



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject	Latin
Level	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

Interpretation

Most candidates achieved good results, comparable with previous years. Most showed a high level of preparation and knowledge of the texts, and the vast majority were able to attempt all the questions to good effect. There was not such a discrepancy in marks between the Verse and the Prose sections as has been seen in previous years and, as usual, most candidates chose the Virgil option in the Verse section. In the extended responses, there were more instances of candidates providing good introductions and conclusions, which was pleasing to see.

Translation

Overall performance of candidates was satisfactory. The majority gained at least 35 out of the 50 marks, with a small number gaining full marks. Candidates applied the word-list sensibly and effectively, taking care to consider each word. There were very few examples indeed of omitted clauses.

In general, there was an aim for fluent and sensible English expression. Most candidates were able to follow a coherent story through, from start to finish, and saw in the final paragraph that the story came to a meaningful conclusion.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Interpretation

Virgil

Q1 was well answered and candidates displayed better knowledge of the English section, compared to recent years.

Q3(c) asked candidates to scan two lines and most managed this satisfactorily, as well as providing a sensible comment about the rhythmic pattern.

Q5(a) asked about personal qualities displayed in the text and it was pleasing to see that some candidates effectively discussed other characters, eg Palinurus, Sibyl, in addition to Aeneas.

Q5(b) asked candidates to consider the sympathy shown to the dead in the text. This was very well done and candidates found lots to discuss.

Plautus

Q1 and 2 were both well answered and responses showed good knowledge of the text.

Q3c, about violence on a Roman stage, elicited wide-ranging, valid responses.

Cicero

Q4(a) asked candidates to find evidence that the people of Syracuse were experienced and clever, and most managed to do this very well.

Translation

There was good observation and understanding of the use of the dative in Block 6b and in 7c, and the ablative in 7c. Candidates were generally secure in their observation of passive infinitives, with good efforts made to render these in Block 2a, 5a and 5c.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Interpretation

Virgil

Q2: Many candidates did not refer to the text when discussing the frightening aspects of the two groups of creatures. Some did not realise that **both** groups were insubstantial.

Q4: Some candidates strayed outside the line references. Many did not directly answer the question, which asked about how **convincing** Aeneas' points were. Instead they discussed Dido and her situation.

Plautus

Q3a: No candidate suggested that Daemones might be gullible, which was one of the expected answers.

Q3(b): This was done in a very brief way with little satisfactory reference to the actual Latin text.

Q5(a): The extended response required some analysis of the plot, but disappointingly few candidates did this, and instead listed a series of disjointed incidents without any further comment.

Cicero

Q1 asked about Antonius' 'old rhetorical trick', and this caused a lot of confusion, with candidates not knowing who Antonius was nor understanding his 'trick'.

Q2(a) mentions the 'fleet', a word which many candidates seemed not to know, despite it being in the English text.

Q2(b) asked about Verres' qualities but many candidates simply discussed his actions instead.

Q3(a) was answered relatively poorly, with few candidates providing a satisfactory account of the effectiveness or purpose of individual literary techniques.

Q3(b) asked about a 'triumph' and this English word too caused confusion.

Q5(a) asked candidates to consider whether Verres' behaviour was illegal or just bad. Many candidates were not able to distinguish between 'illegal' and 'bad', and simply retold parts of the story, especially from Passages 1 and 2, without directly answering the question.

Q5(b) tended not to be done very well. Candidates found it difficult to explain why Cicero was 'showing off' in the examples they chose.

Translation

The main area of difficulty was in the understanding of the two successive accusative and infinitive clauses in Block 4b and 4c, which depended also on the correct interpretation of the relative pronoun *quem* in 4b.

In addition, many candidates found difficulty with *eum...iussit* line 2, *magistrum pecoris* line 6, *Apollonius...habere* lines 9–10, and *iste...conici* lines 10–11.

In Block 3a, *mirum* was frequently understood with *Apollonius* and *tam* appeared to many to introduce a consecutive clause.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Interpretation

Candidates need to be able to discuss the detail of the texts and not simply be aware of the 'big themes'. They need to match the length of their responses with the value of each question. The more valid details they can give, the more marks they will gain.

Candidates need to ensure they refer to the text when asked, to support their answers, ensuring, however, that they do not stray beyond the line references.

When discussing rhetorical techniques, candidates are expected to make some meaningful comment on their effectiveness. Merely to say the technique is 'for emphasis' is not enough.

If candidates quote Latin, they need also to show what the Latin means, either giving a direct translation or a paraphrase of it.

In the extended response questions, they need to ensure that both the English and Latin sections are covered, if the question requests it. Otherwise they will lose marks. These extended response questions require some analysis and candidates need to do more than just retell the story to get their marks.

Translation

Candidates need to handle accusative and infinitive constructions, indirect statements, passive infinitives, and to be able to recognise pronouns when they do not appear in the nominative case.

The word-list provides specific meanings for words in the context of the passage, so candidates are encouraged to check the list, even if they think they already know what the

word means. Also, the word-list can provide candidates with a specific meaning for a particular line eg *in* (+ *ablative*) in; among (*line 8*), so it always worth checking the word-list.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	218
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	258
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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 150				
A	61.2%	61.2%	158	104
B	20.5%	81.8%	53	89
C	10.9%	92.6%	28	74
D	4.7%	97.3%	12	66
No award	2.7%	-	7	-

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.