

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

Latin and Classical Greek

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
Included in this report**

Latin - Advanced Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2003	35
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Number of entries in 2004	45
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General comments re entry numbers

The higher uptake was very welcome.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

A	42.2%
B	24.4%
C	20.0%
D	2.2%
No award	11.1%

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

Although the number of very good candidates was high, there were no outstanding candidates. There was a disappointing number of candidates who achieved no awards.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	42.2	42.2	19	210
B	24.4	66.7	11	180
C	20.0	86.7	9	150
D	2.2	88.9	1	135
No award	11.1	100.0	5	0

General commentary on passmarks and grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create mark schemes which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum 50% of the available marks (notional passmark) and a very well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70%, it is almost impossible to get the standard absolutely on target every year, in every subject and level
- Each year we therefore hold a passmark meeting for each subject at each level where we bring together all the information available (statistical and judgmental). 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 senior management team at SQA
- We adjust the passmark downwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly more demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- We adjust the passmark upwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly less demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- Where the standard appears to be very similar to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries
- 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 are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. And just because SQA has altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry 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
- Our main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain standards across the years, even as syllabuses evolve and change

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Grade boundaries were set at *a priori* levels.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

There were many fine performances in each of the three elements.

Interpretation

Three candidates chose the Cicero, the rest the Ovid. Most candidates appeared at least reasonably well prepared; the best were thoroughly acquainted with the text.

Translation

There were some very good responses to both the Livy and the Virgil. Most candidates appeared to have some grasp of the story line in the Livy passage this year.

Dissertation

Apart from a few these were largely competently tackled with many thoroughly researched and lucidly presented.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Interpretation

There were some excellent essays from candidates with good time management skills. In other questions most candidates were able to find material with which to answer sensibly.

Translation

The best candidates were able to produce coherent story lines in both passages with good attention to grammar and syntax - eg picking up the jussive subjunctive in Livy and the participles in Virgil.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Interpretation

Timing is still a difficulty with many candidates. Tibullus also appeared to be hard to understand for many.

Translation

Candidates were not well prepared grammatically in many cases and were not applying rules, preferring instead to make up a story round what they found in the dictionary – and that was often carelessly consulted. Some candidates did not appear to know even basic grammar such as verb endings. For example, many candidates were unable to tackle the last line of Virgil as the endings were unknown although they could find the verbs in the dictionary.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Interpretation

Candidates should be encouraged to adopt a bullet-point approach to answering, especially for shorter questions; they should be discouraged from writing essay-type answers to everything.

Translation

Candidates need to be taught how to use the dictionary to find information other than a basic meaning. They also need to know the basics of syntax and grammar, eg noun endings, use of case, verb endings. Reading the English assistance is also to be emphasised.

Dissertation

Candidates are using more websites but do not credit authors or even check them out for reliability. Candidates are also beginning to slip back into reliance on narrative. They need to argue a point throughout and should be encouraged to have some sort of thesis from the beginning.