



## External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Classical Studies
Level(s)	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

# Comments on candidate performance

## General comments

The standard of the dissertations deserves positive comment. Although there were fewer outstanding dissertations, there were also fewer poor ones. Those that successfully examined diverse sources of evidence and produced reasoned conclusions were sometimes outstanding pieces of work. Special mention should be given to a dissertation which discussed with passion and real enthusiasm the role of weaving in the classical world — a pleasure to read!

Candidates should be encouraged to distinguish between detail that is almost wholly narrative and that which is relevant. There was sometimes too much of the former. Some candidates theorised adventurously, which was good when supported by evidence. In general, conclusions were neat in the way they brought different strands of the evidence together.

As for the exam, the majority of the candidates chose option C, Heroes and Heroism, producing work of a high standard. The number of candidates choosing the previously popular options A, History and Historiography, and D, Comedy, Satire and Society, was markedly down on previous years. Only one school entered candidates for option B, Individual and Community, producing work of an impressively high standard.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

The best candidates used the opportunity to broaden successfully their sometimes very specialised and often narrow titles to broach some complex concepts and to engage well, using the sources, with ideas like national identity and racial stereotyping. The candidates understood the links between philosophy and religion, and literature and society. They were also aware of class- and gender-based evidence and of other limitations of the sources.

The majority of the candidates produced very impressive work in both Part 1 (comment questions) and in Part 2 (essays). In the Heroes and Heroism section candidates were able to answer well all questions except, in some cases, questions 12a) and 12b), which suggests that their knowledge and understanding of Ovid's *Heroides* was lacking. The quality of the work in all sections was very high.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

There were a small number of candidates whose dissertations consisted of a simple narrative structure, heavy on 'facts', but without argumentation or evidence of other viewpoints. Some, therefore, lacked the depth appropriate for this level.

In the exam most questions were answered very well. However, in Part 1 question 4a), not all candidates recognised the incident referred to. No-one answered question 4b). There is no evidence in their answers to suggest that the candidates found any of the options over-demanding.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

The present level of knowledge and understanding shown by candidates is very high indeed. They seem particularly well-motivated in their dissertations which, at their best, are quite excellent and full of focused enthusiasm.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	82
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	46
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## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 300				
A	91.3%	91.3%	42	210
B	8.7%	100.0%	4	180
C	0.0%	100.0%	0	150
D	0.0%	100.0%	0	135
No award	0.0%	100.0%	0	-

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.