



# ITALIAN COURSES

...not just a language course  
but an **authentic Italian** cultural experience



## C.I.L.S., Certificate of Italian as a second language

### What is Cils?

**CILS** certification is an **official title** which states the degree of communicative competence in Italian as a Foreign Language. The CILS certificate is issued by University for Foreigners of Siena following an exam which consists of a test of communicative ability. Ability in Italian as a foreign language is described, measured and guaranteed using proven methods for objective results. CILS verifies the student's capacity to use Italian in real situations, with regard to both its cultural and spoken usage. The aim of CILS is toward standard Italian in its current usage, alive and shared, as it is both written and spoken.

**CILS** - a certificate of Italian as a second language - measures and assesses the level of competence a student has reached in Italian language. It is useful for those whose work and study puts them in daily contact with Italy, or simply for those who wish to evaluate their competence in the Italian language.

Certificazione  
di Italiano come  
Lingua Straniera



**cils** The certificate awarded by the *Università per Stranieri di Siena* is legally recognised as an official certification of linguistic communicative competence (*Legge 17 febbraio 1992, n. 204 and comma 3 dell'art. 10 dello Statuto dell'Università*). The Foreign Ministry, through the various cultural institutions present abroad, coordinates examination centres across the world for those wishing to undertake the CILS examination

### ALCE, official examination centre



Since July 5th 2007, Alce has been recognized as official **CILS EXAMINATION CENTRE**, Authorized by Unistrasi - University for foreigners at Siena, with official agreement (Convenzione ALCE-UNISTRASI, protocollo Università per stranieri di Siena, n. 10103/2007 del 5 luglio 2007)

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## Why and who is the certificate useful for??

A CILS certificate is aimed at non-Italians or Italian citizens resident abroad who are of Italian ancestry. CILS does not require the student to follow any particular method or type of language course: every candidate must prepare themselves for the certification exam in the way they find most suitable and appropriate. To sit a CILS exam it is not necessary to have obtained any particular academic qualifications, only a knowledge of the Italian language corresponding to the degree of ability required by each CILS level. Good all-round intelligence is required, as are sufficient written ability in the student's own language and a knowledge of the Roman alphabet.

The CILS exam also assumes a basic knowledge of European culture and society, and a frame of knowledge of Italy's place in the geographical, historical and cultural fields. Both Level 1 and Level 2 can be taken by older children and teenagers but are not suitable for children in the early years of primary school.

A certificate for children is currently in preparation. All CILS levels allow for contact with the real-life Italian culture in its different levels, types and functions. CILS is designed for those who study Italian, at those who work and study in contact with real-life Italy, and at those who want their own ability in Italian measured.

A CILS certificate can be used for use at work or study; for personal fulfilment or for whatever other reasons the student has a need for an official declaration of their ability in Italian. Many Italian companies who have operations abroad and who want to take on foreign staff, and foreign companies who have business dealings with Italy, request the attainment of CILS Level 3 or Level 4 with the achievement of a supplementary score at the end of teaching for inclusion on a specific list. The communicative ability certified by the CILS also allows introduction to areas of specific technical language usage: a foreigner in possession of an adequate CILS Level can direct themselves towards specialist tests and single out the informative contents and the principal communicative principles.

## Cils and Common European Framework

The certification system of CILS follows the guidelines laid out in *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, the European

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initiative in evaluating linguistic competence. As such there are **six recognised levels of competence**, each of which is autonomous and complete in itself and each adapted to the various social, professional and intellectual needs of the student.

Livelli QCER Common European Framework of Reference		Cils Levels
Utente Basico	A1	CILS A1
	A2	CILS A2
Utente Indipendente	B1	CILS UNO - B1
	B2	CILS DUE - B2
Utente Competente	C1	CILS TRE - C1
	C2	CILS QUATTRO - C2

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### CILS A1 and CILS A2

Are aimed at those who are taking their first steps in the process of learning Italian. The A1 level indicates that the student has just begun to engage with Italian as a second language, while the A2 level indicates a slightly more involved engagement and attests to a competence which is still in the stage of being formed. Neither level assumes an autonomous communicative ability. Both A1 and A2 of the CILS certification process are modularly structured, differentiated according to the needs and exigencies of the student. There are modules aimed at the children of immigrants who live in Italy, modules aimed at the adults whose first language is markedly different from Italian (Japanese, Chinese, etc.) and for children of emigrants from Italy who now live abroad. The examination at these levels lasts approximately two hours.

### The Livello Uno

**(First level)**, which corresponds to the **B1** level as indicated in *Framework*, assesses the users basic level of competence needed to use Italian with autonomy in authentic everyday contexts. The examination lasts approximately three hours.

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## The Livello Due

**(Second level)** corresponds to **B2** of Framework and is an intermediate level. Users at this level of competence are able to demonstrate the ability to use the fundamental basics of the language in a wide variety of contexts and situations. At this level, users are capable of using Italian to communicate effectively whilst staying in Italy, be it for reasons of study, work or pleasure. Possession of the certificate at this level allows students from outside the EU to register at university courses without having first to undertake an assessment of their Italian. The exam lasts about four hours.

## The Livello Tre

**(Third level)** is equal to **C1** in Framework and represents a superior competence in using the Italian language. The user at this level is able to use Italian effectively in a much wider range of contexts, including atypical situations, formal contexts, in dealing with public bodies, and other such milieu. The examination lasts about five hours.

## The Livello Quattro

**(Fourth level)** – **C2** in Framework – is a advanced level approaching native speaker level. The user has a completely independent use of Italian in all formal and informal situations and the capacity to effectively use Italian in professional contexts.

## The examination and certification

To obtain a CILS certificate it is necessary to pass the relevant examination. This consists of a listening test, a reading test, an analysis of the structures of communication, a writing test and a speaking test. All these papers are produced and evaluated at the Certification Centre of the *Università per stranieri di Siena* according to the guidelines laid down by the EU. Certificates are granted when a student reaches a minimum score on each paper. When retaking the examination in cases where the minimum score was not achieved in all papers, candidates take only those papers where the score was insufficient. Once a pass has been achieved in any given paper, that result lasts one year, after which candidates must retake the whole examination to obtain the certificate.

Examination take place in official centres across the globe. These centres also deal with registration for the exams. ALCE **is authorized examination centre.**

## The test

Central to the CILS system are the tests and their selection criteria. The tests always begin with a text, which constitutes the centre of communication in which the candidate is engaged with usage. The texts are chosen with reference to the spheres of communication in Italian, taking into consideration the various CILS level being sat: the selection of texts takes place while using certain criteria judged to be in harmony with the general functions of

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usage and its own objectives. In this the CILS Centre also makes reference to the most up-to-date research in textual linguistics and pragmatics. The criteria followed for choice of texts are the following:

Types of textual structure: the texts chosen are either topic-based, narrative or descriptive. The texts used for CILS tests essentially display characteristics of internal cohesion and coherence which makes them representative of the following types of texts.

**Informative:** in the text with informative functions, it is the density of information which drives the choice of CILS;

**Pragmatic value:** CILS selects texts which have a strong practical communicative value which are of use to solve problems of interaction at interpersonal level.

The texts used in CILS exams are expressed from the point of view of the type of text, with regard to pragmatic functions and the density of the information contained. The various texts in each of the CILS tests have different levels of reading difficulty (confirmed by proper statistical methods) and different levels of vocabulary and morphosyntax. If the lexical and morphosyntactic structure shown in a text doesn't fall within what is expected for that particular CILS level, the proper mark can be ascertained from the context. Here is the selection of the types of test chosen from those usually in CILS tests:

## **Tests of oral ability:**

- Two-way speaking face-to-face in a free conversation setting: dialogues.
- Two-way speaking face-to-face in a semi-free conversation setting: interviews
- Two-way conversation non face-to-face free-conversation setting: telephone.
- One-way conversation face-to-face: lessons, conferences.
- Conversation non face-to-face from a distance: radio broadcasts.

## **Tests of verbal comprehension ability:**

- Public notices
- Current affairs articles from newspapers.
- Articles on Italian events
- Articles on international affairs
- Articles from newsmagazines on domestic and foreign politics
- Feature articles on items of general interest: health, environment, etc.
- Articles on sport
- Utility bills and announcements (telephone, electricity, etc)
- Instructions for use of the telephone and other commonly-used appliances
- Instructions for taking of medicines

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- Letters (between friends, of complaint)
- Official letters to public bodies (police, municipal council, etc)
- Official forms
- Narratives of various types (stories, fairy-tales, etc)
- Rules, regulations, job advertisements
- Timetables for public transport, offices, museums, etc
- Weather forecasts
- Advertisements

## Tests of written ability:

- Completion of forms (for enrolling at university, requesting a residence permit, etc)
- CVs
- Diaries
- Letters to public EBTI or public administrators (directions from a school, university secretaries.)
- Letters to relatives and friends
- Personal memoranda

## Test of oral ability

- Two-way face-to-face conversation in a free conversation setting, dialogue between the candidate and the examiner.
- Two-way face-to-face conversation in a free conversation setting with the candidate responding to questions asked by the examiner.
- One-way face-to-face explanation, expanding on a subject either chosen or assigned.

## The examination dates

Examinations take place twice a year – in June and December - at the same time in all examination centres.

Next dates
a) 6 december 2007
b) 6 june 2008
c) 5 december 2008

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According to these dates, start preparatory courses at Alce

Preparatory Course starting dates
a) 22 october 2007
b) 19 maggio 2008
c) 20 october 2008

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