



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Latin
Level(s)	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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 decrease in presentations from 48 in 2013 to 28 in 2014. There was also a fall in the number of presenting centres from 18 to 14. One centre returned to present at this level after a gap of two years; there were no new centres.

In the Interpretation and Dissertation components, there were many good and some very good performances. The Translation was the least strong of the three components, but nonetheless it produced a considerable number of good and some outstanding performances.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Interpretation

Cicero and letter-writing

No centre presented candidates for this option.

Ovid and Latin love-poetry

The overall quality of answers was high. Twenty one candidates scored more than 70%, 12 of whom scored between 80 and 89%, and three more than 90%. All candidates passed this option.

Candidates appeared to have enjoyed the paper, engaged with the questions in a very positive manner and managed their time efficiently. Most candidates answered questions on style and technique as effectively as they did those on content. Candidates clearly had no difficulty understanding what was required of them and demonstrated that they had prepared for the prescribed text very thoroughly.

In Question 1(c), candidates clearly enjoyed evaluating the impact of visual details. In Questions 2(c) and 2(d), the imagery was handled well. Essay 4(a) proved slightly more popular than 4(b). Whereas 4(a) was chosen by candidates who perhaps preferred the security of writing on the familiar themes of mythology and religion, 4(b) seemed to attract candidates who appeared to relish the freedom to explore aspects of the poets that had intrigued them. All candidates were stimulated to supply an impressive range of relevant evidence and demonstrate their enthusiasm for and involvement with the prescribed poems.

Translation

Candidates followed the Livy storyline very well and made full and appropriate use of the glossed vocabulary. Whereas Livy translations can be problematic because of lengthy sentences, this piece encouraged more confident translation because of the relative brevity of its sense units, marked by frequent punctuation divisions. 60.7% of candidates passed this translation. Twelve candidates scored over 70%, seven of whom scored between 80 and 89% and two over 90%.

Candidates found the Virgil translation straightforward, and used the English introduction and glossed vocabulary effectively. 85.7% passed this translation, 12 candidates scoring over 70%, three of whom scored between 80 and 89%, and two over 90%.

In both translations, most candidates demonstrated effective time management techniques.

Dissertation

All candidates passed the Dissertation. Twenty candidates scored 70% or more, five of whom scored between 80 and 89% and six more than 90%. From the weakest to the strongest, each candidate had engaged actively and enthusiastically with their chosen topic and had clearly taken pleasure in producing a substantial and original piece of work. This year's candidates deserve particular credit for the quality of their written English, which was high across the entire mark range.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Interpretation

Ovid and Latin love-poetry

No particular area of difficulty stood out and any problems were particular to individual students rather than to the design of the question paper. In some questions, a few candidates did not pay sufficient attention to the lines cited. In Question 3(b)(i), it was surprising how few candidates appreciated the reference to 'Coan silk'. In Question 3(c), there was a tendency for some to summarise the poem with little regard for or reference to the structure.

Translation

Command of grammar and syntax in the Livy was generally strong, problems only arising for some candidates with, for example, *instructis ... exercitibus* in lines 2–3, *praemium esset* in lines 3–4, *his motus* in line 9 and *dona portantes* in line 11. For some candidates, difficulties occurred with correct location of vocabulary, for example, *copias* in line 1, *victori* in line 3, *milia passuum* in line 9, and *divitiis* in line 10.

In the Virgil translation, looking up vocabulary posed relatively few problems, although some candidates had difficulty with, for example, *ardua* in line 2, *pulvere* in line 4, *ares* in line 7 and *nuntius* in line 8. Errors made by candidates were not related to plot components but to grammatical issues, such as not recognising certain noun cases, especially accusatives and ablatives, and not linking adjectives to appropriate nouns.

Dissertation

Some candidates' Dissertations were compromised because the candidate seemed unaware of the technical requirements. A lack of sources, both primary and secondary, did most to undermine their efforts. It was surprising how many candidates made little or no reference in the text to secondary sources listed in the bibliography. Even some otherwise strong discussions suffered from inadequate referencing and inaccurate bibliographies.

Some candidates failed to include the minimum required five quotations in Latin. Some candidates included use of websites of questionable quality. Where an original text was

accessed via a website, some candidates listed the global address without naming either the Roman author or the title of the work concerned.

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 in Latin may dominate the learning and teaching schedule, it is most unwise to underestimate the time and effort that should be put into studying the extensive amount of the prescription presented in English translation. It is highly inadvisable to ask candidates to study these English sections without support from the teacher, since they may well misinterpret content, fail to understand or 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. It cannot be overemphasised to candidates that they must focus answers to short questions on the lines referenced. To answer outwith these lines loses potential marks and wastes time. Candidates must ensure that they refer to the text, if the question states that this is required, to score the maximum marks available.

Translation

Translation of both authors demands careful application of dictionary skills, which should be practised regularly in timed conditions. Confident and accurate knowledge of grammar and syntax is paramount.

Livy presents the challenge of long and complex sentences, Virgil of terseness, poetic nuance and vocabulary, and abstraction. Translation of both authors would be most effectively supported by a structured programme of teacher-led practice, when stylistic features can be actively analysed and discussed.

Dissertation

Choice of topic is all-important. It is not advisable to choose a topic that is 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 that seems more appropriate for Standard Grade in its simplicity. In a centre with several candidates, it is inadvisable for them to choose identical or similar topics: each topic chosen should clearly demonstrate individual research.

The wording of the title must be carefully crafted and must state clearly and precisely what the content and focus of the Dissertation will be. 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. Use of reliable internet resources should be made to locate the most recent academic findings.

Dissertations must avoid over-reliance on narrative: analysis and argument are key requirements. A full range of primary sources appropriate to the chosen topic should be used, in the form both of quotations and of relevant referencing, to support content and argument. It is vital that candidates should be made aware that secondary sources should not appear only in the bibliography, but should be actively discussed in the body of the text. Both primary and secondary sources must be attributed in the bibliography and footnotes, and set out using the format prescribed in the Dissertation guidelines. It would be helpful to candidates to receive advice on the academic quality of websites which they have sourced, and how to attribute all websites appropriately.

Centres should make use of the Appendix to Advanced Higher Latin/Classical Greek Dissertation Guide, which contains extensive guidance on these issues.

The two weakest areas to be improved are those of critical comment on sources (worth 5% of the total) and quotation of Roman authors in Latin as well as in English translation (worth 5% of the total). It is essential that candidates are not disadvantaged because they have not been alerted to the requirement for each of these two components. 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 advised to consult the published Dissertation marking scheme.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	48
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	28
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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 200				
A	67.9%	67.9%	19	210
B	14.3%	82.1%	4	180
C	10.7%	92.9%	3	150
D	0.0%	92.9%	0	135
No award	7.1%	-	2	-

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.