AQA

GCSE

ITALIAN

8633/WH: Writing Higher
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier. Only a small percentage would have benfitted from being entered for the Foundation tier. The quality of work seen in the overlap questions was of a higher standard than at the Foundation tier. The ability to use a range of tenses, idiomatic expressions and more complex language was impressive and students were also able to express and justify opinions well. Where students failed to score marks, this was where inaccuracy caused a delay in communicating messages. This was mainly due to inaccurate verb formation or students writing extended responses, far longer than the suggested word count, which created more scope for error. Another barrier to achievement was omission or misinterpretation of the bullet points in questions 1 and 2. The suggested word count was on the whole adhered to, particularly in Question 2 - a large improvement on the 2019 paper.

Question 1

For this question, there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 90 words in total, about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. The quality of work varied considerably, with many students able to provide extended responses which demonstrated their ability to develop ideas, express opinions and refer to different time frames. Where students were less successful, this was mainly due to misinterpretation, omission of bullet points and grammatical errors which changed the intended meaning. At times the wording of the bullet point was copied directly from the rubric and not changed into the first person singular. This caused lapses in the intended meaning as did the influence of Spanish and/or French.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Students need to be reminded that coverage of bullet points is key, as misinterpreting or omitting even one bullet point means that the award of a mark above 6 is impossible, given that for the award of marks in the range 7 – 10, all aspects of the task must be covered. In addition, although students had no difficulty in developing ideas and expressing opinions, there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as 'lapses' and 'break down of messages') and this impacted on marks awarded. Each of the bullet points gave students scope to answer using three time frames and invited opportunity for an opinion. If information was given in relation to all four bullet points, but there were lapses in clarity and a lack of **two** opinions, students could not necessarily score a mark of 8 or 9.

Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy.
- Variety of language – the range of vocabulary used in response to both questions was appropriate and reasonably extensive. *Mi piace* and *preferisco* were quite often used to indicate liking or preference, but a fairly common error was the omission of the second verb in the infinitive eg. *preferisco vedo* or 'I prefer' written as *mi preferito* or variations on it.
- Attempts at complexity – there were some well-worked longer sentences using a variety of connectives such as *e, ma, comunque, poi* and *però*. However more so in this series, the

accent on *però* was very often missed out, changing the intended meaning. A repeated error such as this resulted in students achieving no more than a mark of 4 for content due to the messages breaking down.
- Negatives were well handled but once again, in this series *no* crept in at times when *non* was needed.
- Time frames – most students were able to make an attempt at all three time frames and the bullet points were designed to encourage this. Students were given credit for an accurate time frame even if it was followed by an inaccurate conjugation; eg. *in futuro io andare*
- Accuracy – most students were able to write accurately in all three tenses using the first and third person singular and at times also the second person plural. There were however common errors:
  - Attempts at the perfect tense were the most inaccurate, often with either no auxiliary verb, an auxiliary verb with an infinitive, the incorrect auxiliary verb or mis-spelling of the various parts of the conjugation *avere*
  - The use of a time marker with the wrong tense
  - The use of modal verbs with a conjugated verb eg. *voglio vado*
  - The omission of the accent on 'è' when required is a major error as it changes the meaning of the sentence.
  - Wrong use of : *a /ha* and *o/ho*
  - Incorrect conjugation of reflexive verbs: *vorrei rilassarsi*
  - The lack of accent in the simple future of *farò, sarò, sarà* were regular errors, changing the meaning of the sentence resulting in message break downs.
  - Spelling of *noioso/a/i/e.*

Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the suggested number of words. The emphasis needs to be on **quality** and not **quantity**.
- Mention **all** of the bullet points. Attempt to write *something* about them rather than omitting them. Tick off the bullet points in the rubric once they have been addressed.
- Identify which bullet points target the different time frames and check that your verb formation is accurate.
- Make sure you include at least **TWO** opinions as required by the task.

Most of the work seen was legible however there were instances where students should have taken greater care in their handwriting as their work was illegible.

Question 1.1

This was the second most popular task chosen. A few students had issues with changing bullet point 3 – *che cosa hai fatto il weekend scorso* to the first person singular. Construction of the perfect/imperfect tenses was tricky for some. Not many were able to use simple future constructions, however the conditional *vorrei/mi piacerebbe + infinitive* was acceptable to cover the future time frame. The use of opinions was in abundance. It was refreshing to see that many students followed their opinions with justifications. Although not a specific requirement for this question, it helps students produce complex structures.

There were many good responses for this and hardly any students missed out any bullet points.

Question 1.2

This question was the least popular out of the three options. Many were able to give a clear advantage of going on holiday in their own country. The aspect of the task that was often not covered, was bullet point 2 which required students to write about a disadvantage of going on holiday with parents. Bullet point 3 which asked about a recent excursion, was also well covered, however some misinterpreted bullet point 4. Instead of talking about wanting to live abroad, they wrote about going on holiday abroad. Unfortunately this caused some to miss out on coverage of the bullet point. It is important that students read the rubrics carefully and do not assume that all four bullet points are linked to the same topic within the theme but that the bullet points could be taken from different topics within the same theme, or in a regular exam series, across themes.

Question 1.3

This was the most popular choice with students. It was a topic with which students are familiar and the advanced information allowed most students to prepare for this topic well.

Bullet point 1, which asked about a favourite day at school caused a few issues. Some missed referring to it completely, some made reference to it in a different tense, hence not allowing for the bullet point to be covered, some gave reasons about liking school. Bullet points 2 and 3 were answered well allowing many to use different time frames as elicited by the rubrics. Bullet point 4 which asked what students will study next year, was missed out by some students and some just made reference to what they will do in general.

Question 2

For this question, there are 15 marks for Content, 12 marks for Range of Language and 5 marks for Accuracy. Students write approximately 150 words in total, about two different bullet points. Both bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. The quality of responses was generally high, with most students able to complete both bullet points in each question, showing good ability to express and justify opinions. Many students were able to produce fluent pieces of extended writing with few lapses and a variety of language. Where students were less successful, it was because they had misinterpreted the bullet points or wrote very lengthy responses, which increased the scope for error.
It was evident with some near native students that they did not receive formal teaching of the specification. It was at times detrimental to how they answered the question as many did not justifiy opinions, not allowing them to access the high marks which they are capable of achieving. It is important that these students are clearly taught how to answer the type of questions that appear in this paper. Failing to do so, puts them at a disadvantage.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: relevance and detail (implicit in this is coverage of both bullet points), amount of information conveyed, clarity of communication and expression and justification of opinions. Students had no difficulty in developing ideas and expressing and justifying opinions, except for some near native speakers who were not aware of the specification requirements. There were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as 'ambiguities') and, again, this impacted on marks awarded.
In this question, 'è' as a verb was very often written without an accent and, therefore, prevented some opinions and justifications from being acknowledged since the 'e' without an accent changes the meaning of a sentence.

Range of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language and a confident ability to produce complex sentences. As mentioned in the general comments, this series saw an increased used of idiomatic expressions which added originality to the pieces. Other examples of variety of language included phrases such as *da grande*, *da piccolo/a*; the use of the *si impersonale*, *credo che*, *anche se*, negative constructions; intensifiers; conjunctions such as *quindi, perciò, tuttavia, per di più*; the use of interchange of the perfect and imperfect tenses in the same sentence; the use of direct object pronouns; a variety of adjectives, not just *interessante, facile, difficile*; varied time phrases such as *due anni fa, quando facevo la prima media* and infinitive constructions with a variety of tenses. There was also a wide range of tenses, including the present and imperfect subjunctive, although at times students were unsure on how the sentence construction continued. Overall the range of language for question 2 was indeed varied.

Accuracy

The criteria for assessment focus mainly on verbs and tense formations and the type of errors that students make. It is to be noted that a 'major' error is one that interferes with communication, and a 'minor error', albeit still an inaccuracy, does not. The majority of students were able to produce work worthy of an accuracy mark of 3 and above. Common major errors included: the lack of accent on the '*e'* for the third person singular *essere*; inappropriate use of infinitives; poor formation of the perfect tense, including the incorrect auxiliary; confusion of simple future and conditional endings eg. *andremmo/andremo, saremmo/saremo*; accents missing on the first and third person singular simple future verbs at times changing the meaning of the sentence since the lack of an accent resulted in the word changing meaning; a time frame followed by the wrong tense & vice versa, eg. *l'anno prossimo sono andato;* the use of reflexive pronouns instead of indirect pronouns*;* prepositions in place of the verb: *a/ha; o/ho* and the wrong use of vocabulary; changing the meaning of the sentence: eg. *spendo tempo con la mia famiglia.* Common minor errors included gender agreements, inaccurate adjectival agreements and incorrect possessive adjectives.

Advice to students

- Read the bullet points and the scene setting carefully, ensuring you know exactly what they require in terms of response.
- Ensure that what you write relates to the bullet points in some way.
- When including complex language, check that your verbs and spellings are accurate.
- Refer to the list of linguistic errors towards the end of this report.

Question 2.1

This was the second most popular choice of question. The majority coped with the question well. A variety of celebrations were mentioned namely one's birthday, Eid, Christmas and Easter. It was pleasing to see that some typical Italian festivities were mentioned such as *La Befana* and the *Sagre*. Showing a wider cultural knowledge of the target language country allows students to write more successfully about the topic. A majority were successful in the use of the past tense for bullet point 1 and the conditional tense for bullet point 2.
Although an equal word length on each bullet point is not required, a few wrote extensively on the first bullet point and only a sentence or two on the second bullet point. This can mean the difference between *conveying a lot of information* to *quite a lot of information* as specified in the mark scheme.

Question 2.2

A less popular choice for students. Bullet point one, which asked students to comment on a social problem in their area gave scope for a variety of answers and there were many including smoking, excessive use of alcohol amongst young people, the homeless, traffic, the environment and how it affected society, housing and the current energy crisis. All these were more than acceptable as answers, providing they made reference to being social problems. Some successful answers went on to suggest solutions to the problem(s).
Bullet point 2 was also well written by the majority, most writing about helping the poor and needy in their area.
From the answers seen, it was clear that some students do not have much experience and practice in writing about such topics resulting in a lack of clarity of communication. It is important to give students the necessary tools and resources to allow them to become more familiar with vocabulary and content on Theme 2, topics 2 & 3: Charity/voluntary work and Poverty/homelessness.

Question 2.3

This was the most popular question chosen. Many answered bullet point 1 well giving quite varied reasons for the importance of studying. A few wrote about the importance of school without any reference to studying so unfortunately this prevented students from scoring marks on the first bullet point. The majority wrote extensively on how studying can directly help future prospects and also the possible consequences if one didn't study. This is where most wrote in the hypotethical *se* with some attempt at using the subjunctive construction well. Occasionally the word *educazione* was confused for *istruzione*. False friends can often lead to miscommunication so it is important that students learn these. In bullet point 2, many ignored the '*in futuro*' part of the rubric and wrote in general terms. It is important that students read carefully what is expected of them as no mention of the future meant that the bullet point wasn't covered. However successful answers included the importance of going to university in the future to qualify for a specific career. Here the interchangeable use of the future and conditional tenses was used extensively to varying degrees of success.

Question 3 – Translation

For this question, there are 6 marks for *Conveying key messages* and 6 marks for *Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures*. Given that the level of demand of the messages was aimed at covering grades 4 to 9, the question differentiated well, with all students able to score some marks.

The passage was divided into 13 key messages, as in the table below.

Conveying key messages

	Message	Main Issues
1	**Technology is useful**	*e* without accent was a common but serious error / various other adjectives such as *importante* and *facile* written instead of *utile*
2	**in everyday life.**	*nella vita quotidiana* not known by a majority
3	**My parents**	Incorrect possessive adjective or inaccurate spelling of *i miei* – *parenti* instead of *genitori*
4	**gave me a laptop**	Not many issues here apart from the mis-spelling of *hanno (anno)* for *mi hanno dato/regalato.*
5	**because I passed my exams.**	*O passato/superato* instead of *ho passato/superato.*
6	**Furthermore, we will go on holiday**	Omission of *inoltre* or using words such as *e* and *anche* Conditional tense instead of the simple future: *andremmo* not *andremo* Wrong preposition used for 'on holiday' *a/alle vacanza*
7	**to the mountains.**	*alle montagne* used a lot for this part of the translation.
8	**We will go for long walks**	*Conditional tense* used instead of the simple future*: faremmo* not *faremo* *Camino / giro* for *camminate*
9	**and I will ride a bike.**	*Andrò in bicicletta* was not known by a majority of students. Answers included: *monterò/userò/guiderò una bicicletta*
10	**Fortunately, the air**	Translated well
11	**will be cleaner.**	*sarà* without the accent changes the meaning of the word
12	**Where I live,**	Translated well
13	**there is a lot of pollution.**	Surprisingly not known by a majority of candidates *inquinazione/contaminazione/polluzione/inquimento* (commonly used)

Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

There were a considerable number of responses or part responses in Spanish or in English with an added vowel at the end with the intention of making the word sound Italian. Minor errors did not

prevent marks being awarded for conveying key messages provided they were communicated. However, when awarding marks for application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures, inaccurate language was considered. For example, language such as '*la tecnologia è utile'* and '*sarà più pulito',* often written without an accent, changed the meaning of the word and this prevented a tick for the key message as well as negatively influencing marks awarded for application of grammatical knowledge and structures. The vocabulary used in translations is largely taken from the vocabulary lists in the specification, cognates and KS3 vocabulary, therefore students do need to have a sound knowledge of the words in the vocabulary lists.

Advice to students

- Learn the difference between *e* and *è*.
- Learn that *sara* and *sarà* mean two different things.
- Practise high frequency words and phrases, especially connectives and prepositions.
- Check carefully that all aspects of the translation have been addressed accurately, particularly the little words (prepositions/articles).
- If you are not sure how to translate something, make an educated guess as it may score you a mark. Leaving it blank will not.
- Check verb tenses and endings.
- Stick to translating the words that are in front of you. DON'T ADD any words nor paraphrase!

Across all questions, there were persistent linguistic errors, listed below, which had an impact on all elements of the paper.

- *e/è*
- *ce/c'è*
- *che/ce/cè'*
- *chi/ci*
- *cio/co/c'ho*
- *pero/però*
- *a/ha/ah*
- *o/ho/oh*
- *ai /hai*
- wrong auxiliary in the *passato prossimo* : *ho andato,sono fatto* … or no auxiliary at all
- English /Spanish words have been used a lot (especially for dates, months, days, subjects studied: eg. physics, business, maths)
- *Poi* instead of *puoi*
- *Voi* instead of *vuoi*
- *Spendere tempo i*nstead of *passare il tempo*

- *Annoiante,annoioso*

- *Cuando/cuatro*

- *Graduare* instead of *laurearsi*

- *Note* for notes

- *Gradi* instead of *voti*

- A lot of students have learnt to write: *penso che sia* but then weren't clear how to carry on with the sentence

- A lot of slang across the questions

Most of the work seen was legible however there were occasions where students should have taken greater care in their handwriting as their work was illegible.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.