

AM SYLLABUS (2026)

ITALIAN

AM 20

SYLLABUS

**Italian AM 20
Syllabus**

(Available in September)

Paper I (Oral/Aural: 1hr 45mins) + Paper II (2 hrs) +
Paper III (2½ hrs) + Paper IV (3 hrs)

1. AIMS

The aims of a course in Italian leading to the Advanced level examination are to:

- develop candidates' ability to understand the spoken and written forms from different registers and language varieties;
- develop candidates' ability to understand a wide range of texts;
- develop candidates' ability for extended listening, speaking, reading and writing;
- develop candidates' ability to communicate confidently, clearly, effectively and appropriately both orally and in writing;
- develop candidates' insights through regular contact with Italian newspapers, TV/radio news bulletins, websites, literary works, etc;
- provide a suitable foundation for further study and/or practical use of Italian;
- provide a sufficient basis for further study at degree level or equivalent.

2. SUBJECT CONTENT

In order to study the subject at Advanced level, candidates should normally have acquired the knowledge, understanding and skills equivalent to those specified for SEC and/or Intermediate.

Advanced specifications should require candidates to:

- understand and study in greater depth aspects of the contemporary society, literature (prescribed texts) and heritage of Italy, demonstrating a high level of critical awareness;
- use the target language to analyze, hypothesize, evaluate, argue a case, justify, persuade, rebut, develop arguments and present viewpoints, in speech and writing;
- demonstrate an ability to think critically, to understand the relationships between different uses of the language and to perceive their field of study in a broader context;
- understand and apply grammar rules and structures;
- use a considerable range of vocabulary in order to express specific notions in various thematic areas while showing understanding of connotations, shades of meaning, implications, inferences and overtones in speech and writing;
- show knowledge of meta-language.

3. ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

3.1

- understand and respond, in speech and writing, to spoken language;
- understand and respond, in speech and writing, to written language;
- show knowledge of grammar rules and structures and the ability to apply them communicatively;
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of various aspects of Italian society.

3.2

Language Skills

3.2.1 Listening

Candidates should be required to:

- understand complex utterances, such as those normally used on Italian media and/or in spontaneous speech;
- understand speech at normal conversational speed;
- understand texts relevant to communicative situations/topics.

3.2.2. Speaking

Candidates should be required to:

- show that they have developed communication and discourse strategies (making oneself understood, asking questions, seeking clarification, speaking about oneself, expressing views and opinions, describing, narrating events/experiences, etc.) ;
- show limited hesitation in their speech while producing communicatively relevant utterances with appropriate intonation and pauses;
- demonstrate that they can speak autonomously and take initiative.

3.2.3 Reading

Candidates should be required to:

- deal with inferences, euphemisms, irony and metaphors;
- understand texts of different genres, intended for Italian native speakers;
- comment on such texts and express their views and opinions on them.

3.2.4. Writing

Candidates should be required to:

- show an ability to deal with private and public correspondence;
- use Italian accurately and appropriately;
- show a sense of audience and style using a wide range of cohesive/anaphoric devices and coherence in writing.

- Show knowledge and understanding of the prescribed textbooks, and an ability to comment on these texts in writing.
- write in correct standard Italian, showing knowledge of orthographic and grammatical rules and structures.

4. SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT (100 marks)

WEIGHTINGS	READING	WRITING	LISTENING	SPEAKING	CONTENT
<i>PAPER I (Aural/oral) Listening/Dictation/Topic Presentation and Discussion</i>		5	5	10	
<i>PAPER II (Writing) Essay/exercises</i>		30			
<i>PAPER III (Reading) Comprehension and Précis</i>	20				
<i>PAPER IV (Literary Topics)</i>					30
TOTAL	20	35	5	10	30

The examination will consist of three written papers and an aural/oral test:

Paper 1 (20%)

Part i: (10%) 1.5 hrs

Aural

- **Dictation:** 5 marks (5%) – approximately 30 minutes
A text of approximately 150-200 words will be read three times. Candidates will be allowed to write during the second reading which will be read at a slower pace. The text will be read out for a third time at the end of the exercise in order to allow candidates to check their work. Names of persons and places will be given to candidates.
- **Listening Comprehension:** 5 marks (5%) – approximately 1 hour
A text of approximately 450-500 words will be read three times. Candidates can take notes during the listening phase, as from the first reading. Candidates will then have to answer to a set of questions on the text. One of the questions will test the ability of the candidates to summarise a part of the text.

Part ii: (10%) 15 mins

Oral

- **Topic Presentation:** 5 marks (5%)

Cinema:

Candidates will select an Italian film from the list provided below. In about 5 minutes the candidate should outline in a concise and lucid fashion the main themes of the film he/she has chosen. Plot and character may be given special attention.

- 1) *Johnny Stecchino*
- 2) *Mediterraneo*
- 3) *Nuovo cinema paradiso*
- 4) *Mine vaganti*

- **Interactive Conversation:** 5 marks (5%)

In about 10 minutes, the candidates' verbal communication skills may be tested by such stimuli as a text for reading and comment and/or pictures for description and discussion.

Paper II (30%) 2 hours

A) Essay on a general topic. 20 marks (20%)

A choice of titles will be given which may include a letter, a dialogue, a report, and comments on general aspects of life in Italy and Malta. Candidates are expected to write about 450-500 words on the topic of their choice.

B) Languages exercises. 10 marks (10%)

Languages exercises (approx. 4) will be set to test the candidates' competence in:

i) spelling ii) punctuation, iii) range of vocabulary, iv) application of grammar rules, v) syntax, vi) familiarity with registers, vii) familiarity with metalinguistic terms and viii) using a dictionary. The exercises set may include multiple choice, cloze tests, word sets, transformation, substitution, joining phrases, jigsaw, sentence completion, matching, recognition of functions, gap filling, editing, etc.

GRAMMATICAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

Candidates are expected to have a thorough knowledge of standard Italian and to express themselves appropriately in speaking and writing. Knowledge of the following is required:

1. the orthographic rules of standard written Italian;
2. correct and adequate use of punctuation and accents;

3. articles and determiners, including demonstratives, possessive forms, interrogatives and exclamatives;
4. nouns (all types and their uses);
5. pronouns (all types and their uses, including awareness of differences in implications when the pronominal subject is omitted or used explicitly);
6. prepositions and prepositional locutions;
7. conjunctions;
8. adjectives and modifiers (all types and their use, including variation of meaning according to their position in a noun phrase);
9. adverbs and adverbial locutions;
10. all verb conjugations and uses (including all tenses, moods, aspect and passive/active voice);
11. agreement between number and gender (inflectional morphology);
12. derivational morphology (including the use of prefixes and suffixes in order to modify nouns, adjectives and verbs);
13. syntax, including the unmarked subject-verb-object word order structure and marked syntactic structures;
14. simple and complex syntactic structures (juxtaposition, independent clauses, main clauses, coordinate and subordinate clauses);
15. direct and indirect speech;
16. a range of vocabulary that demonstrates that one is capable of communicating appropriately according to the situation in which one is involved;
17. speech functions, discourse markers, pragmatic strategies and intercultural notions;
18. metalinguistic knowledge.

Suggested Textbooks for Language and Grammar:

M. Silvestrini – C. Bura – R. Pavese – E. Chiacchella – V. Giunti Armanni, *L'italiano e l'Italia. Grammatica con note di stile*, Guerra, Perugia.

M. Silvestrini – C. Bura – R. Pavese – E. Chiacchella – V. Giunti Armanni, *L'italiano e l'Italia. Esercizi e prove per la Certificazione. Medio e superiore*, Guerra, Perugia.

M. Bocchiola – L. Gerolin, *Grammatica pratica dell'italiano dalla A alla Z*, Hoepli, Milano.

Paper III (20%) 2.5 hours

A) A **précis** of about 200 words on a set text of approx. 600 words. 10 marks (10%)

B) A **reading comprehension**. The text will contain approx. 600-700 words. 10 marks (10%)

Suggested Textbooks:

Balboni-Mezzadri, *Rete 3*, Guerra Edizioni, Perugia.

T. Marin, *Nuovo Progetto Italiano 3. Libro dello studente*, Edilingua, Roma.

Chiuchiù-Pace Asciani, *Italiano In vol. III*, Guerra Edizioni, Perugia.

Paper IV (30%) 3 hours

There will be two sections and candidates must answer 2 questions out of 3 from section A and one question from section B. Each question carries 10% of the marks. In Section A, candidates are to answer a reference to the context question and in section B candidates are to answer an essay question.

A. Antologia 20 marks (20%)

- **Dante:**
 - *Vita Nova: Tanto gentile*
 - *La Divina Commedia: Inferno*
 - Canto I (vv. 1-60)
 - Canto III (vv. 1-9)
 - Canto V (vv. 79-142)
 - Canto XXVI (vv. 85-141)
 - Canto XXXIII (vv. 1-78)
- **Petrarca: *Il Canzoniere***
 - *Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono*
 - *Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi*
 - *Oimè il bel viso, oimè il soave sguardo*
 - *Pace non trovo, et non ò da far guerra*
 - *Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio*
- **Boccaccio: *Il Decameron***
 - *Andreuccio da Perugia*
 - *Chichibò*
- **Commedia dell'Arte e Goldoni: *La locandiera*** (Atto I, Scena V; Atto I, Scena XV; Atto II, Scena IV; Atto II, Scena XVII; Atto III, Scena VI)
- **Foscolo: *Sonetti***
 - *Alla sera*
 - *A Zacinto*
 - *In morte del fratello Giovanni*
- **Leopardi: *Canti***
 - *L'infinito*
 - *A Silvia*
 - *Il sabato del villaggio*
- **Manzoni: *I promessi sposi***
 - Don Abbondio ed i bravi (Capitolo I: "Per una di queste stradicciole [...] in quelli che non poteva scansare.")

- Addio monti (Capitolo VIII: “Non tirava un alito di vento; [...] mentre la barca gli andava avvicinando alla riva destra dell’Adda.”)
- La tragica notte dell’Innominato (Capitolo XXI: “Ma c’era qualchedun altro in quello stesso castello [...] ora lo sospirava, come se dovesse portar la luce anche ne’ suoi pensieri.”)

- **Verga:** *La lupa*
- **Pirandello:** *La carriola*

Candidates are also encouraged to have a knowledge of the author’s background. Although candidates will not be asked to answer questions on the historical background of the author, this knowledge will be very useful for the contextualisation of the questions pertaining to the specific works.

B. Romanzo 10 marks (10%)

Two questions will be set on each book. Candidates are to answer one question on one of the set texts in 450-500 words.

1. Antonio Tabucchi: *Sostiene Pereira*
2. Giorgio Bassani: *Il giardino dei Finzi Contini*
3. Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa: *Il Gattopardo*

Grade Descriptions

1. Oral Component

1.1. Communicative Task:

Completion of Task:

Grade A: The whole task is successfully completed without difficulty. The candidate can cope with complications. Well-sustained performance within limits of resources. Prepared to take initiative. Able to respond and react appropriately to almost any question or comment. Shows good conversational skills (e.g. ability to react, to maintain and direct the conversation, to use appropriate tone and level of directness). Uses imagination and tact where appropriate. Able to convey some subtleties (e.g. reluctant acceptance, compromise).

Grade C: Nearly all the task is successfully completed with a good level of initiative and response most of the time. Capable of responding at some length, keeping the momentum going. Able to qualify statements and responses and to react appropriately to the examiner on most occasions. Can usually cope with complications. Generally fluent. A good range of vocabulary.

Grade E: Capable of a reasonable response but some clarification may be needed and the candidate may not always convey meaning clearly. Candidate’s response may reveal

occasional misunderstanding of the examiner's comments. A patchy performance. Still has a tendency to rely on the examiner and to be rather brief in reply. Vocabulary range reasonable but still a little limited.

1. 2. Language:

Grade A: Very few grammatical errors. Able to handle quite complex language, including range of structures.

Grade C: Mostly accurate. Obviously has a sound grasp of grammatical elements in spite of the occasional lapse. Some success in attempting more adventurous structures (e.g. passives, conditionals, subjunctive, adverbial subordinate clauses).

Grade E: Fairly accurate. Some inconsistency involving some serious elementary errors. Some attempt to use wider range of structures (e.g. adverbial subordinate clauses, passives, conditionals) but not necessarily always successful.

1. 3. Topic presentation and discussion:

1. 3.1. Range of expression:

Grade A: Confident use of articulate language appropriate to conveying well-developed and thoughtful ideas. Very much at home in the language.

Grade C: Uses more ambitious linguistic structures, verb tenses with some confidence (e.g. passives, subjunctives). Clear attempt to link. Sounds unforced. Good knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary. Beginning to use idiom.

Grade E: Able to vary sentence construction (e.g. beginning occasionally with qualifying clauses). Attempts to use more complex structures (e.g. object pronouns, common use of subjunctive). Some maltesisms/anglicisms in expression and perhaps some clumsiness and weakness in linking ideas, though vocabulary mostly adequate to task.

1. 4. Content:

Grade A: Gives a fluent and confident rendering of the subject matter. Obviously knows the subject well. Shows initiative and shares some responsibility for keeping the momentum going. Is able to react to examiner's questions and interventions, and is able to adjust utterances in the light of these. Can express complex and abstract ideas if appropriate to the subject. Shows some ability to present arguments and evidence in support of claims, and to present counter-arguments to examiner's comments where appropriate. Able to demonstrate some awareness of distinction between fact and opinion. Able to extend topic well.

Grade C: Able to talk at some length about the subject, not merely on a factual level. Can give opinions and defend them, although not always with complete consistency. Able to react to examiner's questions and interventions appropriately and with some

imagination. Takes some initiative. Able to extend topic well, e.g. apply ideas to a new but related situation. Knows the subject quite well.

Grade E: Patchy. Able to converse on a descriptive, factual or narrative level, but revealing some gaps. Some attempts to give an opinion, but rather inconsistent. Not always able to respond appropriately to the examiner's questions. At the lower level, still tends to rely largely on the examiner and is rather brief in response to comments or questions. Finds it difficult to extend topic in response to questions, e.g. to apply ideas to a new but related situation. A competent performance which does not go beyond the descriptive, factual or narrative.

2. Writing Component

2.1. Language:

Grade A: Good knowledge of idiom. Rich and sensitive use of language (adjectives, adverbs, verbs). Displays ability to select unexpected words. Demonstrates thorough knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary.

Grade C: Varied and interesting vocabulary. Some evidence of appreciation of idiom. Nearly all vocabulary correctly used. Sound topic-specific vocabulary.

Grade E: Some variation in choice of vocabulary/ability to produce synonyms. Sound general vocabulary, but limited topic-specific vocabulary.

2.2 Range of expression:

Grade A: Confident use of complex sentence patterns and linguistic structures. Uses articulate language appropriate to conveying well-developed and thoughtful ideas, without the style appearing too forced.

Grade C: Uses more ambitious linguistic structures, verb tenses with some confidence (e.g. passives, more complex use of subjunctives), or very creditable attempt to use ambitious language but style very cumbersome or heavily overworked. May include some rhetorical devices such as exclamation, question. Clear attempt to link. Essay reads easily.

Grade E: Able to vary sentence construction (e.g. beginning occasionally with subordinate clauses). Attempts to use more complex structures (e.g. object pronouns, common use of subjunctive) but some weakness in linking. Some maltesisms/anglicisms in expression and perhaps some clumsiness.

2.3. Accuracy:

Grade A: Can handle quite complex language with few errors.

Grade C: May contain a few basic errors and show weakness in one or two specific areas, but none the less generally accurate in handling of more complex areas of grammar

(e.g. irregular verbs, difficult tenses – passives, conditional perfect, word order in complex clause structures).

Grade E: Quality of accuracy is inconsistent. Basic grammar generally mastered (verb endings, adjectival agreements), but weakness in more difficult areas (e.g. tense and mood, irregular verb forms, prepositions). Or, very accurate but simple language.

2.4. Content:

2.4.1. Structure of essay/paragraphing:

Grade A: Well balanced and coherent piece, with good sense of overall perspective. Ideas clearly linked throughout.

Grade C: Competent structure, with logical progression of ideas/presentation of material.

Grade E: Ideas generally expressed in an appropriately structured form, but not always linked.

2.4.2. Relevance to question title:

Grade A: Clearly relevant throughout.

Grade C: Relates comments on the subject clearly to the question/title and answers it thoroughly. Some omissions but most areas covered adequately.

Grade E: Has a competent, even thorough, knowledge of the subject area, but only loosely connects it to the question/title. May refer to the question in the introduction and conclusion or may give good coverage of a limited number of marks.

2.4.3. Analysis and development of ideas:

Grade A: All ideas well developed. Understands implications of subject and draws sensible conclusions, where appropriate. Work likely to demonstrate interesting/unusual/original insights into subject.

Grade C: Most ideas developed. Some attempt to examine implications/draw conclusions where appropriate. Can give opinions and develop them although not always with complete consistency.

Grade E: Contains well worn ideas, occasionally expanded with some qualification. Unlikely to contain analysis of implications. Rather dull and pedestrian. Analysis tends to be tortuous. Some attempt to give an opinion, but rather inconsistent.

2.4.4. Factual content/illustration:

Grade A: Very detailed fully supported answer, demonstrating thorough knowledge of the subject. Non-discursive work illuminated by imaginative use of detail. Occasionally uses unusual/less obvious illustrations.

Grade C: Marks nearly always supported by factual information (e.g. statistics, precise references, specific examples, quotations). Imaginative/descriptive work well supported by detail.

Grade E: Covers the basic factual content of the subject adequately with a reasonable range of examples/illustrations/detail.