



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>Classical Studies</b>
Level	<b>Advanced Higher</b>

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

Many essays sought commendably to argue a point with awareness of alternative viewpoints and a good command of structure. Comparisons were occasionally rather contrived and not analytical enough at this level. Nevertheless, many candidates' analogies with modern times were really thought-provoking. Most essays showed good use of sources, but some clearly transcribed passages without ascription.

### Exam

In general, well-structured essays showed sound preparation. Candidates responded well to Herodotus' entertainment value as well as his historical, moral and literary purposes. Thucydides too was well-handled, but some more 'hard' examples of his analytical technique in action would have been welcome, eg why was it in Athens' interests to side with Corcyra?

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Dissertation

The best dissertations set themselves interesting questions and the answers were well structured. Focal points of structure featured in the best work. Some good work related literary sources to the physical evidence of Greek and Roman artefacts. Good, effective conclusions to arguments, where the candidates showed his/her personal engagement, characterised the best work.

### Exam

The Pythius episode was well analysed. There were also good answers on Praxagora and 'communism' with awareness of Aristophanes' literary persona. Answers on Horace were good at distinguishing between Epicurean and Stoic philosophies. The difference in tone of Juvenal's tenth satire was well-discussed. All answers in the Individual and Community option were of a high standard. The answers from candidates choosing the Heroes and Heroism option were likewise very good.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Dissertation

Some candidates did not do themselves justice because their essays were too short. On the other hand, excessive length was, as ever, counter-productive. There is still a tendency to detail factual information without direct reference to the subject. Repetition of facts and arguments marred a small minority of dissertations. Incoherence, arising from poor understanding of sources, was a feature of some work.

### Exam

Hand-writing was, in some cases, almost illegible. In the History and Historiography section, some candidates were less secure on the build-up to the Peloponnesian War, and Potidaea was barely mentioned. In the comedy option, some found the role(s) of the chorus in Clouds

a difficult concept and failed to disentangle the triple role. In Part 2, the Polybius essay (number 2) and the Horace essay (number 14) were hardly attempted. In number 15, some had difficulty in distinguishing between Juvenal's attacks on vice from his attacks on sections of society.

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

With regard to the dissertations, it would be preferable if candidates did not attempt a topic with its basis on the option which they are studying for the external assessment. The dissertation should be about expanding the breadth of their awareness of the classical world. The best dissertations do this superbly. We urge candidates, under the guidance of their teachers, to seek challenging topics.

We would also urge candidates to adopt a clear structure for their dissertation with chapter headings. Too often essays lack such structure and drift off into a stream of consciousness and incoherence. We would also regard a bibliography as essential rather than just desirable.

There is still a tendency to re-tell events at length.

Centres considering introducing the exam are urged to contact SQA and to seek advice from the Principal Assessor.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	55
Number of resulted entries in 2010	60

## 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	61.7%	61.7%	37	210
B	23.3%	85.0%	14	180
C	11.7%	96.7%	7	150
D	1.7%	98.3%	1	135
No award	1.7%	100.0%	1	—

### 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, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.