



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Latin
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 was a 12.5% increase in presentations, continuing the trend set by the 14.3% increase in 2009. Of the seventeen participating centres, three had returned to present at this level after a gap of several years.

In the Translation and Dissertation components, there were many good and some very good performances. Because of less strong performances in Interpretation, there were few exceptionally able candidates.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Interpretation

Cicero and letter writing

Candidates who chose this option were well prepared and tackled all three authors with confidence. Questions 3 (a) and (b) and 4 (b) were especially well done. Both essay titles proved equally popular and clearly showed personal involvement.

Ovid and Latin love poetry

The prescription was well known by many candidates. Questions 1 (a), 2 (f) and 3 (b) were especially well done. Essay 4 (b) proved considerably more popular than 4 (a). Whether choosing 4 (a) or (b), each candidate demonstrated genuine involvement with the issues raised, responding in 4 (b) with considerable originality. One outstanding candidate scored 97%.

Translation

Most candidates completed both Translations with great success. Three candidates scored more than 90%. The Livy and Virgil were tackled with equal confidence, whereas usually the Virgil is a greater challenge.

Dissertation

58% of candidates scored 70% or more, and two scored more than 90%. Greater care than hitherto had been taken with presentation of footnotes and bibliography.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Interpretation

Cicero and letter writing

Question 4 (a) required a firm understanding of senatorial meetings and of trial procedures; some candidates were imprecise and did not give the four required comparisons.

Ovid and Latin love poetry

Question 1 (e) required analysis of structure, a technique of which many candidates were unsure. Imprecise responses to Questions 2 (e), on poem 7, and 3 (a), on poems 26 and 39, all in English, suggested that some candidates had been left to study them in isolation, without detailed teacher input.

Translation

All candidates completed the Livy. Only one candidate did not attempt the Virgil at all. Timing proved an issue for three candidates who only completed the Virgil in part.

All candidates followed the Livy storyline and were able to make very good sense of the piece. Command of grammar and syntax was generally much stronger than in recent years, problems only arising with the reported statement in lines 3–4 and lines 9–12, which included two present infinitive passives and two gerundives. Occasional difficulties arose with location of vocabulary and selection of the most appropriate dictionary meanings, for example *aperuisset* in line 5, *studiosus* in line 7, and *solvendum* in line 12.

The Virgil posed very few problems grammatically, apart from the failure of some to link *serena* in line 1 with *luce* in line 2, and *laeto* with *coetu* in line 4. Again, the problem for some was selection of appropriate dictionary definitions, for example *vehebant* in line 2, *clari* in line 3, *certare* in line 5, and *munera* in line 6.

Dissertation

Some candidates relied too much on narrative and ignored the need for relevant argument. Some made little or no critical comment on sources. Two candidates did not produce Dissertations tightly enough tied to the title supplied. Two candidates produced work more appropriate for a Standard Grade Investigation.

Some candidates chose historical topics in which judicious incorporation of relevant archaeological evidence was essential to support primary written evidence. In failing to do this, they seriously undermined the strength of their submissions.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Interpretation

Candidates should be prepared to answer textual questions on content, significance and author's intention in considerable detail. It is essential that work covered early in the Course is thoroughly revisited for the final exam. Although the prescription presented in Latin will obviously dominate the teaching-learning schedule, it is most unwise to underestimate the time and effort which should be put into studying the extensive amount of the prescription presented in English.

It is also highly inadvisable to ask candidates to study these English sections unsupported by teacher input, since they may well misinterpret content, fail to take account of context,

and misunderstand mood and tone. Questions on structural analysis require guidance and considerable practice, since this is frequently an area of weakness.

Translation

Translation of both authors demands careful application of dictionary skills, which it is essential for candidates to practise regularly in timed conditions. Confident and accurate knowledge of grammar and syntax is paramount. Livy presents the challenge of longer and more complex sentences, Virgil of terseness, poetic nuance and abstraction. Both would most effectively be supported by a structured programme of teacher-guided practice, where stylistic features may be actively analysed and discussed.

Dissertation

Choice of topic is all-important. It is inadvisable to choose a topic too closely related to the Higher or Advanced Higher Interpretation prescriptions, since it might appear that the Dissertation lacks fresh research. It is inadvisable to choose a topic which seems more appropriate for Standard Grade in its simplicity.

Wording of the title must be carefully crafted. Since there is no requirement to submit titles in advance for approval, there is no excuse for a Dissertation and its title not to be a perfect match. If the title states that two historical figures are to be compared, it is completely inadequate to make comparisons only in the concluding paragraph.

In many topics, archaeological evidence can play a valuable part in strengthening argument, and should be actively researched for inclusion where relevant. Dissertations must avoid over-reliance on narrative; relevant argument is a key requirement. Secondary sources should not appear only in the bibliography, but should be actively discussed in the body of the text.

The two weakest areas to be improved are those of critical comment on sources, and quotation of Roman authors in Latin as well as in English translation. Candidates who do not have access to the Latin of source authors in book form should be advised that all but the most obscure texts are easily found on various user-friendly websites. Centres and candidates are strongly recommended to consult the published Dissertation marking scheme.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	40
Number of resulted entries in 2010	45

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	35.6%	35.6%	16	210
B	33.3%	68.9%	15	180
C	17.8%	86.7%	8	150
D	6.7%	93.3%	3	135
No award	6.7%	100.0%	3	—

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.