



External Assessment Report 2011

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Assessment Panel	Classical Studies
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Subject(s)	Classical Studies
Level(s)	AH

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

Dissertation

A good effort was made by nearly all the candidates. Some perceptive essays on political, social and religious themes were produced. Themes from Art and Archaeology made a welcome appearance. There was, however, still a number of candidates who listed facts without proper argumentation.

Exam

Handwriting continues to be an issue in some papers. Nevertheless, as to the answers themselves, in the main candidates were well-prepared and engagement with the themes and their relevance to modern times was a pleasing feature of many papers.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Dissertation

Some studies were comprehensive, backed by evidence, with conclusions logically and continuously drawn throughout. They showed awareness of different viewpoints and had sound structure with consistency in the development of lines of argument. There was welcome use of artistic, architectural, epigraphic and numismatic evidence. The best were characterised by appropriate use of a range of sources, explicitly acknowledged.

Exam

Candidates showed a good knowledge of structural and thematic issues in the historians and of complex characterisation in Tacitus and Livy. The Heroes and Heroism option was particularly well handled where candidates engaged well with pathos, tragedy and moral issues. The standard of answers in the Comedy section was very high indeed.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Dissertation

There was still some factual, narrative writing appropriate to a lower level. Sometimes titles were too sweeping to permit proper in-depth study. Sometimes, titles were not strictly complied with in the contents. Proof-reading needs to be better – there is some careless writing which can be incoherent. The relevance of quotes was not always clear.

Exam

The exam produced some outstanding results, but too often candidates failed to answer the question asked and, instead, chose to write page after page of whatever they knew about a topic, regardless of its relevance. Lack of detail was a problem in some of the answers in all the options.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

It is important for schools to advise candidates that their dissertations need a clear structure. This should involve building the narrative of their dissertation through a thorough investigation of all relevant sources, focussing on their reliability. Candidates should avoid making speculative statements, not justified or followed through. A contents page with headings for the different sections would also be helpful in this regard. Appropriate comparisons from different historical eras would also be welcomed. Quotes need to be acknowledged. Candidates should also beware of excessive length which can be repetitious and self-penalising.

As regards subject matter, a good number of candidates are producing high-quality work on topics more challenging than a few years ago.

As far as the examination paper itself is concerned, candidates should be encouraged to focus their answers on the specific questions rather than see them as a conduit to write , sometimes at excessive length, general essays on the broader topic.

Please ask SQA or the PA via the SQA, if you have any doubts or concerns over any aspects of the contents of this report. Please also make sure that the candidates are aware of all of the prescribed books in a chosen context.

Guidance notes for PAs

There are four sources of information which inform the Principal Assessor's comments on the performance of candidates. These are:

- ◆ the Question Paper itself and its associated Marking Instructions — both are essentially predictive of the expected standards of candidate responses
- ◆ actual candidate responses — the quality of these responses will be noted in the Principal Assessor's own marking and, at Marker Check and Finalisation, in the work of the whole team of markers
- ◆ any particular difficulties that appeared to have arisen for candidates — communicated through Principal Assessor Referrals and Markers' Reports
- ◆ general issues identified in Markers' Reports — these provide an overview of the marking experience of each member of the marking team

Using these sources, there are three stages through which the Principal Assessor's comments are developed and refined:

- ◆ the Principal Assessor's own initial impressions will be compiled, generally in note form, question by question and, if applicable, component by component
- ◆ the impressions gained and the issues raised by markers will be accurately summarised through a thorough analysis of Principal Assessor Referrals and Marker Reports
- ◆ the trends and patterns revealed by statistical data at pass mark will be interpreted in the light of feedback already received and by comparison with earlier years

Providing the information for an SQA External Assessment Report is therefore not an exercise which is separate from other post-examination procedures: it is the culmination and distillation of judgements made throughout those procedures.

When providing information for an SQA External Assessment Report, it is important to remember that these reports are consulted by a variety of audiences including: assessment panels; universities and colleges; professional teacher organisations; the media and the Government; centres who present candidates in good faith; and, not least, candidates and their parents.

The reports are also key documents in SQA's continuing determination to be transparent and have the potential to provide regular support to centres in the understanding of standards and thereby, to help them in determining the nature of the provision they make for the teaching and preparation of their candidates for assessment.

The structure, content and style of the information provided by PAs must take account of these factors by:

- ◆ maintaining a measured and objective tone throughout
- ◆ using plain English
- ◆ reflecting its essential purpose which is to inform, to clarify, to comment and to advise constructively
- ◆ clearly recognising and respecting its various audiences

Any Markers' Reports on the papers for which the PA is responsible will be sent to them under separate cover. Any comments from the EIS or other sources on the 2011 examination papers will also be forwarded to the PA in due course.