



External Assessment Report 2012

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

Exam

The questions gave candidates a good opportunity to use the texts as a springboard for the analysis of contemporary issues. Most candidates found the context they chose to be stimulating.

Dissertation

There was a good range of topics in the dissertations, from evaluations of the careers of significant characters in classical history to uses of literary and architectural propaganda, and the success or failure of the Romans in Scotland. Presentation was generally effective, with good awareness of the need to back up statements with relevant evidence, and also for structure and conclusions that follow naturally from a clearly stated position.

Areas in which candidates performed well

As regards the dissertation, the best work was characterised by an introduction that set out systematically the direction the essay would take, followed by a tight evidence-based approach, without repetition, and sensitive to other interpretations of the evidence. Comparisons were very relevant in such work, and sometimes woven seamlessly into the fabric of the essay. Perception of motivation and attitudes was occasionally very good.

Areas which candidates found demanding

A few essays were too short to fulfil the criteria for a reasonable to good pass. Some comparisons with more recent history need to be watched for tokenism and artificiality; there should be several reasonable points of contact between the two situations in question.

Deviation resulting in irrelevance is still an issue for some. Also, repetition should be guarded against.

In the examination itself there were no areas of difficulty meriting special mention.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

All centres are advised to consult the Arrangements documentation on the SQA website to confirm details of the prescribed contexts.

In the dissertation, some of the titles chosen by candidates are insufficiently testing to make for good argumentative essays that lead to a high grade at this level. Also, a lightweight

bibliography sometimes resulted in insufficient depth and a presentation which was too narrative.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	66
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	82
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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	65.9%	65.9%	54	210
B	20.7%	86.6%	17	180
C	7.3%	93.9%	6	150
D	1.2%	95.1%	1	135
No award	4.9%	100.0%	4	-

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.