



## External Assessment Report 2009

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Subject	Classical Studies
Level	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

There were many pleasing answers with good analysis, with the tendency towards excessive narrative less marked this year. There was, however, an uneven response to 'Comedy and Satire' suggesting that Horace in particular needed closer study.

In the dissertations most candidates wrote well-structured essays. The best of these were well introduced with the main lines of enquiry set out and the main themes revisited leading to naturally evolving conclusions. There is still a tendency for some candidates to rely too much on narrative at the expense of analysis.

### Areas in which candidates performed well

There were many very good answers on Aristophanes with candidates displaying sound knowledge of the historical context. The 'aurea mediocritas/golden mean' was particularly well-explained in question 16a. The essay on Juvenal (question 15) was done, in some cases, exceptionally well. In the Historiography section there was good awareness of 'hubris' and 'nemesis' in Herodotus and of the literature versus history debate. There were some outstanding essays from candidates who chose the Individual and Community option.

In the dissertations there were good examples of personal engagement with the themes. A number of candidates showed regular awareness of other viewpoints and could make well-sustained comparisons with other societies at other times. There was, in the best dissertations, some impressive tackling of important themes, eg history and the theory of universal art, common themes in ancient and modern drama, comparison of ancient and mediaeval epic, shifting notions of heroism, the development of the Socratic method.

### Areas which candidates found demanding

The interpretation questions in part 1 of the exam cause more difficulties than the essays. The interpretation question on Horace was problematic for many. Question 16b (Juvenal) also caused difficulty with a number of candidates misinterpreting it as a lament for the glorious dead rather than as a criticism of contemporary moral turpitude.

As for the dissertations:

- A few were too short.
- Long quotations are fine, but need always to be relevant to the argument in detail as well as purport.
- Some candidates 'section' their essays too much; this leads to an overly narrative approach.
- Too often evidence is not ascribed; its validity, reliability and degree of bias are not well enough considered.
- There was a heavy dependence on one or two texts sometimes.
- A loose approach to paragraphing can make for poor structure.

### Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

To take on board the points made above and to consult the PA when in doubt.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	55
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	55
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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	38.2%	38.2%	21	210
B	36.4%	74.5%	20	180
C	14.5%	89.1%	8	150
D	1.8%	90.9%	1	135
No award	9.1%	100.0%	5	-

## 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.