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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Italian (4IN0) Paper 4F: Writing

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Introduction

2019 was the first examination for the new GCSE Italian specification. Previously this component was assessed via Controlled Assessment and is now assessed by an examination at the end of the course of study. Questions are set in common contexts, addressing a range of relevant contemporary and cultural themes. They are organised into five themes, each broken down into topics and sub-topics. The five themes are: Identity and culture, Local area, Holiday and travel, School, future aspirations, study and work and International and global dimension.

The assessment tasks feature general content that is familiar and accessible to all students. Students are required to produce responses of varying lengths and types to express facts, ideas and opinions in Italian. The length of each response required and complexity of language increases across the paper. Recommended word counts are specified for each question. Students will not be penalised for writing more or fewer words than recommended in the word count or for going beyond the mandatory bullet points. All questions are marked against the assessment criteria as published in the current specification. The instructions to students are all in Italian. The use of dictionaries is not permitted.

The examination for paper Q4(F) is 1 hour and 10 minutes in length and it carries 60 marks. The paper consists of three open response questions and one translation from English into Italian. Students are required to answer all questions.

Q1 assesses students on their ability to write to describe and to express opinions.

Q2 assesses students on their ability to note down key points and convey information. Students must use the formal register.

Q3 has two options from which students have to select one. This question assesses students on their ability to convey information, narrate, express opinions, interest, and convince the reader about a certain point. Students must use the informal register. This question is common to the Higher tier.

Q4 is the translation question. Students are required to translate five sentences from English to Italian. The sentences are ordered by increasing level of difficulty.

Question 1

Q1 required students to describe the photograph and to give an opinion about television. Students were asked to write 20-30 words in Italian. The question could be answered using exclusively a present time frame, but students were not penalised for using other tenses. Most students were able to describe the photo to some extent although many struggled with verb conjugation. Most also gave the required opinion although some seemed to miss this and lost marks as a result.

Question 2

Q2 required students to write a formal letter to the head of a school in Italy regarding studying there in the future. Students had to include in their response the information given in the four bullet points. The bullet points appear in the formal register and students are expected to respond in the same register. They had to write 40-50 words in Italian.

This proved quite challenging for many students, perhaps because of the use of the formal register in the question. As a result, some wrote responses about someone else (being confused by the *Lei* form of address) and not about themselves. Most students were able to communicate information about what they study and what their favourite subject is. For breaktime activities, some stated simply when breaktime is and not what they do. The final bullet point was most challenging as it was designed to elicit a future time reference, but only a few students successfully managed this. Many used *vorrebbe* instead of *vorrei* and many did not understand what this bullet point required them to do. In terms of language, there was a lot of inaccuracy, especially with verb conjugation and tenses, as well as basic spelling of nouns at times.

There were a few blank responses or responses in which students only attempted one or two bullet point and they must attempt them all in order to access the full range of available marks. There were, however, some good responses where all bullet points were attempted and were well linked. These students used tenses appropriately and even attempted complexity and development of individual points of view.

Question 3 (a)

Students were given four bullet points within the context of an email to a friend about their summer holidays; they had to write 80-90 words of Italian. The question had to be answered using past, present and future time frames. At Foundation level this question was equally popular as Q3(b), however this was generally the better of the two options on question 3 as it is a well-practise topic in many classrooms.

Students were generally able to say what they do during their holidays and what they did last summer. The third bullet point proved more challenging although some did manage to communicate a basic idea of why holidays are important for young people. Most were able to give some information on plans for their next holiday. Again, verb conjugation and tenses were an issue for some and at times this meant that they did not fulfil the requirement of the task.

Question 3 (b)

Q3(b) required students to write an informal email about their best friend. They had to address the four bullet points and produce between 80-90 words in Italian.

The question had to be answered using past, present and future time frames. The bullet points were generally well understood. Students were generally able to give some details about their friend, although the accuracy with some basic constructions was an issue at times, e.g. *è 16 anni* instead of *ha 16 anni*. Basic adjectives and agreement were not always successful either. In terms of a recent activity, many communicated something relevant, although the formation of the *passato prossimo* proved challenging for some, especially with *essere* verbs, e.g. there were many instances of *ho andato*. As with Q3(a) the third bullet point was challenging for many but a lot communicated basic information with adjectives such as *divertente* or *interessante* although agreement was often incorrect. The final bullet point was generally well understood although formation of *vorrei* + infinitive and use of the future tense (e.g. *andarò* instead of *andrò*) was patchy. Some of the weaker students included some irrelevant material. The better responses covered all the bullet points and were able to use different time frames successfully.

Question 4

Q4 addressed the topic of family. Students had to translate five sentences from English to Italian. This was a new question type, and many students found this a difficult question. The translation resulted in most students picking up some marks, although very few achieved full marks as basic errors often mean that the mark could not be awarded.

For part (a) most got the points and in (b) most got the words for ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ correct but many left out the verb or used it incorrectly. For part (c), some students did not know the verb ‘to work’. In part (d) most communicated ‘I like animals’ but some struggled with the second part, writing things like ‘*vorrei essere un cane*’ and some did not know the word for ‘dog’, with some (amusing) alternatives! The last part, (e), was the most challenging. Many confused Saturday with Sunday and *visitato* with *visto*. A lot also struggled with *abita* and *campagna*.

However, all in all, most students at least attempted each sentence and were rewarded in most cases with a mark for a partial translation.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, students are offered the following advice:

- read every question on the exam paper before you begin to write your answers
- look very carefully at the whole question, including the rubric, to make sure that you fully understand what you are being asked to do
- look for keywords in the bullet points as these will help you to answer each of the bullet points correctly
- answer each of the bullet points in order using a new paragraph for each one
- in Q1 write both a description of the photo and an opinion (there is no need to use tenses other than the present)

- in Q1 in Q2 and Q3 address all four of the bullet points
- remember that Q2 uses a formal register, so the instructions will say *Lei* rather than *tu*; however, it requires only present and future time frames in the response
- in Q3 try and vary the language you use, and avoid repetition
- in Q4 try and translate all the words, as you will get credit even for partially correct answers
- leave enough time to check your work carefully at the end of the exam.
- ensure that your handwriting is as neat as possible. This year there were many instances of responses that were virtually illegible.