



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Latin
Level	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

Most candidates were very well prepared. Answers tended to be very full and candidates, for the most part, attempted to match the number of points made to the number of marks available. In the Interpretation paper, the questions requiring candidates to consider the content of the text, and to manipulate that information, were better done than those that asked about word choice and language techniques.

In the Translation paper, almost all candidates maintained a confident grasp of the main ideas and momentum throughout. A story which centred on Verres, his character and his crimes, themes with which they were all familiar, seemed to have appealed to candidates.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Interpretation

In Section A (Virgil), questions on Charon (Question 3) and Cerberus (Question 4a) were well answered.

In Section B (Plautus), the challenging language question on the dialogue between Labrax and Charmides was well done.

In Section C (Cicero), the question on the people of Syracuse (Question 4) was also well done.

Although the 10-mark questions occasionally showed over-reliance on prepared answers, it is gratifying to report that most candidates, in all three sections, were capable of producing reasonably structured and extended responses, with short introductions and summary conclusions.

Translation

A pleasing number of candidates took great care over detail to produce good quality responses. Care taken over spelling, the correct transcription of proper names, and coherent syntax, were also encouraging. It was clear from the presentation and appearance of the scripts that candidates, almost universally, were committed to doing their best. The most outstanding scripts were meticulously observant, and all but three candidates completed the whole passage.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In Section A (Virgil), candidates found the scanning of line 150 difficult (Question 4b), as they had problems with *Cerberus*. In Question 2, discussion on 'Virgil's choice of Latin words' proved challenging, as some candidates knew the English but could not identify the Latin correctly.

In Section B (Plautus), Question 1 on the appearance of the fishermen elicited unfocused answers. Question 5 (a), about Trachalio's description of Labrax, produced vague answers with little validation. Most candidates seemed to have overall knowledge of the play, but were weak on textual detail. The characters' names were frequently misspelled.

In Section C (Cicero), Question 1, on the reference to Hannibal, produced some very confused answers. In Question 2, about Cicero using guesswork, the part of the question 'Give details of this' was frequently omitted.

Some candidates wrote overlong answers and, running out of time, omitted Question 5 in the Virgil and Cicero sections, to allow enough time to complete Question 6, which was worth 10 marks. This, unfortunately, cost them five marks, the value of each of the fifth questions. In questions which contained several parts, candidates did not always attempt all parts, eg Section A, Question 5; Section C, Question 2; Section C, Question 5.

A minority of candidates seemed to be unfamiliar with the English prescriptions and had difficulties understanding both the content and the language of the English passages.

Translation

Two key constructions, which candidates will have practised in their Course work but were not handled well, were the accusative and infinitive (*quod illi... cupidum esse*) and the ablative absolute (*facta manu armata*).

Few translated *multum* as an adverb but instead translated it as 'many'.

The phrase *aeditumi custodesque* also caused problems.

Some candidates did not use the word list properly, and applied the wrong meaning when two were given, even though the relevant lines were specified. They also did not look up words they thought they knew, eg taking *signum* to mean 'statue' when the word list gave the meaning as 'signal'.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Ensure that candidates are sufficiently familiar with the English passages of the prescribed text.
- ◆ Stress the importance of time management in exam conditions.
- ◆ Remind candidates to read the questions in the Interpretation paper carefully, to avoid parts of questions being omitted.
- ◆ Avoid over-reliance on mechanical methods of scansion, eg counting up syllables and trying to calculate the number of dactyls and spondees.
- ◆ Ensure that candidates know how to spell the proper names in the prescribed text.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	199
Number of resulted entries in 2010	228

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark — 150				
A	42.5%	42.5%	97	105
B	21.1%	63.6%	48	90
C	17.1%	80.7%	39	75
D	5.7%	86.4%	13	67
No award	13.6%	100.0%	31	–

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.