



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Latin
Level	Advanced 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

There was a 4.4% decrease in presentations. There was, however, an 11.8% increase in the number of presenting centres, from 17 in 2010 to 19 in 2011. Of these, five centres had returned to present at this level after a gap of several years. Two centres were new to presentation at this level.

A reduced number of questions and total mark awarded in the Interpretation paper in an unaltered time allocation made a valuable contribution to candidates' thinking time in planning their answers, which were not significantly longer than in previous years but showed much improved structure and greater confidence.

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

Areas in which candidates performed well

Interpretation

Cicero and letter writing

Each of the five candidates from the four centres who chose this option was well prepared and tackled all three authors with confidence. Questions 1 (d), 2 (c) and 3 (i) were especially well done. Both essay titles proved equally popular and clearly showed thorough understanding of the issues to be discussed.

One candidate scored full marks in the essay.

Ovid and Latin love poetry

The prescription was well known by most candidates. Questions 1 (c) and (d), 2 (b) and 3 (c) were especially well done. Both essay titles proved equally popular. Whether choosing Question 4 (a) or (b), each candidate demonstrated genuine involvement with the issues raised, responding in 4 (b) with an unexpectedly wide and mature range of comments on what had been learned about the lives of Roman women.

In both essays, most candidates chose to refer to all five authors studied rather than the three proposed by the question. This demonstrated a praiseworthy desire to show a wide sweep of knowledge which candidates felt was relevant and essential.

Five candidates scored full marks in the essay. Seven candidates scored more than 90% in this option, one of whom achieved 98%.

Translation

Many candidates completed both Translations with considerable success. Two candidates scored more than 90%, one scoring 98%. The Livy and Virgil were tackled with equal confidence. Two candidates scored full marks in the Virgil.

Dissertation

58 % of candidates scored 70% or more. Six scored more than 90%.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Interpretation

Cicero and letter writing

Some candidates expanded their answers beyond the stipulated lines, which wasted time and did not earn marks. Some candidates may have spent proportionally too much time on Question 3 (i), worth 12 marks, compared with Question 4, worth 20 marks. There was a tendency for some candidates to weight their essays towards Cicero and give far less information on Pliny and Seneca, whereas a balance should have been struck.

Ovid and Latin love poetry

Some candidates did not restrict their answers to the stipulated lines in Questions 1 (b) and 2 (g), which wasted time and did not earn marks. Question 3 (b) proved taxing for many candidates who had not researched the mythological references on which the question was based. There was very obvious guesswork and considerable error, for example Orestes confused with Orpheus.

Translation

In Livy, candidates found the lengthy sentence in lines 5–8 challenging. Some did not pay due attention to the English link passage which would have given them insight into the meaning of lines 11–12. Translation of the ablative absolute *silentio facto* in line 2 proved unexpectedly demanding. In line 6, the names *lorem* and *lunonem* were not always recognised. More attention should have been paid to small vital prepositions, for example *ad* in line 6 and *ab* in line 9, and to the future tenses *ibo* and *agam* in line 8.

In Virgil, very few issues caused problems. Noun cases in lines 4 and 5 had to be worked out with care. Some candidates took *portas* in line 1 and *portus* in line 6 to be the same word. A few were uncertain about the meaning of *ait* in line 10.

Dissertation

Some candidates relied too much on narrative and ignored the need for relevant argument. Some made little or no comment on sources. Three candidates did not produce Dissertations tightly enough tied to the title supplied, while one candidate produced work more appropriate for a Standard Grade Investigation. One candidate did not supply a bibliography.

Some candidates chose historical topics in which judicious incorporation of relevant archaeological evidence would have greatly strengthened their argument. Two candidates who chose to compare Roman social issues with those in Britain today devoted an inappropriately large amount of text to the modern world.

Candidates should refer to the Dissertation Guide for guidance on the correct use of footnotes, where appropriate, and bibliography. It should be remembered that up to 5% of the Dissertation mark is awarded for quotation in Latin.

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 presented in Latin may dominate the teaching-learning 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. It is also highly inadvisable to ask candidates to study these English sections without support from the teacher, since they may well misinterpret content, fail to 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 it is essential for candidates to practise 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 guided practice, where 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 which seems more appropriate for Standard Grade in its simplicity. It is inadvisable in a centre with several candidates 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, a Dissertation and its title should be a perfect match. If the title states that two historical characters or two societies 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. Dissertations must avoid over-reliance on narrative; relevant argument is an important requirement. Secondary sources should not only appear in the bibliography, but should be actively discussed in the body of the text. Correct presentation of footnotes, where appropriate, and bibliography is essential: instructions are set out in the AH Latin Dissertation Guidelines.

Areas to be improved are those of critical comment on sources and quotation of Roman authors in Latin, in addition to those supplied in English translation. Candidates must be made fully aware of the importance of including these essential components, without which they could lose up to 10% of the Dissertation mark. 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 study the Dissertation Guidelines and Marking Scheme published on the SQA website.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	45
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	43
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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 300				
A	53.5%	53.5%	23	210
B	30.2%	83.7%	13	180
C	9.3%	93.0%	4	150
D	7.0%	100.0%	3	135
No award	0.0%	100.0%	0	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, 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.