



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Latin
Level(s)	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 39.5 % decrease in presentations. There was also a drop in the number of presenting centres from nineteen to fourteen. However, four centres returned to present at this level after a gap of several years, and there was one new entry.

In the Interpretation and Dissertation components, there were many good and some very good performances, but less strong performances in Translation.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Interpretation

Ovid and Latin love-poetry

The prescription was very well known by most candidates. Questions 1(a), (c) and (d) were answered especially well and with enthusiasm. In Question 2(a), candidates engaged with the text and handled discussion of Ovid's originality with confidence. In Question 2(b), the Horace poem produced some very perceptive and sensitive responses. Question 3(c) demonstrated how thoroughly most candidates had cross-referenced themes between the five poets.

Essays 4(a) and (b) proved almost equally popular. Each candidate demonstrated genuine involvement with the issues raised, responding, especially in 4(b), with keen insight and supplying an impressive range of evidence. Four candidates scored full marks in the essay. All candidates passed the Interpretation. Two scored over 90%, and 81% of candidates achieved more than 70%.

Translation

All candidates followed the Livy storyline very well and made full and appropriate use of the glossed vocabulary. Nineteen candidates out of the 26 presented passed the Livy, six scoring over 80% and 10 in total over 70%.

The long sentence in lines 2–5 was tackled positively by candidates, who made good use of the separating commas. The Livy was tackled with greater confidence than the Virgil. Candidates found the Virgil 'plot' straightforward to understand, and used the English introduction and glossed vocabulary effectively.

All candidates finished the passage. Three candidates scored over 80%.

Dissertation

All candidates passed the Dissertation. 65% of candidates scored 70% or more, of whom seven candidates scored between 80% and 89%, and three more than 90%. Great care had been taken with presentation of footnotes and bibliography.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Interpretation

Question 1(b) required discussion of a mythological reference. Many candidates, however, produced rather sketchy answers. In Question 2(c), some answers were too general or too succinct. Question 3(b) required discussion of structure. Although this question was generally done well, it was clear that some candidates were unsure what this type of question requires.

Cicero and letter writing

No candidates chose this option.

Translation

Command of grammar and syntax in the Livy was strong, problems only arising with, for example, the phrase 'postero die' in line 1, the genitive plural 'proconsulum' in line 1, and the locative 'Capuae'.

For some candidates, difficulties occurred with correct location of vocabulary, for example 'legio' in line 1, 'legato' in line 2, 'ire' in line 5, 'quaestores' in line 6 and 'tribunali' in line 8.

In the Virgil translation, looking up vocabulary posed very few problems, although a few candidates had difficulty with 'artus' in line 4, 'expediunt' in line 9 and 'rerum' in line 9.

Errors made by candidates were not related to plot components but to grammar issues such as not recognising certain noun cases, especially accusatives and ablatives, and not linking adjectives to appropriate nouns.

Dissertation

Some candidates relied too much on narrative and ignored the need for relevant argument. Some made little or no comment on sources. Two candidates did not produce Dissertations tightly enough tied to the title supplied. Some candidates chose historical topics in which judicious incorporation of relevant archaeological evidence was essential to support primary evidence. In failing to do this, they undermined the strength of their submissions.

Although most candidates were aware of the necessity to include a certain number of sources quoted in Latin rather than in translation, some did not and lost 5% of the total mark allocation.

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 learning and teaching schedule must be focused on the prescription presented in Latin, 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 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 that 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, the Dissertation and its title should be a perfect match. If the title states that two historical figures are to be compared, it is 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 a key requirement. Secondary sources

should not appear only in the bibliography, but should be actively discussed in the body of the text.

The two 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 recommended to consult the published Dissertation marking scheme.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	43
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	26
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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	46.2%	46.2%	12	208
B	34.6%	80.8%	9	178
C	15.4%	96.2%	4	148
D	3.8%	100.0%	1	133
No award	0.0%	100.0%	0	-

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.