



Course Report 2015

Subject	Latin
Level	New Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

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 assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question paper: Translation

Candidates are required to translate into English a passage of Latin of approximately 120 words, and with the support of a specific word-list. This component is worth 40 marks and the allotted time is one hour.

For marking purposes, the passage is always divided into twenty blocks and each block is worth 2 or 1 or 0 marks. If candidates translate the block correctly or almost correctly, they are awarded two marks for the block. If they just get the 'essential idea', they are awarded one mark. If they do not get the essential idea, they receive 0 marks.

A block review is also used at the marking stage and '+1' is available, if it is felt that a candidate deserves more than 0, even if he/she has not translated the essential idea.

Component 2: Question paper: Literary Appreciation

Candidates are required to choose any two authors from five (Catullus, Ovid, Virgil, Pliny, Cicero) and answer questions on prescribed texts. Both the questions and the answers are in English. Each section is worth 15 marks and this Component is worth 30 marks in total, to allow equal weighting with Component 1. The allotted time is one hour.

Each author's section of questions assesses the same skills: identifying and explaining main ideas and themes; identifying and explaining literary techniques; communicating appropriate critical responses; and identifying and explaining aspects of Roman culture.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question paper: Translation

The story was adapted from Livy and described Hannibal's journey through the Alps.

Most candidates completed the translation of the passage in its entirety, and most achieved at least half marks. Candidates made effective use of the word list. Most candidates produced a reasonably fluent translation of the passage, conveying the meaning satisfactorily and indicating that they had analysed the sentences and clauses appropriately.

Some sentences caused difficulty; the phrase *Hannibal militibus ostentat subiectosque montibus campos* in the first paragraph was unusual in that many candidates failed properly to identify the case of *Italiam* and referred to, variously, the plains of Italy and the soldiers of Italy.

In the third paragraph the word-list gave the translation 'for no purpose' rather than 'to no purpose' for *nequiquam*, which it was felt might mislead candidates, but this was allowed for in marking and did not of itself cause problems, although this sentence did seem to cause

difficulty in translation, possibly due to a word order that may have been unfamiliar to some candidates.

Component 2: Question paper: Literary Appreciation

The majority of candidates and centres elected to answer the Virgil and Cicero questions, reflecting familiarity with these authors in recent years, but there were reasonably healthy numbers for Ovid and Pliny. No candidates or centres chose Catullus, perhaps because of this author's popularity at N4 and N5 levels. Most candidates demonstrated familiarity with and understanding of the texts they had studied.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper: Translation

Most candidates produced a reasonably accurate rendering of the passage, aided by the word list and by the generally clear structure.

Component 2: Question paper: Literary Appreciation

Section 1, Catullus, Poems

No candidates attempted this section

Section 2, Ovid, Metamorphoses

Candidates generally performed very well in this section, finding the questions clear and accessible.

Question 8: Most candidates identified relevant characteristics to describe Pyramus and Thisbe as an ideal couple. Some identified further characteristics which went beyond the marking instructions.

Question 9: Most candidates were able to make a valid assessment of Thisbe's conduct.

Question 10: Most candidates responded well to the question providing lively and thoughtful evaluations of the use of language. This question represented a very successful language evaluation exercise.

Question 12: Most candidates were able to identify relevant details of the lifestyle of poor people from the text, making it a valid question in terms of learning about culture from literature.

Section 3, Virgil, *Aeneid* I, IV, VI (Selections)

Question 15: Most candidates were able to identify relevant characteristics.

Question 16: Most candidates effectively explored the simile and understood the comparison between Dido and the deer.

Question 17: Most candidates correctly identified elements of Roman weddings symbolised by natural phenomena.

Question 20: Most candidates identified the gods and Aeneas as forces over which Dido had no control, but did not identify wider influences such as Iarbas, Pygmalion etc.

Section 4, Pliny, *Letters*

Most candidates were able to comment on the effectiveness of Pliny's description and also answered perceptively in terms of Pliny's character as illustrated in the text. Candidates gave the impression of having been interested in the subject matter and having found the text engaging and lively.

Section 5, Cicero, *In Verrem V*

Most candidates demonstrated familiarity with the text and were able to identify the various accusations made by Cicero against Verres, and make an accurate evaluation of Cicero's rhetorical techniques.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper: Translation

Some candidates had difficulty in recognising cases and in analysing sentences to identify verb, subject, object and other elements. Block 4, *de promunturio...campos* caused some problems where candidates allowed the word order to confuse their analysis of the grammar and syntax.

Block 11, *nec stirpes...posset* also caused difficulty where some candidates interpreted *pede aut manu* as subjects rather than ablative of instrument.

Blocks 12 and 13 were sometimes confused with each other. There had been some concern that Block 12 may have been misleading in that *nequiquam* had been rendered as 'for no purpose' in the vocabulary, but this was allowed for in the marking. The structure of the sentence was challenging for some candidates.

Component 2: Question Paper: Literary Appreciation.

Section 1, Catullus, Poems

No candidates attempted this section

Section 2, Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

Question 14: Many candidates misinterpreted the term 'simplistic' as applied to Ovid's description and thought it meant 'simple' in regards to the character of the women.

Section 3, Virgil, *Aeneid* I, IV, VI, selections

Question 19: Candidates generally answered on the subject matter, with less analysis of the poetical technique.

Section 4, Pliny, Letters

Candidates generally seem to have found this section accessible and answered well.

Section 5, Cicero, *In Verrem* V

Question 33: Some candidates had difficulty in discerning that the question involved the analysis of the quality of argument rather than the rhetorical techniques, and there was evidence in a few cases of candidates attempting to fit a prepared essay on rhetorical technique to the title.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper: Translation

Where candidates experienced problems, these generally related to word order and case usages. The word list prevents good candidates being disadvantaged by meeting unpredictable and unfamiliar words or having to use long periods of time memorising vocabulary, but candidates should remember that knowing the vocabulary is only one step in the process; thoroughly understanding case usages, tenses, moods and other grammatical and syntactical features is of greater importance. Efforts should continue to be made to develop the skills of analysis, and a thorough grounding in accidence and syntax, with emphasis on recognition of punctuation and conjunctions to assist in the analysis of individual clauses.

Component 2: Question paper: Literary Appreciation

The overwhelming majority of candidates were well prepared for the paper and showed detailed knowledge of the texts. Centres appeared to have made good use of the course assessment specifications and specimen assessments. The 'culture' questions, examining the background and context of the text, were generally answered well, and centres are encouraged to continue to develop this aspect of the learning process. Centres are also encouraged to focus on the evaluation of character, technique and argument.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	0
Number of resulted entries in 2015	168

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark				
A	57.7%	57.7%	97	70
B	23.8%	81.5%	40	90
C	13.1%	94.6%	22	75
D	1.8%	96.4%	3	67
No award	3.6%	-	6	-

For this Course, the intention was to set an assessment with grade boundaries at the notional values of 50% for a Grade C and 70% for a Grade A. The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

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.