



External Assessment Report 2014

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

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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

Where the structure of questions invited a methodical response, candidates performed well. More discursive essays were harder for some. On the whole, answers were well-structured, although the absolute importance of 'sticking to the question' was a problem for some who wished to narrate at length, sometimes away from the subject. Some answers were excellent, especially where candidates understood the thematic approach required to answer some questions fully. A similar observation may be made about the effective use of comparisons, especially to highlight similarities and differences with other historical periods.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidate performance compared well with previous years, with a few exceptional papers at the top.

As regards the different contexts, those studying Individual and Community produced consistently well-argued answers. In the Heroes and Heroism option, there were many good answers on the role of the gods and on heroic qualities then and now. Candidates opting for History and Historiography produced good answers, although Thucydides's digression was not always identified. Answers in Comedy, Satire and Society were, generally, of a good standard.

Dissertations showed good structure, well followed through. Evidence was used systematically to reinforce conclusions. Awareness of other viewpoints and bias was frequent.

Comparisons ranged from elaborate to efficient, with just the occasional irrelevant one. Conclusions were usually drawn from statements and properly evaluated. There was effective use of a good variety of evidence and personal engagement with the theme, including mature writing on the authorial voice and child psychology in classical Rome.

Areas which candidates found demanding

A few essays were on the short side — 3500 words or less. There was, occasionally, mistranscription of information and unclear sentence structure. Sometimes also a tendency to repeat points, and indifferent wording. There was less redundant information than in previous years.

The need to prove alternative viewpoints was not constantly met.

There were fewer high A passes than in previous years but, overall, the standard of work was impressively high.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The message remains the same, especially as regards the dissertation. The best dissertations are thematic and comparative.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	46
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	49
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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	81.6%	81.6%	40	210
B	16.3%	98.0%	8	180
C	2.0%	100.0%	1	150
D	0.0%	100.0%	0	135
No award	0.0%	-	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.