



**GCSE**  
**Italian**

8633/SH Paper 1 Speaking Higher Tier

Report on the Examination

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## Introduction

Students and teachers are once again to be congratulated on a successful speaking examination season in 2024. It is pleasing to report that there seemed to have been fewer problems than in the past.

It was again noted that there were very few incidences of poor-quality sound recordings and very few technical issues.

However, there are always ways to do better and the following examples of what went well and what did not, will hopefully help teachers when preparing students for future examinations.

## General comments on the themes and topics.

Using the sequence chart in the Teacher’s Booklet allowed for students to cover all three themes during their test, one in the Photo Card and two in the General Conversation. On the very few occasions when one of the themes in the General Conversation was the same as the theme of the Photo Card, a significant penalty was applied. Fortunately, this happened only rarely.

This year there seemed to be a greater confidence in the way students talked about technology. They were very comfortable talking about favourite apps and the uses and dangers of their phones. They were still more tentative about social issues, homelessness and volunteering etc. As always it is essential that students are familiar with all topics in the specification as they can occur in any part of the test.

## Role plays

In general, the students did well but here are a few points which caused difficulty to be considered for future examinations.

Some teachers seemed to be setting a timer, but this element of the test is not timed.

A very few teachers re-worded a question in order to elicit an answer. In the Role Play this is not allowed. Teachers must stick to the script.

It is also not allowed to ‘re-present’ a question if the student incorrectly starts or has given an incorrect answer. Even if the student subsequently had given an appropriate response, it did not count.

On very rare occasions teachers used the set questions as a basis for a general role play conversation or occasionally omitted one or more of the questions. This resulted in a significant loss of marks.

## The ! task

It was noticeable that in many cases the -!- question proved to be problematic. This is understandable as the students had not been able to prepare an answer. Often students were unable to grasp the essence of the question, possibly not recognising the key question word or form of question. An example would be ‘Secondo Lei, è facile vivere una vita sana? Perché?’ A significant number answered what they did and did not do to be healthy and did not actually answer the question.

There were often problems of manipulation of verbs from second to first person, eg in a question using ‘Preferisci...’ a significant number answered with ‘preferisci’ rather than ‘preferisco’.

**The ? task**

There was a marked improvement in how students asked questions though not all were successful. Some asked a random question unrelated to the stimulus on the card. This did not count. Students should be reminded that the question must be based on the given stimulus in some way.

A few did not seem to be aware that ? meant that they actually had to ask a question.

Again, this year, some asked a question with flat intonation, so it sounded like a statement so ‘Ti piace studiare’ rather than ‘Ti piace studiare?’ Again, this did not count.

**Role Play 7**

Some could not appropriately phrase what advice to give to a friend.

Most could talk well about types of programs and a recent film.

**Role Play 8**

Many students did not say how they used the internet to study. They just mentioned that they liked using technology and a computer.

Most could think of ideas for the future of technology – some very innovative.

**Role Play 9**

Being in the Lei form task 2 caused problems and some struggled to answer this question.

Most had ideas about why some young people smoke and on alcohol.

**Role Play 10**

Some did not answer the ‘Perchè?’ part of tasks 1 and 3.

Many could explain interesting disastrous holidays.

**Role Play 11**

For task 1 some just said what languages they study and gave no opinion on how important it is to learn languages. Similarly, when asked to describe a bad teacher they just mentioned somebody and said they did not like them without mentioning any traits.

They knew which subjects they like and dislike and why.

**Role Play 12**

Many did not have an opinion about the cost of university education or whether university is better near to home. They did better with future projects.

**The Photo Cards**

There were many interesting and imaginative descriptions of the photos.

The Photo Card test is timed and when students were very slow to respond or were allowed to continue with long answers, the 3-minute time limit was reached and sometimes the final question/s were not assessed.

Many students clearly knew that the best marks required at least three verb clauses in at least three responses. As they could prepare the first three responses, many did appropriately extend these first three answers, also including the required justified opinions. Some very able students did not seem to be aware of the requirements of the Mark Scheme and so did not score as highly as they should have done.

Very few students were asked only the first three prepared questions and not the remaining two unprepared questions. This resulted in a significant loss of marks.

Some questions involved a 'Perchè?' and some students were not prompted by the teacher to answer this part of the task.

Teachers are allowed to slightly re-phrase a question in this part of the test but in so doing, some gave away key vocabulary or meaning, perhaps by giving alternatives or suggestions, so that any subsequent appropriate answer given did not count. An example would be in Photo Card H task 4: 'Ti piacerebbe provare uno sport estremo – per esempio l'alpinismo? Quale e perché?'

Students did better when expecting a question in the past and another in the future, one of which is within the first 3 questions and a non-first person question somewhere. This latter question form did cause occasional problems, for example 'Cosa fanno i tuoi amici per tenersi in forma?'. Many found it difficult to use non first-person verbs.

### **Photo Card G**

Some did not have ideas about what they did not like to do with friends or family, but some had multiple ideas.

Some struggled for an opinion about marriage or living together.

### **Photo Card H**

They struggled with extreme sports and answering task 5 with a response in the third person plural. Other questions were well done.

### **Photo Card I**

Most described the photo well with many details and had opinions about town and country.

They found the volunteering question challenging and had difficulty putting an answer into words about what the town is doing for the environment.

### **Photo Card J**

Most described many details in the picture but found the homelessness questions and topic in general challenging.

### **Photo Card K**

They seemed confused by the idea of extracurricular activities and gave activities that were clearly not linked to school.

Other questions were done well.

**Photo Card L**

Many could not word an answer to task 2.  
Most had opinions about footballers' pay.

**The General Conversation**

Most students were well prepared and were able to engage in an interesting and meaningful dialogue. In general, there were many genuinely interesting conversations.

Many students skilfully 'recycled' vocabulary from the questions asked and this is fine. However, sometimes they were not able to adapt the verb to the appropriate ending.

In most cases it was clear that teachers knew their students well and the kind of material they would be comfortable to discuss. However, a significant number of students seemed to be reliant on pre-learned answers sometimes remembering an incorrect prepared response.

**Question types**

Most students were asked questions at a suitable level of difficulty and based on the appropriate themes. However, once again, in some cases the teachers simply used the 'exemplar' questions given in the Teachers Booklet. These are unrelated examples of question types which may or may not have been at an appropriate level of difficulty for any given student. The 'flow' of conversation was almost always compromised when using only these questions. These are just exemplar questions and not intended to be a script.

Occasionally students were asked closed questions which did not allow for able students to give full replies and other students were asked unstructured questions beyond their ability. Students did best when they were answering questions at an appropriate level and on a topic which interested them.

Given that students are required to offer and explain opinions to score for Communication, some students answered too many opinion questions at the expense of narration and use of different tenses. It was pleasing that almost all students did give explained opinions.

**Use of tenses**

Many students were not sufficiently challenged to answer in a variety of tenses. Some were asked just one or two 'tense' questions towards the end of the time available. Some were not asked any at all. Teachers should be encouraged to give students as much opportunity as they need to successfully use past and future time frames if they are able.

**Themes and topics**

The full range of topics was covered, some in imaginative ways. This year students seemed much more comfortable answering about topics such as technology and to a lesser extent environmental and social issues. They knew more of the topic specific vocabulary and answered well.

A small number of students were asked questions on the same theme as the Photo Card and a significant penalty was applied.

### **Asking a question**

It was noted that many more students were asking their question during the first theme of the conversation, so this meant that there were fewer occasions of questions being timed out at the end of the second theme.

The 'E tu?' option was popular and, in many cases, worked perfectly when the question previously asked by the teacher made it grammatically suitable, eg teacher, 'Cos'hai fatto al weekend?' the student then replied with what they did the 'e tu?'.

In some cases, it did not work: 'teacher: 'Com'è la tua citta?' – student answer + 'e tu?'. A good option for some was for the student to give a statement followed by 'e tu?', eg: 'Ho un cane e un gatto, e tu?'. This usually worked well.

A few still asked a question with flat intonation so it was a statement and not a question. 'Ti piace la scuola' rather than 'Ti piace la scuola?'. This did not count.

Teachers should remind students that the question must be based on one of the General Conversation topics to count. It must also sound like a question.

### **Timing of the Conversation**

The timing of the test remained an issue for a few students. Some tests exceeded the 7 minutes allowed and nothing was assessed once any utterance started before the limit was completed. This included any question asked by the student.

On a few occasions the first theme was too long and so did not allow the minimum 2½ minutes for the second theme before the time limit was reached.

In both of the above cases, a penalty was applied.

### **Conclusion**

In general, most students did as well as they were able and will achieve the grades they deserve. Well done to all.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.