



External Assessment Report 2011

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

The overall response of candidates was good. Most displayed a sound knowledge of the Prescribed Texts, presentation of work was orderly and handwriting clear. Candidates seemed to enjoy the opportunity to discuss the Prescribed Texts and were keen to share their views and thoughts.

A pleasing number of candidates took considerable care over their translations and there was an awareness also that 'style' and mode of expression were elements for consideration. Almost all understood the sequence of the passage and produced coherent versions.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Interpretation (Virgil)

- ◆ Most candidates managed the scansion correctly, including the elision.
- ◆ Q4 (a): This question, asking candidates whether Charon would be reassured by the Sibyl's words, was very well handled. The best answers weighed up both sides of the issue.
- ◆ Q5: Discussion on Aeneas' reaction to seeing Dido's ghost was well done, with many appropriate references to the text.

Interpretation (Plautus)

- ◆ Q2: Candidates were clearly familiar with Labrax's and Charmides's grumbles, and could explain well why these were amusing.
- ◆ Q3(c): There was good character analysis of Daemones.

Interpretation (Cicero)

- ◆ Q3 (a): This question on Servilius was well answered and many candidates gained the full five marks.
- ◆ Q3 (b): Candidates were able to discuss rhetorical techniques effectively.
- ◆ Q4 (a) and (b): The puzzle as to why Verres did not send the 'pirate' to the stone quarries was well explained, and no candidates seemed confused over this complex part of the speech.

Translation

- ◆ Most candidates carefully observed singular and plural as well as the tense of verbs.
- ◆ Candidates seemed to understand the sense of the action of the story.
- ◆ They also managed to translate the passive voice appropriately.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Interpretation (Virgil)

- ◆ Q2: The question asked about 'aspects of their surroundings' but some candidates discussed the characters of Aeneas and the Sibyl instead.
- ◆ Q3: Asked if Virgil's description of Charon justified the use of the word *horrendus*, many candidates simply gave a description of him, which could not get them full marks.
- ◆ Q6 (a): The response to this question was disappointing, as candidates ignored the word 'frightening' altogether and confused the word 'horrible' with 'depressing'.
- ◆ Q6 (b): This question on whether Aeneas was cruel and hard-hearted was not answered well. Responses were not well focused, while some were irrelevant and displayed a tendency to re-write formulaic, prepared essays on Aeneas' *pietas*.

Interpretation (Plautus)

- ◆ Q4: This question on Palaestra and Trachalio each praying to Venus seemed to present difficulty, with most candidates gaining only one or two marks out of a possible five. Many answers were very general and contained little specific reference to the lines, despite the fact that the allocation of five marks indicated detailed analysis was required.
- ◆ Q5 (a) and (b): The general standard of these ten-mark questions was disappointing. Many answers concentrated only on the English section, and the level of comment was superficial.

Interpretation (Cicero)

- ◆ Q1: Candidates were confused over who Chelidon was and whether Verres was in Sicily or in Rome at the time of this incident.
- ◆ Q2: Although candidates were asked to discuss the capture of a pirate ship, most focused, instead, on discussing the Roman fleet.
- ◆ Q5: A considerable number of candidates did not stay within the specific line references when discussing the Syracusans.
- ◆ Q6 (a): This ten-mark question was not well done, with many candidates producing a list of descriptions rather than answering the question asked.
- ◆ Q6 (b): Many candidates did not appear to understand what the word 'evidence' meant and simply argued that if Cicero said it, it must be true.

Translation

- ◆ Lines 3-4: *iste...esse* candidates found difficulty with the accusative and infinitive construction and deponent verb.
- ◆ Lines 5-6: *his institutis... erat* caused problems, with few candidates translating correctly as 'by/because of these actions'.
- ◆ Lines 8-9: *cum... coniectus esset* — only a few candidates translated this correctly.
- ◆ Line 13: *eo ipso die* was not well done, with candidates usually writing 'on that day' and not referring to *ipso*.
- ◆ Lines 14-15: *se... fuisse*: many candidates found this difficult.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Interpretation

- ◆ Candidates should ensure they use their exam time wisely, so that Section C can be completed in full.
- ◆ They should read carefully every question and make sure they answer exactly what is asked.
- ◆ They should supply succinct answers.
- ◆ When practising the ten-mark questions, they should try to replace simple narrative with analysis, which is what is expected of candidates at this level.

Translation

- ◆ Candidates need to master accusative and infinitive clauses and, in particular, the use of *se* in these clauses.
- ◆ If time allows, they should write a draft version first.
- ◆ If they could write their answer on alternate lines, this would aid them when reviewing their work by giving them more space to make corrections.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	228
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	222
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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	52.7%	52.7%	117	105
B	19.4%	72.1%	43	90
C	18.0%	90.1%	40	75
D	3.6%	93.7%	8	67
No award	6.3%	100.0%	14	-

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.