



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject(s)	CLASSICAL STUDIES
Level(s)	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**

In general, candidates had been well prepared and performed well. There were few outstanding performances, but a number of very good ones. Standards in literacy and handwriting seem to have improved, which is very encouraging and helpful to the marking team. Also, there is less evidence of candidates being entered at inappropriate levels.

## **Areas in which candidates performed well**

In Classical Drama, there were many excellent responses, especially in Question 1 on Antigone and Question 2 on Medea. Question 4, where candidates had to answer on two plays, proved popular this year and prompted some very good responses.

In the Power and Freedom section, Question 5 on Athenian democracy was popular, as expected, and well done.

In the Religion and Belief section, Question 9, which dealt with rituals and beliefs about death, was very popular and well done.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

In Section 1, Power and Freedom in Questions 2a and 6a, candidates simply repeated the content of the sources.

In Section 1, Religion and Belief, Questions 3a on Demeter, and 6a on the Roman attitude towards foreign religions, were not well done.

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

The main issue is still that of candidates not answering the specific question asked and writing vague, general responses. Candidates should practise past papers and concentrate on the wording of the question, especially if there are two parts to it.

They should not make use of bullet points in Section 2 unless they are running out of time. Planning is important before writing essays so that work is organised and does not end up with asterisks and extra points throughout the booklet.

Although essays should be of a reasonable length (at least two to three sides of A4), candidates need not write copiously. Some candidates are taking up to five extra double sheets of A4 paper or two extra booklets. This is not necessary.

Clearly, there is evidence of good preparation by teachers and candidates alike.

What is apparent is that candidates have a great deal of knowledge of the subject. Now centres must work on helping them relate and adapt this knowledge to the specific questions.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	431
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	387
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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 100				
A	26.1%	26.1%	101	70
B	22.0%	48.1%	85	60
C	23.0%	71.1%	89	50
D	5.4%	76.5%	21	45
No award	23.5%	100.0%	91	-

## 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.