



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2016

ITALIAN

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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1. Introduction

1.1 Syllabus Structure

The current Leaving Certificate Italian syllabus was introduced in 1995 and first examined in 1997. The syllabus shares a common structure, including common aims and objectives, with those of the other modern European language syllabuses.

The syllabus aims to cater for a wide range of pupil ability. Assessment is at two levels: Ordinary and Higher. While the syllabus is the same for both levels, the performance targets involve language use of varying degrees of complexity. Differentiation between the levels is therefore achieved through differing levels of difficulty and complexity of the tasks set on the examination, along with different relative weightings between productive and receptive language skills.

This report should be read in conjunction with the examination papers, the published marking schemes and the syllabus for this subject. The examination papers and marking schemes are available on the State Examination Commission's website www.examinations.ie and the syllabuses are available at www.curriculumonline.ie.

1.2 Assessment Specification

The core assessment objectives reflect the four areas of language use that arise from the productive and receptive use of the oral and written language. These are: understanding the spoken language; understanding the written language; communicating in the spoken language; communicating in the written language. They are often summarised for convenience as listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The assessment objectives are specified more fully in the syllabus.

The relative weightings assigned to the four areas is also specified in the syllabus. These weightings differ for the two levels, in recognition of the fact that, in the ongoing process of acquiring a language, the receptive skills develop earlier and to a greater degree than do the productive skills. The weightings are as follows:

	Higher level	Ordinary level
Speaking	25%	20%
Listening comprehension	20%	25%
Reading comprehension	30%	40%
Writing	25%	15%

Table 1: mark weightings by level for areas of language use

The examination at each level comprises three components: an oral examination, which is taken at a common level and tests the candidate’s ability to communicate in the spoken language, a listening comprehension test (understand the spoken language), and a written paper containing both a reading comprehension section (understand the written language) and a written production section (communicate in the written language). The marks for these components and sections are allocated according to the above table.

1.3 Participation Trends

Table 2 gives the overall participation rates of candidates in Leaving Certificate Italian for the last five years. There has been a moderate increase in the number of Leaving Certificate students taking Italian in the last two years.

Given the small candidature and small number of schools offering Italian as a mainstream subject, fluctuations in cohort size at both levels and in the gender composition of the cohort occur from year to year. No significant statistical inferences can be drawn from such fluctuations.

Year	Italian candidature	Total Leaving Certificate candidature*	Italian as % of total
2012	384	52589	0.7
2013	352	52767	0.7
2014	333	54025	0.6
2015	436	55045	0.8
2016	512	55707	0.9

*Total Leaving Certificate candidature excludes Leaving Certificate Applied candidates.

Table 2: participation in Leaving Certificate Italian, 2012 to 2016

The breakdown in terms of participation at Higher and Ordinary levels over the last five years is given in **Table 3**. The breakdown in terms of gender at Higher level and at Ordinary level over the last five years is given in **Table 4** and **Table 5** respectively. Given the size of the overall cohort the breakdown by level and by gender is relatively stable.

Year	Total Italian Candidature	Number at Ordinary level	Number at Higher level	% Ordinary level	% Higher level
2012	384	106	278	27.6	72.4
2013	352	94	258	26.7	73.3
2014	333	85	248	25.6	74.4
2015	436	111	325	25.5	74.5
2016	512	146	366	28.5	71.5

Table 3: number and percentage of candidates at each level, 2012 to 2016

Year	Total Higher level	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	Female as % of total	Male as % of total
2012	278	192	86	69.1	31.9
2013	258	180	78	69.8	30.2
2014	248	173	75	69.8	30.2
2015	325	241	84	74.2	25.8
2016	366	262	104	71.6	28.4

Table 4: gender composition of Higher level cohort, 2012 to 2016

Year	Total Ordinary level	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	Female as % of total	Male as % of total
2012	106	68	38	64.1	35.9
2013	94	56	38	59.6	40.4
2014	85	42	43	49.4	50.6
2015	111	63	48	56.7	43.3
2016	146	97	49	66.4	33.6

Table 5: gender composition of Ordinary level cohort, 2012 to 2016

2. Performance of candidates

2.1 Higher Level Statistics

The distribution of grades awarded over the last five years is given in **Table 6** (lettered grades) and **Table 7** (sub-grades).

Year	A	B	C	A, B, C	D	E	F	NG	E, F, NG
2012	25.2	27.4	25.5	78.1	20.9	1.1	0	0	1.1
2013	26.3	36.4	26.8	84.5	14.0	1.6	0	0	1.6
2014	21.8	26.3	33.1	81.2	16	2.4	0.4	0	2.8
2015	26.1	27.2	26.8	81.5	16.9	1.5	0	0	1.5
2016	23.8	28.2	26.8	78.5	19.4	1.9	0.3	0	2.2

Table 6 Percentage of candidates awarded each lettered grade in Higher Level Italian, 2012 – 2016

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2012	11.2	14	7.2	10.8	9.4	9.7	9.0	6.8	10.1	6.1	4.7	1.1	0	0
2013	14.3	12.0	11.6	12.4	12.4	7.0	7.4	7.4	7.0	3.5	3.5	1.6	0	0
2014	10.9	10.9	10.1	6.5	9.7	11.7	9.3	12.1	6.0	6.0	4.0	2.4	0.4	0
2015	13.8	12.3	8.6	10.8	11.1	7.1	8.0	9.8	7.1	4.3	5.5	1.5	0	0
2016	10.1	13.7	12.8	7.7	7.7	10.7	9.0	6.8	10.1	5.5	3.8	1.9	0.3	0

Table 7 Percentage of candidates awarded each sub-grade in Higher Level Italian, 2012 – 2016

The increase in candidature in 2016 was accompanied by a small decrease in the percentage of candidates achieving an A1 grade and increase in the A2 grades. It is noted that this is a relatively small cohort, so what may appear to be a significant percentage change can occur from comparatively modest changes in absolute numbers. Each year a number of candidates present at a ‘native’ or ‘near native’ level of competency. Small changes in the numbers of such candidates can impact significantly on statistics, particularly across the A1/A2 grades.

The distribution of sub-grades by gender over the last five years is given in **Table 8** (female candidates) and **Table 9** (male candidates).

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2012	10.4	13.5	7.3	10.9	9.4	8.3	8.9	8.3	10.9	7.3	4.2	0.5	0	0
2013	12.2	11.7	12.8	13.3	11.7	8.3	6.7	8.9	6.7	2.8	3.9	1.7	0	0
2014	9.2	11.5	9.2	7.5	10.9	13.8	10.3	9.8	6.9	5.7	4.6	0.6	0	0
2015	14.9	11.2	9.5	12.0	12.0	7.9	6.6	8.7	7.1	3.3	5.8	0.8	0	0
2016	11.1	14.1	14.1	8.8	6.9	11.8	8.4	6.5	8.0	4.2	3.8	1.9	0.4	0

Table 8: Percentage of female candidates awarded each sub-grade in Higher Level Italian, 2012 – 2016

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2012	11.6	14.0	9.3	8.1	9.3	14.0	10.5	3.5	8.1	3.5	5.8	2.3	0	0
2013	19.2	12.8	9.0	10.3	14.1	3.8	9.0	3.8	7.7	5.1	3.8	1.3	0	0
2014	12.0	12.0	10.7	4.0	6.7	9.3	6.7	16.0	5.3	6.7	2.7	6.7	1.3	0
2015	10.7	15.5	6.0	7.1	8.3	4.8	11.9	13.1	7.1	7.1	4.8	3.6	0	0
2016	7.7	12.5	9.6	4.8	9.6	7.7	10.6	7.7	15.4	8.7	3.8	1.9	0	0

Table 9: Percentage of male candidates awarded each sub-grade in Higher Level Italian, 2012 – 2016

In terms of the percentage of candidates scoring at or above any given grade, these results show that, depending on sub-grade and year in question, the stronger performance varies between male and female.

2.2 Ordinary Level Statistics

The distribution of grades awarded over the last five years is given in **Table 10** (lettered grades) and **Table 11** (sub-grades).

Year	A	B	C	A, B, C	D	E	F	NG	E, F, NG
2012	1.9	24.5	34.8	61.2	28.3	8.5	0.9	0.9	10.3
2013	3.2	27.6	34.1	64.9	30.8	3.2	1.1	0	4.3
2014	1.2	16.5	36.5	54.2	40.0	5.9	0	0	5.9
2015	2.7	21.6	37.8	62.1	24.3	8.1	3.6	1.8	13.5
2016	4.8	15	47.9	67.8	28.1	3.4	0.7	0	4.1

Table 10: Percentage of candidates awarded each lettered grade in Ordinary Level Italian, 2012 – 2016

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2012	1.9	0	4.7	8.5	11.3	11.3	7.5	16	6.6	9.4	12.3	8.5	0.9	0.9
2013	2.1	1.1	7.4	8.5	11.7	9.6	9.6	14.9	9.6	10.6	10.6	3.2	1.1	0
2014	0	1.2	2.4	4.7	9.4	10.6	11.8	14.1	14.1	9.4	16.5	5.9	0	0
2015	0	2.7	0.9	6.3	14.4	10.8	11.7	15.3	7.2	9.0	8.1	8.1	3.6	1.8
2016	0.7	4.1	0.7	6.8	7.5	12.3	16.4	19.2	10.3	9.6	8.2	3.4	0.7	0

Table 11 Percentage of candidates awarded each sub-grade in Ordinary Level Italian, 2012 – 2016

Given the small number of candidates involved, it is not possible to draw conclusions from small differences between Table 10 and Table 11.

The distribution of sub-grades by gender over the last five years is given in **Table 12** (female candidates) and **Table 13** (male candidates).

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2012	1.5	0	2.9	11.8	8.8	11.8	11.8	17.6	5.9	8.8	11.8	5.9	0	1.5
2013	3.6	1.8	7.1	7.1	16.1	12.5	12.5	14.3	8.9	8.9	5.4	1.8	0	0
2014	0	2.4	2.4	4.8	14.3	9.5	14.3	19.0	11.9	9.5	7.1	4.8	0	0
2015	0	3.2	1.6	9.5	20.6	12.7	12.7	14.3	7.9	7.9	4.8	1.6	3.2	0
2016	0	5.2	1.0	9.3	8.2	15.5	16.5	18.6	7.2	7.2	6.2	4.1	1.0	0

Table 12 Percentage of female candidates awarded each sub-grade in Ordinary Level Italian, 2012 – 2016

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2012	2.6	0	7.9	2.6	15.8	10.5	0	13.2	7.9	10.5	13.2	13.2	2.6	0
2013	0	0	7.9	10.5	5.3	5.3	5.3	15.8	10.5	13.2	18.4	5.3	2.6	0
2014	0	0	2.3	4.7	4.7	11.6	9.3	9.3	16.3	9.3	25.6	7.0	0	0
2015	0	2.1	0	2.1	6.3	8.3	10.4	16.7	6.3	10.4	12.5	16.7	4.2	4.2
2016	2.0	2.0	0	2.0	6.1	6.1	16.3	20.4	16.3	14.3	12.2	2.0	0	0

Table 13 Percentage of male candidates awarded each sub-grade in Ordinary Level Italian, 2012 – 2016

Given the small number of candidates involved, it is not possible to draw conclusions from small differences between Table 12 and Table 13.

3. Analysis of Candidate Performance

3.1 Engagement and Performance

Statistical information on performance on the various questions in the written and aural components is presented below. Data on performance in the various aspects of the oral component are not captured centrally in a manner that allows for similar analysis.

Higher Level

Table 14 is a summary based on an analysis of a random selection of 40 scripts (approximately 11 % of all scripts).

Section	Question	Popularity (% attempts)	Rank order in popularity	Average mark (and as %)	Rank order in average mark	Topic
A	1	N/A	N/A	35.2(58.6%)	6	<i>Table Babel</i> language platform
B	1	8(20%)	=2	45.8(76.3%)	2	Literary Piece <i>Gli anni al contrario</i>
	2 A	8(20%)	=2	42.1(70.1%)	3	<i>Io non ho paura</i>
	2 B	2(20%)	4	46.5(77.5%)	1	<i>Marcolvaldo</i>
	3A1	17(42.5%)	1	38.7(64.5%)	5	Essay on <i>Io non ho paura</i>
	3A2	0(0%)	=5	N/A	=7	Essay on <i>Io non ho paura</i>
	3 B1	5(12.5%)	3	39.8(65.8%)	4	Essay on <i>Marcolvaldo</i>
	3 B2	0(0%)	=5	N/A	=7	Essay on <i>Marcolvaldo</i>
C	1	N/A	N/A	17.3(69.2%)	2	Importance of languages
	2	N/A	N/A	18.6(74.4%)	1	Summer experience
	3(a)	30(75%)	1	33.2(66.4%)	3	Class reunion in Italy
	3(b)	10(25%)	2	29.8(59.6%)	4	An online order
Aural	I	N/A	N/A	14.7(91.9%)	1	Varied MCQs
	D. 1	N/A	N/A	12.4(77.5%)	2	Help with Chemistry exam
	D. 2	N/A	N/A	7.4(43.5%)	4	Wallet stolen
	D. 3	N/A	N/A	22.4(72.3%)	3	Interview with captain of basketball team

Table 14: popularity of and average mark for each question, Higher Level Italian

The aural component, along with question 1 of the written paper and Section C question 1 and 2 Section A in the aural, had at high success rate at 91.9%. Conversely, Dialogue 2 was more challenging for candidates - with a 43.5% success rate. In Section B candidates are exposed to choice and the question SA1 was the most popular with a 42.5% attempt rate. The best answered question, where no choice was involved, was question 2, Section C.

The percentage of surplus questions attempted in Section B - literary optional section - was 25%. This figure includes questions started but not completed.

Ordinary Level

Table 15 is a summary based on an analysis of a random selection of 20 scripts.

Section	Question	Popularity (% attempts)	Rank order in popularity	Average mark (and as %)	Rank order in average mark	Topic
A	1	N/A	N/A	30.3(75.7%)	2	Italians working abroad
	2	N/A	N/A	18.3(45.75%)	7	Swap shop
B	1	N/A	N/A	17.1(88.5%)	1	Job advertisements
	2	N/A	N/A	12.25(62.5%)	4	European volunteer service
	3	N/A	N/A	10.7(66.8%)	3	Bargain section
	4	N/A	N/A	7.1(59.1%)	5	Spending a package
	5	N/A	N/A	4.9(40.8%)	9	Cinema offer
C	1(a)	100%	1	12.1(40.3%)	10	Letter on summer plans and plans for next year
	1(b)	0	2	N/A	N/A	Dialogue on spending day together and day plan
	2	N/A	N/A	12.5(56.8%)	6	Form filling basic personal information
	3	N/A	N/A	3.6(45%)	8	Daily routine
Aural	A	N/A	N/A	14.3(59.9%)	1	Varied MCQs
	D. 1	N/A	N/A	4.9(27.2%)	3	Getting help with Chemistry exam
	D. 2	N/A	N/A	4.3(23.8%)	4	Wallet stolen
	D. 3	N/A	N/A	15.59(38.75%)	2	Interview with captain of basketball team

Table 15: popularity of and average mark for each question, Ordinary Level Italian

The majority of questions on the Ordinary level paper are compulsory. Candidates scored highest on average from the sample in question 1, Section B. From this small sample, candidates scored lowest in the three dialogues in the aural section. The examination paper offers a broad range of topics which should aid the aural skills. However, candidates in this limited sample found all three dialogue questions challenging. In general, candidates performed less well on the aural component of the examination than in the examination as a whole.

3.2 Attainment of Key Syllabus Objectives

Communicating in the spoken language (oral examination)

The oral examination is common to both Higher and Ordinary Level. The oral comprises three parts: General Conversation, Role-Play and a Picture Sequence. The Role-Plays and Picture Sequences in 2016 were the same as for 2015. The time allotted per candidate is fifteen minutes.

Elements from all three strands of the Behavioural Objectives on the Syllabus may be included in the Oral Examination. The main emphasis is generally on the Performance Objectives set out under *Strand I: Basic Communicative Proficiency*, e.g. I.3. - understanding, seeking and giving information about climate and weather. The conversation may also include elements from *Strand II: Language Awareness*, e.g. II.4. - talking about your experience of the target language and *Strand III: Cultural Awareness*, e.g. III.5 - understanding, describing and discussing issues that transcend cultural divisions. The General Conversation, Role-Play and Picture Sequence span the range of General Activity/ Theme components of the syllabus.

Most candidates showed a willingness and enthusiasm to communicate. The performance of the candidates of the 2016 Leaving Certificate examination spanned the entire range of abilities from 'native' or 'near native' to very weak. Both candidates and teachers are to be commended on the work they undertook in preparation for the orals. Marks achieved were broadly in line with those of previous years. Examiners expressed general satisfaction with the overall standard of candidate performance. In general, candidates performed better in the General Conversation element of the examination. Examiners noted that some candidates found the Role-Play and Picture Sequence sections of the examination somewhat challenging and gave less successful responses in respect of these elements of the examination.

(i) General Conversation

Examiners were impressed with the candidates' general willingness to engage fully with the oral examination. Examiners noted that candidates had prepared general topics very well. However, Examiners reported that many candidates simply offered a basic response and did not attempt to expand when answering. Expansion of answers is very important, thus providing the candidates with the best opportunity to display their level of competence and to gain marks. Some candidates had difficulty with basic grammatical structures, used inaccurate language and did not always have the necessary vocabulary to express themselves. Many candidates tended to speak only in the present tense, thus limiting their opportunities to gain marks in an examination, where a broad range of verbal tenses are required. Candidates discussed school, pastimes/hobbies, plans for the future, cultural differences between Ireland and Italy and many other topics that arose in the course of the conversation. Candidates have the option of discussing one of the prescribed Italian literary texts for the written examination – *Io non ho paura* by Niccolò Ammaniti or *Marcovaldo* by Italo Calvino. Only occasionally in the past was this option chosen. In 2016, four candidates chose to discuss *Io non ho paura*.

Role-Play

Many candidates engaged reasonably well with the role-play element of the examination. Examiners reported that many candidates did not speak in the correct register for this element of the examination. Pronunciation was sometimes poor and at times incomprehensible. Examiners indicated that some candidates tended to over-rely on memorized material, which often created difficulties for less fluent candidates. At times, the fact that a role-play had been prepared in advance proved to be a disadvantage to some candidates who focused their efforts on trying to remember what they had memorized, rather than reacting to the role-play situation. A small number of candidates read the prompts in Italian from the Role-Play card and made little effort to participate or engage in any exchange with the Examiner. Some candidates lacked the vocabulary and grammatical structures to communicate successfully. Some candidates responded mainly in English. Candidates who prepare well for this part of the examination tend to perform well.

Picture Sequence

Many candidates gave well prepared descriptions of the Picture Sequences but, as with the Role-Plays, an over-reliance on memorized material meant that there was, at times, a lack of spontaneity in the language. Again in the Picture Sequence section, pronunciation was, at times poor. A small number of candidates lacked the vocabulary and grammatical structures to complete the task successfully.

Recurring errors reported by examiners:

- Verb conjugations
- Inadequate knowledge of subjunctive and conditional tenses
- Agreements
- Pronunciation
- Syntax, word order
- Failure to recognise words within the question which indicate the tense which should be used. *ieri.. domani*
- Using English words (e.g. names of cities)
- Using Irish words instead of Italian words
- Gender of common nouns confused or unknown - *il problema*
- Candidates not using future tense (but using 'vorrei + infinitive' to 'circumvent' using future tense)
- Comprehension problems.
- Not knowing how to say times (e.g. when school starts) or numbers (e.g. points needed for a course)
- “Lei” not being used in role play
- Overuse and incorrect use of *mi piace* and *mi piacerebbe*
- Incorrect use of articles, prepositions and possessive pronouns
- Echoing the question form used by the Examiner*Come vieni a scuola?*
..*Vieni*Lack of the necessary vocabulary to deal with a particular topic
e.g. school - and not knowing words like *divisa, maturità, orario*
- The question “*Sei mai stato in Italia?*” was very often not understood by candidates and had to be rephrased by the Examiner in order to elicit a response
- Use of auxiliary verb *avere* instead of *essere* in the *passato prossimo*
- Use of *essere* instead of *avere* when speaking of age.

Understanding the spoken language (listening comprehension)

Higher level

This Aural section was generally well answered. However, at times candidates did not give full answers when full details were required. Weaker students had the opportunity to gain marks by recognising basic but important vocabulary e.g. *chimica, ripetere, esperienza, frutta e verdura, offerta, veterinaria, carismatico ect.*

Section A

Multiple choices section did not prove overly challenging and the majority of candidates answered very well in this section.

Section B - Dialogue 1

Question 1

This question was reasonably well answered by most students. Some candidates incorrectly wrote “she won’t be going on holiday”. The word *rimandata* was answered correctly by over half the candidates which is a word that could be considered more challenging at this level.

Question 2

Not all candidates provided the full information required. Some candidates incorrectly gave the fact that Marta will not be going on holidays this summer. Some omitted “repeat” or “chemistry” and a small number omitted the answer “examination”.

Question 3

This question was reasonably well answered. Some candidates omitted “chemistry teacher”.

Question 4

Candidates generally answered this question well. Some candidates said “pick fruit and veg” but did not include “in the garden”

Dialogue 2

Overall, candidates found this dialogue the most difficult.

Question 1

This question was attempted by many but was not generally well answered.

Question 2

Many answers to this question were incorrect. Many candidates did not understand the basic word *portafoglio* - which was a key part of the answer.

Question 3

Many candidates did not give full answers to this question. For the *Why?* many candidates either wrote that “he was a good customer” or “to protect the reputation of the shop”.

Question 4

Many candidates were unable to give full details here thus not achieving full marks. The most common element omitted was the idea that there were *due ragazzi*/ “two guys”.

Dialogue 3

Question 1

This question was well answered.

Question 2

This question was well answered. Some confused “accept your limits” with things like “they are limited” or “you can go beyond your limits”.

Question 3

Answered well. There were slight variances such as “encourage the team when they are losing”.

Question 4 and Question 5

Generally well answered by many candidates.

Question 6

Most candidates got some of the details correct here. Quite a few missed either the idea of the diet or going to bed early, or both. Very few candidates mentioned the time management idea. A small number of candidates just said “sleep”.

Question 7

Well answered. However, some candidates said “arm” instead of “leg”.

Question 8

This question was generally well answered.

Ordinary level

In the aural section, the standard this year was rather poor. In some cases questions were not attempted. It was noted that only a small number of candidates achieved full marks in Section A of the aural paper. Dialogue 3 was less challenging than Dialogue 1 and Dialogue 2.

Section A:

The choice of answer in the multiple choice section has to be clear for marks to be awarded. Question 5 and question 6 proved to be the most challenging - few candidates answered them correctly.

Section B

Dialogue 1

Question 1

Full answers were not provided by candidates. Many candidates answered vaguely with “holiday” or “holiday in Europe” adding “with his parents” on occasions. Some other candidates wrote “finished school” or “camp”.

Question 2

This question was, in general, poorly answered. Many candidates were unable to understand the piece - as a variety of incorrect answers were given.

Question 3

This question was reasonably well answered. Many candidates answered “uncle” however, expansion of the answer was generally not given.

Question 4

This question was poorly answered. Many candidates omitted the word “help” in the answer - “to help cleaning the carport/garage”.

Dialogue 2

Many candidates did not include key details in their answers.

Question 1 and Question 2 were reasonably well answered

Question 3

This question was poorly answered. Many candidates did not include that “he was disappointed”.

Question 4

This question was poorly answered. Many candidates did not understand the context of the conversation and answered off point.

Dialogue 3

Question 1

This question was well answered. Many candidates answered “father”.

Question 2

This question was poorly answered. Few candidates offered the correct answer.

Question 3

This question was adequately answered.

Question 4 and Question 5

Both of these questions were well answered. The vocabulary in these questions proved manageable for candidates.

Question 6

This question proved to be the most challenging for candidates. Many candidates incorrectly answered “with family relaxing”.

Questions 7 and Questions 8

The vocabulary in these questions proved manageable for most candidates.

Understanding the written language (reading comprehension)

Higher Level

General Comments

Candidates performed reasonably well overall. The topic proved to be accessible and many candidates grasped the ideas without too much difficulty. However, some candidates struggled to put the answers into their own words - *spiegate con le vostre parole*. Some candidates did not use the correct subjects with verbs or did not change the pronouns where required.

Question 5 proved challenging. The *Founders* question was often not answered fully or indeed correctly answered. A significant number of candidates did not mention the idea of dining in either Question 1 or Question 5, it seems that many were confused in relation to the *Founders* section in question 5 and talked only about Helena Geraci.

Section A

“A cena con lo straniero per imparare la lingua”

Question 1

Most candidates answered this question well, with candidates identifying the key elements *persone sconosciute, cenano, parlano in lingua straniera, imparare o ripassare, socializzare*. It is of note that reference to *cena* was often omitted.

Question 2 (a) and (b)

This question was well answered. However, some candidates omitted elements of the answer, thus not achieving full marks.

Question 3(a)

This question was well answered.

Question 3 (b)

This question was generally answered well.

Question 4 (a) and (b)

These questions were generally answered very well.

Question 5

In general, this question was not well answered. Insufficient detail was provided in many responses. The “*What?*” element of the question, very often, was not fully answered. Frequently, only one full answer was given in an attempt to cover the two “*What*” elements of the question.

Founders: Frequently not answered fully. Often answered by just talking about Helena Geraci.

Section B

In Section B, candidates had **three** options:

1. an unseen literary passage
2. a literary passage from one of the two prescribed texts
3. an essay in either English/Irish or Italian on one of the two prescribed texts.

Below is the breakdown of the candidates’ choices in Section B in 2016 - some candidates attempted more than one option indicated in brackets.

1	Literary passage (unseen) <i>Gli anni al contrario</i>	98 (34)
2A	Literary passage from <i>Io non ho paura</i>	66 (40)
2B	Literary passage from <i>Marcovaldo</i>	19 (9)
3A	Essay in English on <i>Io non ho paura</i> 1	187 (28)
3A	Essay in English on <i>Io non ho paura</i> 2	3 (0)
3B	Essay in English on <i>Marcovaldo</i> 1	30 (2)
3B	Essay in English on <i>Marcovaldo</i> 2	3 (2)

In accordance with standard practice, where candidates attempt more than one question, both options are marked and the higher of the two marks is awarded to the candidate. There is a wide choice in Section B. From this data, it is clear that the novel or the novel-based question is preferred - with *Io non ho paura* most dominant. All essays were answered in English. Examiners reported that some candidates who answered the essay on the novel performed poorly in the journalistic passage.

1. *Gli anni al contario* N. Terranova

The excerpt was interesting and the candidates grasped the inherent meaning of the piece, answering well in the process. Candidates mostly lost marks in question 5 for not expanding on their points or repeating points already made about the character traits of Aurora and Giovanni.

Question 1

Almost all candidates who attempted this section answered this question well.

Question 2 (a) and (b)

Both questions were answered well.

Question 3 (a)

This question was well answered.

Question 3 (b)

This question was well answered, however quite a few candidates omitted *a undici anni*, so they could not be awarded full marks.

Question 4 (a) and (b)

Both questions were answered well.

Question 5

This question was not very well answered. Some candidates did not support their answer with the relevant information.

In the question on *Difference*, answers already given in first part of question 5 were often repeated. Also no expansion or examples were provided in quite a few cases. A small number of candidates confused “Giovanni” with his father.

2A *Io non ho paura* N. Ammaniti

Question 1 (a)

This question was generally very well answered by candidates. Some said “he couldn’t wait any longer” or because “his mother and sister were still sleeping”.

Question 1 (b)

Most candidates answered this question correctly. Some did not mention the car and instead just talked about the cloud of dust. Many did not mention that the car was coming from the abandoned house.

Question 2 (a) and (b)

These questions were well answered

Question 3 (b)

Most candidates answered this question correctly.

Question 4 (a) and (b)

Both of these questions were well answered.

Question 5

This question was generally not well answered. Some candidates did not expand on their points fully. Many candidates did not refer to the novel, or if they did made incorrect reference to the novel. Candidates omitted a key fact - that Felice was involved in the kidnapping.

B *Marcovaldo I. Calvino*

All questions were reasonably well answered.

When dealing with question five, candidates were not always able to fully explain points about Marcovaldo's disappointment and were unable to support their points with examples from the text as a whole.

Question 1 and Question 2

Both these questions were well answered.

Question 3(a)

This question was well answered.

Question 3 (b)

This question was generally not well answered. Some candidates did not answer fully or omitted to refer to the fact that he didn't eat the leftovers. Many candidates simply referred to the fact that he got up from the bench and started walking.

Question 4

This question was well answered.

Question 5

This question was generally poorly answered. Many candidates did to provide expansion or examples. In some cases reference to the novel was poor or incorrect.

3 Essay on prescribed text

A1 **Io non ho paura**

Number of candidates 187

Many candidates correctly cited the example of Michele, showing understanding of what was morally correct in order to save Barbara from humiliation - the fear of his own father when he finds out the truth, the courage it took to defy his father, looking after Filippo etc. Often there was a lack of sufficient reference to the novel, and at times there were some major factual inaccuracies. Indeed, serious factual errors followed on from very good points. The factual errors often seemed to reference scenes or details from the film that did not reflect true to the novel. It was apparent that some candidates had read the novel in English only - as candidates offered quotes from the English version of the novel when Italian quotes would have been expected. Candidates often referenced characters by the English translation of their name e.g. *il Teschio*. There are some inconsistencies between the novel and the DVD and some candidates gave answers which were more consistent with having seen the DVD than having read the novel. Candidates often showed an unfamiliarity with characters by attributing actions to the incorrect character. Some candidates showed very little knowledge of the novel they chose.

A2 Io non ho paura

Number of candidates: 3

This essay was generally well composed, though the general standard was a little lower than that of A1. Full detail on how Teresa actually changed throughout the novel, going from being fun and playful to being anxious and regretful, were not fully explained. When candidates explained the point about Felice attacking Teresa, many did not accurately convey the scene in the novel, but depicted instead the scene in the DVD. Some candidates failed to mention how Teresa attacked Felice first because she saw him attacking her son.

B1 Marcovaldo

Number of candidates: 30

The level of answering in this question was varied. Examiners reported that candidates made reference to very similar stories within *Marcovaldo*, believing that any of the stories from the text would suffice to gain marks, regardless of the question posed on the examination paper. It is imperative that candidates familiarise themselves with the stories, with a view to exploring various themes and concepts in *Marcovaldo*. Candidates should choose the stories which best answer the question. Candidates often showed an unfamiliarity with characters by attributing actions to the incorrect character. Candidates did not always show a great understanding of *Marcovaldo* the character.

Some candidates quoted in English not Italian. Examiners reported that some candidates had incomplete titles or misspelt the titles of the short stories chosen.

B2 Marcovaldo

Number of candidates: 3

Generally, the standard of answering in this question was not very high. Some points were vague and often not relevant.

Ordinary level

Candidates' performance was varied. Candidates are advised to attempt all questions as Examiners reported that some questions were not attempted or that the answers were not fully developed. Basic language structures should be revised.

Section A

This section was, for the most part, quite well answered and proved to be the most accessible to candidates who, overall, answered successfully in nearly all the subsections. Candidates were frequently able to identify the correct Italian words and phrases from the text.

Question 1

Question 1

This was well answered. However, many candidates did not translate *Gran Bretagna* and *Cina* correctly.

Question 2 (a)

This question was well answered.

Question 2(b)

This question was answered satisfactorily. Candidates often identified the main concept of the answer but did not identify the extra part ('with the help of') which would have enhanced their answer.

Question 2 (c)

Many candidates identified the correct answer, showing familiarity of vocabulary related to languages, climate and family.

Question 3

This question was generally poorly answered.

Question 4

This question was very well answered. All candidates answered at least three of the four sub questions correctly, highlighting their familiarity with vocabulary about jobs. Some candidates found it difficult to express in English the answers they had correctly identified in the text, for example, *esperti* in *telecomunicazioni* was expressed in one instance as “telecom guy”. The word *commercialisti* was avoided by many candidates. There was a vast range of answers, thus candidates performed very well.

Question 5

This question was very well answered.

Question 2

Question 1

This question was well answered.

Question 2

- (a) This question was well answered. This question offered candidates a variety of basic vocabulary from which to answer - *libri*, *scarpe* etc.
- (b) This question was answered satisfactorily.

Question 3

This question was poorly answered. Many candidates did not understand the concept of the piece “to swap unwanted items”.

Question 4

This question was well answered. This question offered a range of vocabulary with which the candidates were very comfortable.

Section B - Question 1

Question 1 (a)

Many candidates answered correctly and frequent answers for this question were “have excellent English”, “a minimum of 1.6 m of height” and “owning a passport”. Some misinterpreted *una buona capacità visiva* for “visa required”.

Question 1 (b)

This question was well answered.

Question 2 and question 3

These questions were answered correctly by many candidates.

Question 4

This question was reasonably well answered

Question 2

Question 1

This question was well answered by many candidates and frequent answers included: “to do voluntary work”, “to acquire problem solving skills”, and “to learn a new language”.

Questions 2, question 3, question 4 and question 5 were all well answered.

Question 6

This question was reasonably well answered. It was apparent, however, that many candidates did not recognise the verb *firmare*.

Question 3

Question 1

This question was reasonably well answered. Despite many candidates identifying what the correct answer was, they often limited themselves to providing very little details on the offer. A frequent answer was “30% off all books”.

Question 2 (i)

This question was answered well. Many candidates correctly provided the answer “text the number”, in some cases they provided a wrong answer for part (ii) for instance: “use the time app”.

Question 3, Question 4, Question 5 and Question 6

These questions caused some candidates difficulty, indicating a lack of basic vocabulary.

Question 4

Question 1 and Question 2

These questions were reasonably well answered.

Question 3

This question was reasonably well answered. It was apparent that the majority of candidates did not recognise the verb *stampare* - however, in some cases *incollare* did not pose a problem.

Question 4

This question was reasonably well answered.

Question 5

Question 1

This question was, in general, poorly answered. It appears that many candidates did not attempt question 1, or did not provide a lot of detail on the initiative and/or answered incorrectly - a common answer being “a cinema day”.

Question 2 and Question 3

These questions were generally poorly answered.

Question 4

This question was well answered, however some candidates did not give the full detail that was required.

Communicate in the written language (written production)

Higher level

General Comments

Section C – Writing (Written Production)

The overall standard of answering by candidates in 2016 was similar to that of previous years. This section was generally well answered and many candidates achieved high marks. Many candidates used the present subjunctive well, usually in the form of *penso che sia molto importante*. The essay linked to the journalistic passage was well done, the guided essay had good content and the formal letter was particularly well done.

However, despite the improvement in content and communication in written production, some candidates lacked precision in their approach to grammatical accuracy and spelling.

1. Essay linked to journalistic passage

For the most part, candidates wrote extensively on the importance of *la lingua italiana* and sometimes did not give equal weight to the other elements of the question. Many candidates did not cover all the points asked of them. Language proficiency varied greatly amongst candidates. Some candidates tended to use phrases taken word for word from the Journalistic Passage. A significant number of candidates had grammatical problems, in particular with basic tenses, prepositions, noun and adjective agreements and with syntax in general. Many candidates failed to give a conclusion. Some candidates wrote answers which were off topic. It is important that candidates respond to the question proposed. Many candidates failed to write on *l'atteggiamento degli studenti irlandesi nei confronti delle lingue straniere*.

2. Guided Composition

Again in 2016, the guided composition was well done by many candidates. Almost all candidates used all the ideas listed. Some candidates used good idiomatic phrases in this piece. Some irrelevant material was included, leading at times to a less coherent piece being written. As in the linked essay, incorrect use of tenses was common and at times this interfered with the meaning. Many candidates used good idiomatic phrases in this piece. Some candidates did not conjugate the verbs into the 1st person or did not change tenses. Some points were stated but not developed any further e.g. many candidates were unable to effectively manipulate the prompt about *routine giornaliera, amici e colleghi*. Some candidates did not give more than one example of things they learnt though it was *imparare tante cose*. Many candidates did not use *il futuro* as was expected. Also, many candidates used the *passato prossimo* instead of the *imperfetto* especially in the expansion of *routine giornaliera*. The idea of *soggiorno* was often not dealt with fully. Many candidates simply stated that they went to Italy - without any meaningful expansion regarding the time period.

3. Formal Writing

Examiners reported that the overall standard was reasonably high in this question. Some candidates did not perform well in the format element of the letter, spelling mistakes and words missing in the closing formula were the most common errors.

Some candidates used the incorrect register, using *tu* instead of *Lei* or *ciao/buongiorno* instead of the appropriate greeting of *Egregio, Gentile, Spettabile* etc. Examiners commented that while the marks awarded for content and communication were higher than in previous years, some problems with grammatical structures were also in evidence.

(a) Letter

Most of the candidates wrote well and applied themselves to the task quite well and many wrote interesting and comprehensive letters, using relevant and well-developed information to cover all points as required.

Introductions to this question were often poorly written, few candidates used the correct register e.g. *La/Vi contatto in merito alla richiesta di informazioni.....* Many mentioned the

reunion but few candidates mentioned that they were also requesting information. Due perhaps to a cultural difference, the point on *escursioni* was generally not well answered. Mention of outdoor activities would have been expected. This letter was attempted by 286 candidates.

(b) Letter

Candidates' performance in this section was better than average. However, significant numbers of candidates did not fully engage with the question. Some candidates did not fully express their dissatisfaction in the letter. Candidates often did not use the *motivi* listed in the examination paper. *Consegna in ritardo* was mentioned by most candidates. *Prodotto difettoso* was also used frequently. The idea of getting the wrong product in the post was the most popular *motivo* that the candidates suggested. This letter was attempted by 97 candidates.

Ordinary level

The standard of the written production varied considerably, with a broad spread of marks across the cohort of candidates.

An overall low standard of answering was generally noted in the written section of the examination. The following highlight the main areas of weakness in candidates' answering - Question 2, the questionnaire and question 3, the message, which were attempted by most candidates. Question 1 - the 'letter/dialogue' question was problematic for some candidates. The standard of answering was generally poor. There was a marked weakness in the formatting of the email and dialogue. Many candidates did not use typical opening phrases at the beginning of the email or dialogue and many did not use a closing phrase. Many of those who did include these components often wrote incorrect or incomplete phrases.

Question 1

(a) Letter

Some candidates were not familiar with the layout of an email/letter and did not have the necessary vocabulary. It is important for candidates to cover all points mentioned in the instructions given. Few closing phrases were used overall, simple phrases such as *Ora devo andare* or *sono molto impegnato...*

Many answers lacked appropriate opening and closing phrases, with many candidates simply opening with "Ciao", which was often misspelled, for both opening and closing phrases.

Many candidates did not develop the points well in the question and many wrote little about their examinations. Many candidates did not address how the examinations went, merely stating that they were over.

The plans for the summer and the future were, for the most part, quite well answered. Many candidates were confident with topics such as summer plans and future projects. Some candidates did not attempt the question - and left a blank page.

(b) Dialogue

The question was generally poorly answered. Basic grammatical structures were often incorrect. Of the candidates who chose this question, few identified where the train ticket could be bought, though some did say that they could be bought online. A small number of candidates thought that the conversation was between a ticket seller, or an operator, and a young person. Few candidates included their own ideas about activities that could be done during the day, the vast majority of candidates simply copied what was suggested on the paper.

Question 2

In *Nome and Cognome, Nazionalità, Data di Nascita, Indirizzo di Posta Elettronica* many of the candidates achieved full marks.

In the *Perché vuoi lavorare in Italia?* and *Passatempi* sections, many candidates did not give full answers.

In the *Lingue Straniere* section, many candidates provided *inglese* as their answer. Some provided a second answer. Some candidates got confused between *quali* and *quante* in the question *Quali lingue straniere parli?*

In the *Esperienze lavorative* section, many candidates only answered with words such as *cameriere, professore*.

Question 3

This question is primarily reading comprehension rather than productive writing.

Overall, candidates did reasonably well - with most candidates getting 50% or more of the marks for the question.

4. Conclusions

Higher Level

- The overall performance in the 2016 examination in Italian at Higher Level was in line with that of previous years.
- The journalistic passage, question 5, caused difficulty for some candidates.
- The candidates who chose the Unseen Literary Passage did very well.
- In 2016, more candidates chose the essay on the prescribed texts than the Literary Passage or Unseen Literary Passage.
- Written Production has improved on past years, yet spelling and grammatical structures would benefit from further practice.
- The Aural section highlights that, for some candidates, basic vocabulary poses problems.

Ordinary Level

- Examiners noted that a number of candidates were quite challenged by some of the Reading Comprehension passages.
- Answers in both Reading Comprehension and Listening Comprehension sometimes lacked the required degree of detail.
- Basic vocabulary and spelling need to be prioritised in Written Production. Many candidates left blank spaces, thus not attempting to engage with some topics.
- Candidates had varying results in the Aural Section. As with previous years, some candidates had great difficulty understanding basic vocabulary in the Listening Comprehension Section, despite the clarity and appropriate pace of the texts on the CD.

5. Recommendations to Teachers and Students

The comments below refer to both levels unless otherwise specified. The depth of understanding and level of mastery required of students at Ordinary level is obviously less than that expected at Higher level.

5.1 Preparing for the examination

- ensure that students have regular practice in all aspects of language skills:
listening, speaking, reading and writing
- speak as much Italian as possible in the classroom

- devote time to learning basic grammar
- emphasize the importance of grammatical accuracy and spelling
- devote time to learning basic and topical vocabulary
- practise idiomatic phrases
- prepare students in a variety of basic topics: family, personal details, school, likes/dislikes and so on
- introduce students to a wide range of reading materials which contain core vocabulary related to the themes of the syllabus
- encourage an appreciation of Italian language and culture
- encourage students to become more responsible for their own learning by setting attainable targets
- become more familiar with spoken Italian by exposure to Italian CDs, films/DVDs, television, podcasts, apps, YouTube, songs, newspapers, magazines, novels, books, movies, etc. throughout the year.
- practise verb forms and tenses, in particular the *passato prossimo* and *imperfetto*
- retain a file of materials relevant to oral work from the beginning of 5th year
- read a variety of Italian texts - newspapers, magazines, novels and so on
- revise basic vocabulary such as: numbers, dates and times, days of the week, months of the year, seasons, names of Italian cities and regions, names of countries etc.
- revise basic grammar – articles, nouns and adjectives, verbs - the *presente*, *passato prossimo* and *imperfetto*
- become familiar with the layout of formal and informal letters
- study the examination papers and CDs from previous years
- note that Section B on the Higher Paper offers a choice of questions. Students should explore the option of the Unseen Literary Passage or the Literary Passage from the prescribed novel. Whilst answers are predominantly written in Italian, these types of questions may suit some students better than the essay question, which is written in English
- if students choose to study the novel, it should be read in the target language. Translations should only be used as an aid. The value to students of reading literature in the target language cannot be overstated.

5.2 In the examination

- students should prepare well for the Oral Examination; this will also benefit the preparation for the written and aural examinations in June
- students should develop their responses in the Oral Examination rather than give just *Si* or *No* answers
- students are encouraged to be spontaneous and natural in their answers and to treat the General Conversation section as a normal conversation in which the Examiner is interested in talking about candidates' interests and opinions
- be familiar with all five Role-Plays and Picture Sequences without relying on memorized material
- describe what is relevant to the narrative in the Picture Sequence and not describe in detail objects that appear in the pictures unless they are relevant of the narrative
- pronounce the words as clearly as possible
- before the aural examination begins, ensure the CD can be clearly heard
- attempt all questions on the examination paper and write clearly
- develop written answers to ensure full answers are provided where required
- re-read all answers carefully before handing up the examination paper.