PRINCIPAL COURSE ITALIAN

Paper 9783/01 **Speaking**

Key Messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:
- in Part I, consider the issue raised in their chosen article and their own reaction(s) to it
- in Part II, choose a subject which genuinely interests them and which clearly relates to a country where the target language is spoken
- in Parts I and II, be prepared to take the lead in the conversation
- in Parts I and II, be ready to engage in natural and spontaneous discussion

General Comments

The exam consists of two parts: Part 1 – Discussion of article; Part 2 – Prepared Topic Discussion.

The Discussion of an article is only present in the Principal Course (PC) and represents a freer and somewhat more challenging exercise in which candidates can demonstrate the ability to engage in a fairly unpredictable discussion. Part 2 is the same exercise required for the Short Course (SC) speaking test.

The overall exam is of considerably length but candidates appeared to be well prepared to maintain their level of performance over the entire exam. Performances for the two parts of the exam were well balanced, with only a marginally higher mean mark for language in Part 2 – as could be expected.

Comments on Specific Questions

Part 1 - **Discussion of a newspaper article and related themes**

Candidates could choose a stimulus card from
1   *No al volontariato* (Theme: Employment and unemployment)
2   *Gratta e vinci...una nuova dipendenza* (Theme: Patterns of daily life)
3   *Voglia di trekking* (Theme: Travel and tourism)
4   *Gli sprechi che non vediamo* (Theme: Environment/Conservation)

Choices were equally divided among the four cards and, as a result, there were interesting discussions on all of the four themes.

Comprehension and Discussion

Candidates were not required to understand the article in detail, but only well enough to be able to engage in discussion on the issues raised. Candidates coped with this part of the exam very well. They were able to outline the main theme of the article, discuss the issues it raised and broaden the conversation to the general theme.

Part 2

Many candidates chose to discuss a literary text or a film while others tackled topics such as 'the Italian language', 'slow food' or social issues (*i senzatetto; le coppie gay*) and. Topics were generally wisely chosen and well researched.

Most of the presentations were well timed and well articulated, leading naturally to discussion. In most instances the Examiner adopted the position of the "interested layman" acknowledging that the candidate was the "expert". This ensured spontaneity of discussion and elicited from candidates the ability to adapt

their prepared material to respond to the Examiner's questions. Most candidates were able to present a good range of pertinent facts, had the ability to analyse them in an interesting way and to express their opinions in a naturally flowing conversation with the Examiner.

Language (range and accuracy)

In terms of language, there was a wide range of competence, from candidates who struggled with fairly basic structures to some who were able to use complex structures and a good range of vocabulary. As could be expected, scores for language were slightly higher for part 2, but only marginally so. Even at this level, the most common mistakes remain the use of prepositions, some influence from other foreign languages and some lack of control over agreements, gender and occasionally over verb endings.

Pronunciation and Intonation.

Candidates appear to have mastered the sounds of Italian, is spite of the occasional misplaced stress and mispronunciation of double consonant or vowel sounds.

Conclusion

Most candidates fully understood the requirements of this unit, were well prepared for it and performed to the best of their abilities.

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Paper 9783/02

Reading and Listening

Key Messages and General Comments

Reading section: candidates need to be able to target pieces of information as they arose in order in the text, and then to tailor an answer to the questions asked, using a degree of inference and justification or providing multiple points where necessary. Success in the translation question relies on keeping as close as possible to the original, and certainly on the ability to accurately draw on items that have already been present elsewhere in the paper.

Listening section: again candidates need to be able to follow information sequentially and use the listening material selectively in order to answer the questions. Candidates should give succinct answers that are tailored to the question asked. With regard to the summary question, it is important to keep to the word count and to respond directly to the bullet points, identifying the most salient points of the passage.

Comments on Specific Questions

PART I

Testo di lettura 1 (Questions 1–7)

The majority of candidates coped very well with the questions in this section.

Question 1

This question required candidates to recognise the contrast between the two time frames with their answer, which posed some difficulty to a number of candidates.

Question 7

Answers needed to be limited to the information conveyed in speech marks in the text.

Testo di lettura 2 (Questions 8–15)

Again, these questions posed no serious difficulties to most of the candidates.

Question 8

To gain the mark, explanation was required, rather than mere translation of the title.

Testo di lettura 3 (Question 16)

Strong answers used topic-specific vocabulary located in *Testo di lettura 2*, and manipulated it accurately to fit the new context. High scoring candidates paid close attention to agreements verb formations.

PART II

Brano d'ascolto 1 (Questions 17–25)

Question 17

Candidates overwhelmingly responded well to this question, often including three accurate pieces of information rather than the two required for the two marks allocated to the question.

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Question 19

Most candidates answered this question accurately; but some answered 'una settimana a due mesi' (having misheard the 'd' of 'ad un mese' in the transcript possibly).

Brano d'ascolto 2 (Questions 26–32)

Generally speaking candidates dealt well with this part of the test. However, candidates must be wary of using 'false-English' in their answers so they don't end up writing things like, for example "he cannot 'control' all of them", taken to mean that "he cannot <u>check</u> all of the job descriptions" (Question 31).   Strong candidates were able to edit their answers and ensure that they make good sense in English.

Brano d'ascolto 3 (Question 33)

High-scoring answers kept closely to the personal/subjective context of the emigration in bullet points 1 and 4 in particular: e.g. 'he thinks Sicilians are easier to be friends with rather than work with', instead of 'the working environment is difficult'.

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> **Paper 9783/03**
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> **Writing and Usage**

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- in Part **I**, choose a title on which they have something to say and for which they have command of appropriate structures and lexis
- in Part **I**, plan their essay to produce well-structured and persuasive arguments
- in Part **I**, write complex sentences when appropriate, but without losing the thread of the argument
- in Part **II**, read each question carefully and make sure they understand the sense of the sentence(s)
- in Parts **I** and **II**, carefully proofread their responses.

General comments

On the whole, candidates were well prepared for this paper. All the candidates completed all sections of the paper and demonstrated both the ability to compose an extended piece of writing in Italian and to apply grammatical structures accurately.

Comments on specific questions

Part I – Discursive Essay

The majority of the candidates showed the ability to communicate clearly in Italian and were at pains to showcase their familiarity with the more sophisticated registers of the language. Basic accuracy (agreements, verb forms etc.) was, as in past series, a little disappointing even in candidates whose written Italian was otherwise fluent, varied and ambitious. Only on a few occasions was it difficult to understand what the candidate was trying to say. The essays were, on the whole, well-structured and – especially at the top end – coherently argued. There was evidence in every case that candidates had planned what they were going to say, and all candidates referred back to the question in their concluding paragraph.

Question 1

(a) Perhaps surprisingly, relatively few candidates chose this question. The arguments advanced on both sides were relevant, with candidates acknowledging that youngsters from less well-off families are put off the idea of going to university while defending the right of institutions to ask for larger contributions to ensure the quality of education and the broader candidate experience.

(b) This was quite a popular choice, but it was also the question that elicited the broadest range of responses. A difficulty here was that some candidates did not engage convincingly with the title, overlooking the issue of <u>why</u> some drugs are legal and others are not, and preferring to write solely about the rights and wrongs of legalisation. More sophisticated answers concluded that this apparently illogical situation has its own kind of logic, representing an acknowledgement of the importance of culture and tradition (as well as tax income) in drugs legislation.

(c) There were too few answers here to draw any meaningful conclusions.

(d) This proved quite a popular question, and was on the whole well done. Candidates were divided on whether or not more immigrants means more racism, and some interesting points were offered up: the 'profile' (rather than just the number) of the immigrant population; the amount of cultural and religious difference between the immigrant population and the host country; and so on.

(e)   There were few answers here. Most concluded that there are more advantages than disadvantages to being beautiful, but (perhaps inevitably) there was a certain amount of generalisation and peddling of received wisdom about beauty and how people use it and respond to it.

Part II – Use of Italian

There were some very good performances on exercises 1 and 2, with many candidates showing an excellent knowledge of some of the most advanced grammatical structures as well as a very pleasing familiarity with irregular verbs. These exercises can be quite challenging, and it was therefore inevitable that towards the bottom of the ability range candidates would occasionally struggle to come up with the correct answers. Exercise 3 seemed to be the least challenging one, where even less advanced candidates, perhaps taking advantage of the multiple-choice format, managed to score a number of marks. There were plenty of candidates at the top end who got everything or almost everything right here.

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Paper 9783/04

Topics and Texts

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Key Messages

To score well in this paper candidates should read the questions thoroughly and show in their answers their understanding that individual episodes, characters and relationships discussed in the texts and films have a more general significance which is what the question will doubtless be targeting. The tendency to recount episodes when illustrating arguments is very difficult to avoid but if candidates concentrate on the point they wish to make such 'narration' will be kept to a minimum. Candidates will do well if they respect the evidence found in their texts and films rather than force it into the mould apparently given by the question.

General comments

Questions were answered on three topics – *Gli anni di piombo*, *Visioni del mezzogiorno italiano* and *Il cinema di Federico Fellini*. Answers to the *Gli anni di piombo* questions showed a good level of familiarity with the texts and films. Some candidates lost marks by not addressing both parts of the chosen question. Answers to the *Visioni del mezzogiorno* questions engaged well with the tasks and showed a sensitive response to the material. Comprehension was occasionally compromised by less well developed linguistic skills. Answers on *Il cinema di Federico Fellini* showed a good knowledge of the films and were written in competent Italian.

The standards of response and linguistic ability were generally good. Candidates are advised to concentrate on two stimuli rather than spread themselves too thinly over three, and to choose their texts carefully. Candidates should ensure that their answers do not focus too heavily on one text or film over another, and that their answers are balanced and comparative.

Two texts received answers: Svevo, and Ammaniti. All three of the Ammaniti questions were attempted. While showing good knowledge of the text, candidates were sometimes, it seemed, persuaded by the question, or pre-conceived ideas on the characters, to write answers that did not always sit comfortably with the evidence. Relatively few candidates considered the importance of the child-narrator in answering the question on Pino. Both essays were attempted for Svevo's text but not the commentary, with most candidates choosing to discuss the question on *inettitudine*. Generally good knowledge of the text was displayed.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1

Questions 1

(a) and (b) Both questions generated answers that showed good knowledge of the texts and film. Candidates also demonstrated good background knowledge to the texts/film and most candidates used this to successfully contextualise the questions and the works. Some candidates spent too much time on the historical context to this topic and, as a result, some essays lost a little of their literary focus. Candidates should ensure that they do not spend too much time on the first half of a question to the detriment of the rest.

Questions 2

(a) and (b) The answers to these questions generally showed a good understanding of the texts and film that the candidates had studied. Some answers to **Question 2a** demonstrated a less than solid understanding of the notion of *potere sociale*. Generally candidates were more successful in answering **Question 2b** on religion; however, some answers focused quite heavily on one text and a few candidates didn't give a genuinely comparative response.

Question 3

(a) The answers to this question were written in very good Italian and displayed a good understanding of the films, their principle protagonists and the theme of *amore*. Candidates responded well to the task and gave good personal responses.

Part 2

Questions 10

(b) and (c) Some very good material was on display in answers to both these questions. The best answers demonstrated an understanding of the text and the questions that allowed for an elaboration based on more than the obvious and immediate material. Many candidates successfully explored the complex and multi-layered narrative of the *La coscienza di Zeno* and some had a good understanding of the psychoanalytical themes that underpin the novel. Generally the use of quotation and narrative to illustrate the points being made was effective.

Questions 13

(a), (b), and (c) **Question 13c** was the most popular one on the Ammaniti text, with the other two being addressed by relatively few candidates. Many of the answers to these questions demonstrated a good knowledge of the text, although only a few candidates who answered 13c commented on the difficulties involved in answering this question when one considers the issues surrounding the child-narrator. Responses to the commentary question did not always address all the elements of the task set. Candidates need to focus their responses on the extract that is set and should not allow themselves to refer indiscriminately to other parts of the text. Responses to **Question 13b** made good reference to both the physical and social environment in which the children are growing up.