



LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2000

ITALIAN

HIGHER and ORDINARY LEVELS

ORAL EXAMINATION (COMMON)

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

HIGHER LEVEL

Total number of candidates: 133

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Number	36	36	31	22	8
%	27.10	27.10	23.30	16.50	6.00

General Comments

While there appears to be a disproportionate number of As and Bs, it must be borne in mind that these grades were achieved mainly in single-script centres, where there were individual candidates of Italian origin or who had lived in Italy. When these results are extracted from the totals, there is a more normal distribution of grades achieved by candidates who had followed the Leaving Certificate course in schools.

The Listening Comprehension section provided some difficulty for weaker candidates. There was a very definite correspondence between a good overall result and a good result in this section. It was very difficult to achieve an A grade or even a good B grade without excellent results in the aural test. The opposite was also true, in that even when candidates did particularly well in the written paper but poorly in the aural test, their overall grade was sometimes disappointing. Teachers should be aware of the importance of preparing well for the aural by doing as much listening work as possible in the classroom.

Overall, knowledge of vocabulary was fairly poor; this is another area which needs greater emphasis in the classroom.

The third area which would seem to require more attention is the formal letter, as many candidates were not familiar with its format.

Candidates should be reminded not to write in pencil, and should be discouraged from using correcting fluid. They should be aware of the fact that it is perfectly acceptable to make a correction by crossing out and rewriting.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Overall, the aural was well answered.

Section A: the multiple-choice section was generally well answered. The four questions that caused some difficulty were Questions 2 (*sconti nei migliori alberghi*), 4 (*pacchetti comprensivi*), 7 (*hanno lasciato a terra il sacco*) and 8 (*sette feriti e tanto panico*).

In Section B, the questions on Dialogues 1 and 2 were well answered, except that the word *ricetta* was not generally understood. Dialogue 3, however, proved to be very difficult for many candidates, and only particularly good candidates scored well. Many candidates who had done very well in the rest of the aural test got very low marks here. Questions 2, 5, 6 and 7 caused particular problems. Most students did not know the word *nebbia*.

WRITTEN PAPER

SECTION A – Journalistic passage

The overall standard of answering was quite satisfactory. The first four questions were generally well answered by most candidates, although some had difficulty in choosing the exact answer and in expressing it correctly in Italian. In Question 5 very few candidates managed to cover all the points. Many only mentioned the fact that farmers were to be encouraged to grow substitute crops. From Question 5 the examiners could check whether candidates had understood the text, and the overall comment is that many had not.

SECTION B - Literature

1. **Literary Passage (unseen):** The majority of candidates chose to answer this question. Question 3(a) proved difficult for many candidates, as they did not understand *apprendimento attivo e passivo*, a concept which would probably have caused problems even in English. In Question 5, surprisingly few

candidates mentioned the author's age as the main reason for his difficulty in learning a foreign language.

2. Literary Passage from Prescribed Novel: Very few candidates answered on *Gli occhiali d'oro*, and those who did were not very familiar with the text as a whole and therefore did not do well. Very few answered on *A ciascuno il suo*, and those who did seemed not to be familiar with the text as a whole. In particular, Question 5, which should have been very well done, was not at all well answered.

3. Essay on Prescribed Text: A small number of candidates wrote an essay on *Gli occhiali d'oro*, and in general did very well. They showed an excellent knowledge of the novel and gave very accurate and apposite references to the text. The essay on the personality and role of the narrator was the more popular choice, and a number of candidates wrote a very mature and impressive essay on the topic. Candidates who wrote on *A ciascuno il suo* also did very well, some making interesting points on why this novel is not a typical detective story. There were some excellent essays, well structured, clear and to the point, although there was sometimes a tendency to tell the story rather than answer the question.

SECTION C – Writing

1. **Essay linked to the journalistic passage:** The standard of both content and language varied enormously in this section. Good candidates performed very well and dealt with the topic in a competent way. Weaker candidates had great difficulty with this section and language was very poor. As far as the content is concerned, candidates had clear opinions on the drugs issue, but poor command of grammar and syntax interfered with the communication of their opinions, thus losing them points on both content and language. Examples of every possible variation on the spelling of *la droga* were found throughout all the written work, and while there were examples of correct use of the subjunctive (e.g. "bisogna che il governo prenda una decisione"), a simple sentence with correct agreements was hard to find. This section shows clearly the linguistic ability of the candidate. Typical problem areas were: the use of the imperfect and future tenses, agreements, gender (e.g. *la problema*), and the word *gente*. Link words such as *inoltre* and *quindi* did not seem to be known.
- 2.
3. **Guided Composition:** The standard in this section was very similar to that of the previous one, although some candidates answered this question better. In certain cases, grammatical mistakes made sentences incomprehensible. A great number of candidates showed they had no understanding at all of the difference between the *imperfetto* and the *passato prossimo*, which is very important in this type of writing.. Although not all the ideas listed had to be used, some candidates used very few of the expressions. Some were copied

directly into the story without any attempt to change them: e.g. *giornata trascorsa a festeggiare l'ultimo giorno dell'anno*, and *ti svegli di soprassalto*. It was disappointing at Higher Level Leaving Certificate to see such poor examples of linguistic production. On the other hand, it must be said that there were some excellent compositions, and it was interesting to see that some students took the expression *conto alla rovescia* from the journalistic passage and used it for *l'ultimo dell'anno*. Some interesting expressions used: "morendo di sonno," "abbiamo ballato e ci siamo divertiti un sacco".

4. **Formal Letter:** Once again, the standard of both content and language varied enormously in this section. A short, simple and accurate letter covering all the points given is all that is required to do well here. In option (a), some candidates did not mention that they were writing on behalf of neighbours, and consequently lost marks. Some took *direzione* to mean directions to the campsite, and not all candidates understood the word *roulotte*. In (b) many candidates did not cover all the points mentioned, though some wrote excellent letters with wonderful descriptions of local places of interest. The format of a letter was not always adhered to, and the closing phrases were often not known or were remembered incorrectly. Consistency in the use of pronouns is important in letter-writing: some candidates ranged from *Lei* to *voi*, *loro* and even *tu* in the same letter. Errors such as "Il mio casa c'è molto granda," "la mia ragazzo" and "il mia madre" were not, unfortunately, rare. *C'è* and *è* were frequently confused, and *è* was often written without its accent. Here again, the importance of *accuracy* and *agreement* cannot be too strongly emphasised. If accuracy is insisted on right from the beginning, students will develop an eye for obvious mistakes and be able to write simple sentences correctly.

ORDINARY LEVEL

Total number of candidates: 66

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F
Number	6	27	24	7	1	1
%	9.10	40.90	36.40	10.60	1.50	1.50

General Comments

Most of the As and Bs came from single-script centres. This is probably due to the fact that these candidates were either of Italian origin or had lived in Italy for long periods. Only two candidates did not achieve a pass grade. This was partly accounted for by the high success rate in the Listening Comprehension component of the examination, where only seven students failed to reach the 40% pass mark. In general, however, candidates' vocabulary was very limited. Many candidates had problems with numbers; this was particularly evident in the Listening Comprehension section,

where times, dates and sums of money are frequently encountered. The Writing section was the weakest point for most candidates. Many did not seem to have read the instructions, and when they had, what they wrote was frequently irrelevant. Many candidates did not know the format of even the most elementary letter.

The above comments show the necessity to practise listening comprehension, learn a wider range of vocabulary, be quicker with numbers, and practise more letter-writing.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Section A

Questions 1, 7 and 8 gave most problems. Question 1 was left blank. Question 7 was not understood: most candidates seemed to guess and ticked either (a) or (b). In Question 8 few understood the word *galleria*.

Section B

This section showed a lack of cultural awareness: The candidates did not get *Siena* and misunderstood *Olanda*. Dialogue 3 proved difficult for this level, with Questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 badly done. Many candidates did not get the word *tariffa*.

SECTION A - READING

1

Question 1: There was some confusion here, as two times were mentioned, three hours and two and a half hours. Both answers were accepted.

Questions 2, 3 and 4 were well answered.

Question 5: *Mouvetate la gamba e sollevate il piede* was not understood. Most got *piede* and said "walk a little".

2

This passage proved difficult for all candidates, even native speakers, and was poorly answered. Questions 1, 2 and 3 were not well done; only a few candidates understood *tessera* in Question 3.

Question 5 was badly done: the word *tariffa* caused problems.

SECTION B – PUBLICITY PIECES/ADVERTISING/SIGNS

1

- a. Only two candidates understood the word *principianti*.
- b. The word *settimanali* was not understood.
- c. Many candidates did not understand *dall'8 giugno* and they wrote just the date.

2

- a. The English word *periodical* was not understood.
- b. Very few got *edicola*, most said "cinema" or "at the school".
- c. This question was generally well answered; a few candidates said "4 times a month".
- d. There was a wide variety of answers for this question, as there were a lot of items mentioned—astrology, cinema, environment, etc.

3

- a. Well answered.
- b. There was a limited number of correct answers to this question.
- c. Well answered.
- d. Only a few understood *lettera raccomandata*, so the answer "letter" was accepted.

SECTION C - WRITING

1 – Informal Writing

a. Informal letter

Those who chose this option did better than those who chose option (b), but they were unfamiliar with the layout of a letter. Most did not realise that they were supposed to be writing from Italy and put in a full Irish address. The date was often left out and the greeting was left without a name, or *a chara* was used. Those who did well wrote what they had learned off by heart. A few of the less able just transcribed the question without any changes.

b. Dialogue

Most did not use *Pronto*, and did not ask the friend to go to the disco. The last two instructions were generally ignored, and nobody used *che cosa pensa d'indossare l'amica*, presumably because they did not understand the word *indossare*. In many cases, this answer was not written in dialogue form.

2

This question format was new to the candidates. They did not read the instructions in English, and often simply ticked the words they understood. The words *giallo* and *magia* were not known. Only a few answered the question *Quanti libri compri all'anno?:* they did not realise it had to be answered—perhaps there should have been a line for the answer. Some candidates confused *nome* and *cognome*. *Via* was not filled in properly, no number was given, and only two candidates understood *prefisso*—most filled in a job, and put the telephone prefix with the number.

3

This question was generally done well, with most candidates getting at least 5 out of the 8 right. Cultural awareness was important here, and candidates who were aware of this did very well.

Statistics in Leaving Certificate Italian, Higher Level, 1998-2000

	Total	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
1998	100	6.00	12.00	7.00	7.00	12.00	6.00	11.00	10.00	9.00	9.00	6.00	4.00	1.00	0.00
1999	138	12.30	6.50	8.70	8.00	12.30	12.30	11.60	10.10	5.10	6.50	3.60	2.20	0.70	0.00
2000	133	18.80	15.00	9.00	9.80	11.30	8.30	7.50	8.30	6.00	2.30	3.00	0.80	0.00	0.00

Statistics in Leaving Certificate Italian, Ordinary Level, 1998-2000

	Total	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	N
1998	60	0.00	0.00	3.30	8.30	10.00	13.30	21.70	13.30	18.30	1.70	5.00	5.00	0.00	0
1999	72	0.00	1.40	1.40	5.60	8.30	4.20	13.90	22.20	13.90	12.50	11.10	5.60	0.00	0
2000	67	6.00	0.00	16.40	14.90	10.40	6.00	17.90	14.90	4.50	3.00	3.00	1.50	1.50	0

ORAL EXAMINATION (COMMON)

Section 1 General Conversation

This section worked well and even the weaker candidates performed satisfactorily. The candidates were generally well prepared and were able to express themselves without too much difficulty. Candidates were usually enthusiastic and quite anxious to talk even if they did not always have the structures to do so. The usual problems in terms of accuracy related to verbs—incorrect tenses, adjectives—lack of agreement, and articles—incorrect gender, etc. In general, however, candidates performed better in this section than in the role-play and picture sequence sections.

Section 2 Role-Play

This section was done very badly by many candidates. For the less able candidates, the fact that they had the role-play tasks in advance appeared to be a disadvantage rather than an advantage. They seemed to expend all their energy on trying to remember what they had learned off by heart and had great difficulty in having any kind of normal interaction in the role-play situation. It was frustrating for examiners to see candidates who had done well in Section 1, not score well in Section 2 just because they could not recall what they had memorised. They were unable to use the

