this section continues to be very challenging, students attempted all questions. Students and teachers are encouraged to devote adequate time to the development of active listening skills across Stage 1 and Stage 2.

Text 1

Students were asked to explain why Paolo and Francesca were disappointed. Successful responses identified and related information appropriately and accurately. They clearly identified Luca, the third character in the text, and explained how he would have liked to join Paolo and Francesca in Melbourne to go to the Italian film festival, to watch Italian films in the original language

Less successful responses, whilst they effectively identified general aspects of the text, failed to draw sufficient detail. Fragmented understanding caused confusion and misinterpretation of specific aspects of the text. The terms 'almeno' (at least), 'torneo' (tournament) and 'lingua italiana' were particularly challenging.

Text 2

In Text 2, students were asked to list the ingredients and quantities required for the given recipe. Students who mentioned at least 6 items obtained 3 marks. Unfortunately, given the popular recipe of 'Spaghetti alla Carbonara', a large number of students simply made a random list based on their prior knowledge, without taking into account the details in the text.

The given recipe included the following: 500 g spaghetti, 1 tablespoon salt, 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, 150 g pancetta, 3 egg yolks and 1 whole egg, 100 g grated pecorino cheese, a little black pepper, water.

Unfamiliar terms such as 'tuorlo' and students' inability to decipher numbers accurately were recurring errors. Students are reminded of the importance of revising numbers prior to their examination.

Text 3

Students had to identify who Gabriele was and why he was leaving a message on Marco's answering machine. Also, students had to explain why the date 25 April is marked in red on the calendar. Successful responses demonstrated clear understanding of the text in all its aspects. They focused on the relevant information from the text and used it to support their answers appropriately and accurately. Students explained that the date is marked in red on the calendar because it is a public holiday that commemorates Liberation Day, i.e., Italy's liberation from Nazi-fascism. Successful responses related information about Gabriele who rang up his cousin Marco to wish him a Happy Name Day.

A significant number of students, however, did not identify information appropriately to support their answers. They mistakenly interpreted the day as a 'festival' where people wore red; they failed to recognise Liberation Day or a public holiday.

Students are encouraged to check entries in the bilingual dictionary attentively before drawing conclusions. Also, it is vital for students to look at words in context to make meaning.

Text 4

In question 4(a), successful responses identified the intended audience as young people looking for work. The more eloquent responses elaborated on the purpose of the program, i.e. to inform young people about the importance of having a well prepared CV; and to give tips on what information to include in it.

Although many students were unfamiliar with the term 'biglietto da visita' (business card), successful ones were able to find the compound noun in their dictionary and/or look at the term in context to make meaning. Hence, they produced quite appropriate responses (Question 4(b)).

Less confident responses showed difficulty with the concept and did not provide sufficient information or detail. In addition, some could not identify the type of document or its function. Accurate responses indicated how a CV introduces job applicants to future employers; and how this helps them get noticed in order to be selected for a job interview.

In question 4(c), students were asked to list the skills that Dr Romano highlights as being fundamental in the workplace. Most students appropriately identified foreign language skills and computing skills.

Text 5

As a whole, Text 5 was answered satisfactorily. In question 5(a) students were asked to identify the purpose of the text, which was to advertise an Italian language course on a sailing boat in the Aeolian Islands in Sicily. Whilst most students identified some key words and make general meaning, a significant number of students did not mention that the language course took place '*in barca a vela*' (sailing boat).

In question 5(b), a significant number of students did not translate the Italian expression '*ti lascerà senza fiato*'. More successful responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the expression and provided appropriate evidence from the text, i.e., the beautiful scenery would leave you *breathless* because of the sun, beautiful sky, volcanoes, grottos, unforgettable sunsets, fishing villages, pristine beaches. The unfamiliarity with the terms '*lenzuola*' (linen) and '*cabina doppia*' (twin share accommodation) caused major confusion in question 5 (c) (i). Students are strongly encouraged to check entries in bilingual dictionaries carefully, and to pay attention to the context.

In question 5 (c) (ii), more successful responses listed two more items included in the price of the language course - the language lessons and the various excursions to the seven islands. However, once again, it was noted that a significant number of students continue to identify numbers inaccurately. The number and duration of lessons (10 x 45 minute lessons), the cost (720 euros per person for seven nights), and the minimum participants (six) caused unnecessary confusion.

SECTION 2: READING AND RESPONDING PART A

General comments:

Incorrect translations of words/phrases were a frequent problem, particularly in Text 6. Students are reminded to consult their dictionary with care and to select translations that are appropriate for the context of the reading passage.

Students are reminded to read questions carefully. Only a few students underlined/highlighted key words in the questions and/or key passages in the texts. This is a simple and effective strategy that students are encouraged to use.

English expression was at times careless and occasionally interfered with meaning. Students are reminded to read their answers to check they are coherent and actually say what they mean to say, so they are not penalised unnecessarily.

Students are reminded that work must be legible.

Text 6

6 (a) Better responses included an explanation of what happens at a 'swap party' as well as additional party details. The term *locali prestigiosi* was problematic for many students, with *prestigious locals* and *prestigious local event* among the many incorrect translations.

6 (b) Most students answered this question well. The majority of students were able to correctly identify most of the eligibility criteria for swap party items.

The most common error was stating that items had to be *less* than €50 instead of *more*. Students are reminded to note relevant information in the text and proof-read answers carefully.

Occasional errors included incorrect translation of *non devono costare meno di 50 euro* as 'they *don't* have to cost less than 50 euro' instead of 'they *must not*' which clearly alters the meaning. The word *vestiti* was occasionally translated as *dress* instead of the more general *clothing*.

6 (c) This question was generally answered well although some students did not register the *how* in the question and merely stated who benefited from the swap party without actually explaining how. Some students incorrectly wrote that left-over items donated to the Last Minute Market went to disadvantaged children, whereas the children actually benefited specifically from the entrance fees collected.

Frequent errors included mistranslations of the word *disagio* in the phrase '*in condizioni di disagio sociale*', which was incorrectly translated as *anxiety*, *embarrassment*, *discomfort*. Similarly, the adjective *disagiati* was also problematic with a number of students incorrectly translating it as *disabled* or *disturbed* instead of *disadvantaged*.

Text 7

7 (a) Despite being a relatively simple question, this was problematic for some students who incorrectly translated *4 miliardi* as 4 million instead of 4 billion. A small number of students translated it as $\frac{1}{4}$ million. The comma in *1,5 milioni di tonnellate* also created some confusion for a small minority and was occasionally recorded as 15 million instead of 1.5 million. Students are reminded that in Italian a comma is used between numbers where English uses a decimal point. A range of errors with numbers could have been avoided with careful proof-reading of answers, e.g. 4 euro instead of 4 billion euro; € instead of €50; dollars instead of euro.

The word *rifiuti* was occasionally incorrectly translated as *refused* instead of *rubbish*.

- 7 (b) This question was generally very well answered with most students highlighting the use of statistics as well as the presence of a rhetorical question to engage the reader. A number of students also correctly identified the use of the first person plural form of both the subject and possessive pronouns to directly engage the reader.
- 7 (c) This question was generally answered well, although some students did not register the *how* in the question, merely stating the positive outcomes of the Last Minute Market without actually explaining *how* the initiative actually provides those positive outcomes. More successful responses explained how the LMM was beneficial in terms of its impact on the environment, economics and social justice.
- 7 (d) While many students attempted to summarise the content of the two texts or discussed how recycling benefits society, successful responses succinctly explained what is important to Italians and what their attitude is to recycling. Those students made reference to Italians' growing awareness of the issue of enormous waste, particularly in situations of financial hardship, and an increasing willingness to reduce this waste through recycling items of clothing and salvageable foodstuffs in order to benefit themselves, the disadvantaged, and the environment. Students are reminded to read questions carefully and be aware of which key words in the question are required in the answer.

READING AND RESPONDING PART B

Students were required to write an email to a friend suggesting ways to convince their parents to allow them to go on an end-of-school holiday to Corfu.

Most students clearly managed their time well and planned effectively, highlighting sections in the text so that most cues were addressed. Responses in general were quite strong.

Most students identified the main details of the trip: cost, location, dates, and included items in the cost and the need to convince parents. More successful responses included at least a passing reference to the student exchange and the need to act quickly. The most successful responses elaborated on the reasons why the trip would be so good.

Overall, the email text type was adhered to and even though the structure lends itself to flexibility, greeting, paragraphs and appropriate signing off are necessary. Students appeared very comfortable and familiar with this form of communication.

Expression was reasonably accurate in most students, who used the reading text in an effective way. There were a few recurring problems with the phrases such as 'having a good time' written as 'avere un tempo incredibile' and consequently, students are encouraged not to translate literally. 'Greca' was often written instead of Grecia and there were a few problems with the agreement of adjectives and nouns.

SECTION 3: WRITING IN ITALIAN

Of the 3 questions in the Writing section, question 10 (diary entry) was chosen with greatest frequency with over 80% of students. 14% of students chose question 9 (speech) and only 5% selected question 11 (photograph).

Overall, the more confident students coped with the task in a confident, fluent and cohesive manner; adhering very well to the text type requirements and with variety and sophistication in language structures, vocabulary and idioms used. A few students were brief in their word count at approximately 200 words, and a few did not seem to finish the task. Some students used simple language structures and ideas to create their piece of writing and consequently needed to be more detailed.

Grammatical accuracy was variable but the more successful responses used the language with greater accuracy, particularly in relation to spelling and tenses. Some very basic errors included incorrect gender, agreements, spelling and auxiliary verbs and short sentence structures that detracted from the fluency of the writing. Conjunctions such as *anche* continued to be placed incorrectly in the sentence. At times *anche* was spelt with an accent. On the other hand, some responses demonstrated an excellent ability to manipulate the language spontaneously and with impressive accuracy and natural flair. Generally the increased use of conjunctions was an advantage to the flow of writing.

Some students clearly worked with prepared phrases and constructions that they were able to adapt to the task. *Se* clauses are one such example, where a number of students learnt to use the subjunctive and conditional well in such a circumstance. Students were clearly more comfortable in discussing familiar contexts.

In terms of text types, the diary entry was clearly more practised and therefore less problematic than the other two text types, even though the responses often missed the date, the use of a lower case letter (after the greeting) or an appropriate close or signing off. Some students did not structure their writing in paragraphs.

Question 9 was more problematic as students found the concept of addressing the panel for the speech a bit more difficult. While some students did not address the purpose of their writing in their introduction and conclusion, they did have some relevant contextual discussion in their response.

Question 11 caused the most problems. Of the few attempts made of this question, at times the response was presented as a letter or as a diary. Even though responses were satisfactory overall, very few students were familiar with or able to accurately write the creative story effectively in its genre type.

Correct use of punctuation is essential (capital letters to begin a sentence or using proper nouns, commas, full stops) as this helps to create the desired effect and assist with structure, fluency and cohesion. Also, markers commented that the increased use of idioms/colloquialisms and conjunctions rendered text responses more 'authentic.'

Responses reflected general difficulties in the use of:

- reflexive verbs generally (omitting the reflexive pronoun and using the incorrect auxiliary verb in compound tenses)
- *rendersi conto di* incorrectly used
- *amare: ti amo* used to mean I love ...
- gender and spelling of familiar words such as *ristorante*

- family nouns and possessive adjectives – omission of definite article not observed
- auxiliary verbs in compound tenses: *avere* instead of *essere* with verbs of motion
- formation of plurals
- time (and how to express it accurately) and the use of the imperfect with time in the past.. *erano le tre*
- *prendere* in the place of *portare*: *mi ha preso alla spiaggia*
- the verb *realizzare* to mean to realise (understand) and the verb *eccitare* (*sono eccitata*) to be excited. Given that these verbs now are used in this context in contemporary Italy, it is possible to permit their use in this context even though *rendersi conto* and *sono emozionato/a* are preferred.
- *anche* often spelled with an accent
- *vesito* was often *vestita* and used in the feminine
- *in bocca al lupo*, used and spelt incorrectly
- monument names must be correctly spelt
- accents
- *e`* and *e*, were not always used correctly
- water was often spelt incorrectly – *aqua* and not *acqua*.
- mum and dad were often spelt incorrectly – *mumma e papa*
- *piacere* was often used with *si* and not with its indirect object pronoun

Anglicisms:

to go for a swim: *fare una nuotata* instead of *fare un bagno*

in my dreams: *e` dentro il mio sogno*

club: *mazza* instead of *club* (sporting club)

False friends:

Favourite: *favorito*

Overall, the more successful responses easily met the word count, used a variety of language structures and tenses including the more familiar present and present perfect, but also the imperfect, future, conditional, 'if clause', subjunctive, a variety of conjunctions and apt idioms. The most effective responses were able to provide depth and breadth in their treatment of ideas, information and opinions.

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