



External Assessment Report 2013

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

In the Interpretation paper, overall candidate response was good. The majority of candidates had prepared well and had plenty of opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. Some performance was weaker as a result of inadequate preparation or inaccurate reference to line references.

The Virgil section was generally better done than the Cicero section, especially regarding the extended ten-mark responses. Candidates opting for the Plautus section performed reasonably well and certainly knew what the play was about, although there were not many very strong performances here.

The Translation paper was generally well done. There were some very good efforts, and a few poor ones. Most candidates used common sense to sustain a coherent narrative and to pick up the thread of the story, even after a more challenging block had caused difficulties. The majority of candidates showed confidence in developing fluent English versions out of the Latin constructions. In almost all cases, the translation was completed to the final block.

Areas in which candidates performed well

In the Interpretation paper, many responses were clearly thought out and well expressed. In Virgil question 4b) and Cicero questions 2b), 3a) and 4, some candidates showed particularly good knowledge of terms for technical analysis of literature. Virgil questions 1, 2a) and 4a), Plautus question 2a) and Cicero questions 1 and 2 elicited responses which clearly showed personal engagement with the various themes within the texts.

In the Translation paper, there was a pleasing number of candidates who showed meticulous care over detail, such as singular and plural nouns and verb tense. The ablative absolute was well handled.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Interpretation

Candidates did not seem to know the English sections sufficiently well. Some did not read the ten-mark extended response questions carefully enough and others tried to make a 'learned essay' fit the question.

In Cicero question 5a), some candidates were not sure what 'private life' meant. In Cicero question 5b), others were unclear what 'keeping the jury on his side' meant.

In the Virgil extended response question 5b) concerning three separate characters, too little time was spent on Dido, where most of the available ten marks could be made. Some candidates lost marks in the Virgil scansion questions 3b) and 3c), because they did not recognise the elision or else they scanned the wrong lines.

In the Plautus section, question 3a) was not well answered. Candidates could point to examples of alliteration and assonance, for example, but did not explain very effectively why these contributed to the humour of the lines, giving only the vaguest of explanations. A similar comment can be made about question 3b), where answers were often confused.

Translation

Block 4 proved challenging. Many translated *hanc Cleomenes* in Block 4a as 'this Cleomenes' or else *hanc Cleomenes amabat* as 'she loved Clemones', which therefore distorted the interpretation of Blocks 4b and 4c. Therefore in Block 4b, there was a lot of confusion, with many candidates making the subject 'she', or taking *istius* as nominative. Subsequently, there was a good deal of confusion over the subject of *devinciebatur* in Block 4c.

In addition the following features proved the most challenging for a fair proportion of candidates: pronouns: *hanc* (line 5), *istius* (line 5), *isto* (line 6), *eius* (line 8), *quae* (line 15); identifying and negotiating accusatives, if these are not positioned in an 'expected' order: *hanc* (line 5), *uxorem* (line 8), *quadriremque* (line 14).

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Candidates need to be familiar with the content of specific line references, in order to answer the questions in the Interpretation paper which expect detailed knowledge of particular lines. They should not stray beyond the line references in their responses.
- ◆ The English sections of the prescribed texts need to be as thoroughly prepared as the Latin sections.
- ◆ In the ten-mark extended response questions, candidates need to read the wording of the questions carefully and ensure that each part of the question has been considered in their responses.
- ◆ Candidates need to have covered all the prescribed accidence and syntax required for this course; this list can be found on the SQA website.
- ◆ When tackling more complex syntax in a Translation passage, candidates need to consider the role of subject / main verb / object, rather than relying on information supplied by the word-list and guessing the meaning.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	243
Number of resulted entries in 2013	218

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	65.1%	65.1%	142	104
B	16.1%	81.2%	35	89
C	10.1%	91.3%	22	74
D	3.2%	94.5%	7	66
No award	5.5%	100.0%	12	-

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.