



JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

2002

ITALIAN

HIGHER AND ORDINARY LEVELS

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

The Junior Certificate Italian examination is based on a common syllabus and has three main components, viz.,

		Higher Level	Ordinary Level
Part I:	Listening Comprehension	140 marks (43.75%)	140 marks (43.75%)
Part II:	Reading Comprehension	100 marks (31.25 %)	120 marks (37.50 %)
Part III:	Written Expression	80 marks (25%)	60 marks (18.75%)
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		320 marks	320 marks
Oral examination (optional)		80 marks	80 marks

The candidature this year was **167** at Higher Level and **101** at Ordinary Level, a significant increase on the numbers in recent years. No candidates presented for an optional oral examination, hence all candidates' scripts were marked out of a possible total of 320 marks.

Table 1. Results for 2002

Higher Level	Grade	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
	Number	167	26	45	39	45	10	1	1
	%	100	15.6	26.9	23.4	26.9	6	0.6	0.6
Ordinary Level									
Number	101	2	8	30	45	13	3	0	
%	100	2.0	7.9	29.7	44.6	12.9	3.0	0.0	

Table 2. Percentages of candidates achieving each grade in Higher Level Italian in 2000-2002

	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
2000	86	38.4	24.4	30.2	7.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2001	134	35.1	29.1	30.6	5.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
2002	167	15.6	26.9	23.4	26.9	6.0	0.6	0.6

Table 3. Percentages of candidates achieving each grade in Ordinary Level Italian in 2000-2002

	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
2000	44	4.5	45.5	36.4	13.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
2001	58	10.3	65.5	20.7	3.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
2002	101	2.0	7.9	29.7	44.6	12.9	3.0	0.0

GENERAL COMMENTS (HIGHER LEVEL)

In general, it was felt that the examination was fair and appropriate to Junior Certificate Higher level. The questions were nicely "weighted" and the grades awarded reflected the students' abilities in Italian.

After two years of rather inflated results, this year sees a return to something like the pattern of the years before 2000. The overall breakdown of candidates by grade broadly resembles that in the other modern languages at this level. The increased percentage of Ds, at 26.9%, for example, is more in line with typical percentages for the other modern languages. While the percentage of As is down considerably on last year, it is still quite high at 15.6%.

This year again, there was a good number of single-candidate centres, i.e., schools where only one student sat the examination. Typically, these candidates' results tend to distort the general profile, as many of them are native Italians, children of Italian parents, or have lived in Italy. Almost all of them achieve grades A or B. This year, these single candidates accounted for only about 10% of the total cohort, and so their effect on the percentage breakdown was not as marked as in previous years. It is to be expected that as the number of students taking Italian increases, thanks to the promotion of the subject through the Languages Initiative and the greater availability of teaching materials, the results profile will continue to "normalise".

One disappointing feature of this year's results is the high number of Es, Fs and NGs. The most likely explanation is that these candidates were not able for this level, and would have been better advised to take Ordinary Level. The perception persists that Italian is an easy subject, and sometimes candidates are allowed to take Higher Level, even when for most other subjects they take the Ordinary Level.

GENERAL COMMENTS (ORDINARY LEVEL)

In general, it was felt that the examination was fair and appropriate for the level. However, the results were disappointing, compared with those of previous years. There was a marked drop in the percentage of As and Bs, and an increase in the percentage of all the lower grades, with 15.9% achieving E or F grades.

Junior Certificate Ordinary Level Italian is a very predictable examination, both in form and content, and this year's paper was no more difficult than those of previous years. Some of the factors mentioned above in regard to performance at Higher Level are relevant here also, especially as a bigger cohort tends to produce a more normal distribution of grades. If some of the candidates who performed poorly at Higher Level had taken Ordinary Level instead, it would very likely have had a positive effect on the results profile of both levels.

For future reference, a careful reading of this report by teachers and attention to its recommendations should prove helpful. Finally, it is important to emphasise that for many candidates at this level the achievement of a grade D in a foreign language is a considerable accomplishment.

2. ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE (HIGHER LEVEL)

Part 1. Listening Comprehension

The Listening Comprehension Section was well answered by the majority of students.

In Section A, Questions 4(b) and 5(b) proved the most difficult. 4(b) was answered incorrectly by most candidates, some of whom confused *sabato pomeriggio* with *sabato sera*. Question 5(b) was not answered as completely as required by the marking scheme, because the candidates did not write “trips to nearby towns”. Many candidates wrote “pizza” instead of “meals in a pizzeria”.

Surprisingly, there was also a significant number of wrong answers in 6(b), parts of the body.

Section B was generally well answered. Questions (i) 3 and 4 (a) and (ii) 3(a) generated the greatest number of incorrect answers. Question (i) 2 was answered incompletely by about 30% of the candidates.

Part II. Reading Comprehension

This section of the examination was generally well answered, though not as well as the listening comprehension section.

A. Questions 1 and 2 were well answered, although, 1(a), 1(b) and 2(d) caused some difficulty. There were few correct answers to 1(b), as many candidates did not understand “si è rotto”. In 2(c) a number of students wrote 70 for *sessanta*.

B. There were few correct answers to 1(c): the word *pittrice* was not understood. 1(e) was incompletely answered by many candidates. 1(h) was also badly answered.

C. Question 1 (signs and notices) was generally very badly answered. Very few candidates understood (b) *orario continuato* correctly.

Question 2 (odd-word-out) was reasonably well attempted by most. However, (c) was incorrectly answered by the majority, the word *banco* causing much confusion.

Question 3 was well answered with the exception of (c) and (e), where *in stanza con i genitori* and *consigliata* caused problems for most candidates.

Question 4 was well answered.

Question 5 was well answered with the exception of (a) which was incorrectly answered in most cases, *bambini* being mistaken for “babies”.

Question 6 was reasonably well answered in general, except for (a) and (c). Many candidates wrote only the website address.

Part III. Writing

This Section always proves the most challenging. Many candidates are not sufficiently confident and/or competent in the use of written Italian. Examiners noted frequent problems with sentence structures, tenses and other aspects of grammar. For example, most candidates had problems with the plural form, *i tuoi genitori*, many writing *il tuo genitori*. In many cases, the use of the *passato prossimo* was poor. One examiner noted that some candidates' attempts at the letter and message were quite poor compared with their answering of the rest of the paper.

The bullet point instructions for the letter and the message were found to be helpful.

The final point of the letter—meeting at the airport—was poorly answered in many cases.

Question B, the message, was generally not well answered: few students scored well here.

Question C1, the verb cloze test, was poorly answered, while Question C2, the articles/prepositions cloze test was well answered.

3. ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE (ORDINARY LEVEL)

Part 1. Listening Comprehension

On the whole, this section was well answered.

Section A caused greatest difficulty, whilst most candidates scored best in B. Questions A 2(a), 5(a), 5(b), 6(a), 6(b) and B(i)4(a) were answered incorrectly the most frequently. Many did not understand *motorino*.

Section B was generally well answered. In Question (ii)1(a), some confusion was caused by the fact that the tape asks “Are you free for the weekend?” whilst the question ambiguously asks “Francesco wants to know what Massimo is doing at the week end”. In Question (ii) 4(b), the inclusion of the word *prenotare* would have helped candidates to answer correctly.

Part II. Reading Comprehension

A 1 was well answered except for (ii) *laboratorio linguistico*.

A 2 was well answered with approximately 30% of candidates achieving full marks. Some candidates may not have studied the advertisements and just guessed the answers.

A 3 was badly answered by quite a number of candidates. Few candidates understood *visite guidate*.

A 4 was well answered, on the whole, except that candidates did not give the five languages required, *tedesco* not being generally understood.

A 5 and 6 were well answered overall.

Most students attempted B 1, but in question (c) most candidates omitted “afternoon”.

Question (d) was incorrectly and incompletely answered by most candidates. Possibly the construction of *Ricordati di riportarmi la rivista che ti ho prestato* proved too difficult for Ordinary Level students.

B 2: Instructions to answer in English would have helped here, as many candidates answered in Italian. This is the case also for other parts of the reading comprehension test. In future, the rubric should state clearly that candidates are to answer in English.

Part III. Writing

Section A

This part of the examination was very badly answered. One examiner reported that, out of 73 candidates, fourteen did not attempt Section A, and twenty-seven received 0 marks for Section B, while one student did not attempt Section B at all. For A 1, candidates generally copied verbatim from the note provided and received their marks for greetings and endings only, which often were just *Ciao* and *Ciao*. Sentence structures were weak and/or non-existent. Many candidates did not perform all the required tasks in postcard A 2, thus losing marks.

Section B

Most candidates attempted B 1, some achieving full marks. The sequencing required proved very difficult for most.

Very few candidates achieved full marks for B2. In general, B2 was very badly answered, many candidates scoring 0 for this section, and only a couple of candidates getting it right.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS: BOTH LEVELS

- While candidates' mastery of the receptive skills of listening and reading is generally satisfactory, their competence in written expression—the only productive skill tested at Junior Certificate level—generally leaves a lot to be desired. It is discouraging to find that many candidates seem unable to produce even the simplest sentence after three years' study of the language. It may be that the lack of a compulsory oral examination tends to lead to an excessive emphasis on the receptive skills, to the detriment of spoken and written Italian.
- **Students need to be engaged in the production of a variety of simple, original written texts right from the beginning of First Year.** Teachers should make provision for this when they are planning their year's work, and class time should be devoted to it on a regular basis. If this were to happen, the modest level of written competence required in the Junior Certificate examination would be well within the reach of most candidates.
- The question of *language awareness and grammatical accuracy* follows naturally from the previous recommendation. If the students are writing regularly throughout the three years of the Junior Cycle, there will be many opportunities to teach them grammar in context, and they will develop an eye for obvious mistakes and be able to write simple, correct Italian. They can also be encouraged to take pride in the presentation of their written work. Project work and correspondence with pen-pals are examples of activities which would help in this regard.

