



## External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Latin
Level(s)	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

**Interpretation:** Candidates clearly knew the texts well, and some gave very imaginative answers which demonstrated their independent and creative thinking. Very few candidates failed to attempt individual questions.

The standard of the ten-mark 'essay' questions, in structure and depth, was pleasing. Most candidates at least gained half marks for these questions and many achieved eight or more marks for individual answers.

The 'language-style' questions were also well done. However, some candidates wrote over-long answers, which caused them to run out of time. As a result, a sizeable number omitted the penultimate Cicero question to 'free up' time for the last ten-mark question, which was a pity since the omitted question (Cicero 4(b)) was worth six marks.

**Translation:** The passage had a strong narrative, and the majority of candidates coped very well in arriving at the sense, even if they might have been unaware of the exact constructions being used by Cicero. Almost all understood the sequence of events in the story, and their English versions read coherently.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Interpretation

**Virgil:** Question 1 was generally well done, although a few candidates did not focus their answers on what was asked, ie 'Is the description **effective**?' Question 2 (a) was very well answered and most candidates got at least three of the four available marks. Questions 4 (a) and (b) elicited some very good responses and candidates were able to discuss Virgil's word choice and language effectively. Question 5(a), worth ten marks, on Aeneas' character, produced a very pleasing number of well-structured and quality responses.

**Plautus:** Questions about the humour in the text were generally well done (ie questions 1, 2(b), 2(c) and 4(c)) and clearly candidates had been well prepared for discussing the comedy elements within the play. Both question 5(a) and 5(b) were equally well answered and many got high marks out of a possible ten for their responses.

**Cicero:** In question 2(a), a pleasing number of candidates competently discussed the use of the superlatives and the metaphor. Answers to question 3 about the stone quarries indicate that candidates were very familiar with this section of the text. Question 4(c), about the use of emotional language, was challenging and yet was very well done by many candidates.

**Translation:** Candidates seemed to have read the English links more carefully than in previous years, and this helped them make sense of the narrative. The difficult perfect

infinitives in lines 6–8 *contulisse arsisse... maluisse ...* were managed by most candidates, as was the *cum* clause within the indirect statement in line 6. Candidates also spotted the different uses of *ut* in lines 9 and 10.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Interpretation

**Virgil:** In the scansion question (2(b)), some candidates missed out individual syllables, which resulted in problems when they tried to apply the scansion rules, which they clearly knew. Question 3(b), about Palinurus, proved to be demanding, and only a few candidates got the full five marks for this. Question 5(b), worth ten marks, asked candidates to consider the Sibyl, Charon and Cerberus, but some discussed only the Sibyl and did not mention anything new beyond what they had written in answer to question 1 about the Sibyl.

**Plautus:** Language questions proved challenging for many. Question 2(b), about the language used to emphasise how cold and wet the characters were, elicited some vague answers. Question 4(a) about the military language used also proved to be demanding.

**Cicero:** Answers to question 1, about why governors made journeys in summer, tended to be over-complicated as most answered as if it was a general background question. For question 2(b), candidates either did not know who Publius Servilius was or else, if they did, gave a thumbnail sketch of him, without answering the question and did not explain why Cicero did compare Verres to Servilius.

Question 4(a) had many candidates straying beyond the line references. In both the ten-mark questions, some candidates did not address the questions properly. In question 5(a), some omitted to consider Verres's 'personal faults' and instead concentrated on Verres's criminal activity, and in question 5(b), others neglected to consider the 'hard evidence' part of the question.

**Translation:** In line 1, candidates who wrote 'Aris and Bostaria were in love' got no marks, as the essential idea was Aris being in love with Bostaria. Also in line 1, *anus* 'old woman' had to be treated as a noun, which some failed to do and instead wrongly made it an adjective 'old'. In line 4, *se* proved challenging, with some candidates writing 'he promised himself' rather than 'he promised that he would ...'

In line 7, some did not spot that the adjective *infidelem* agreed with *maritum*, and instead wrote 'her husband had been unfaithful with Bostaria and had gone to Rome', resulting in no marks. Other candidates thought *negotium* 'task' was a verb, not a noun, and wrote for line 9 'he set out to task a freedman'. In line 10, again some candidates were unable to recognise verbs and nouns so were let down and translated *suspendio perisse* as 'hung to death' rather than 'died by hanging'.

# Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

## Interpretation

- ◆ Candidates should ensure that they use their exam time wisely, to avoid non-completion of Section C: Cicero.
- ◆ To save time, candidates do not need to repeat the question in their answer eg 'The qualities the stone quarries had, which made them an ideal prison were ...' is not necessary to answer Cicero question 3(a). Instead it is easier to write: 'They were ...'
- ◆ Candidates should ensure that all components of each question are covered in their answers.
- ◆ They should restrict their answers to within the line references.
- ◆ When answering the ten-mark question, it is advisable for the answer to have a structure with a beginning, middle and end, rather than a list of disjointed thoughts.

## Translation

- ◆ Centres and candidates are reminded that the complete list of prescribed grammar, accident and syntax for Higher Latin is available on the SQA website.
- ◆ Word-lists are specific to each passage and therefore it is advisable that candidates should check each word for its specific meaning.
- ◆ If candidates wrote on alternate lines, they might find this helpful when checking through their work, giving them more space to make corrections.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	222
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	243
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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	63.8%	63.8%	155	105
B	18.5%	82.3%	45	90
C	9.9%	92.2%	24	75
D	2.1%	94.2%	5	67
No award	5.8%	100.0%	14	-

## 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.