

Principal Assessor Report 2005

Assessment Panel:

Latin and Classical Greek

Qualification area

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

Latin Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 & Higher

Statistical information: update

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2004	1
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	7
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Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2004	93
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	63
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Higher

Number of resulted entries in 2004	244
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	279
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General comments re resulted entry numbers

It was pleasing to see a small increase in the numbers of presentations at Higher, especially in the context where departments are being closed down.
Numbers at Intermediate 2 will vary from year to year, but it is expected that they will rise, as some centres discontinue Standard Grade.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Intermediate 1

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 60	-	-	-	-
A	71.4	71.4	5	42
B	14.3	85.7	1	36
C	14.3	100.0	1	30
D	0.0	100.0	0	27
No award	0.0	100.0	0	-

Intermediate 2

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 60	-	-	-	-
A	82.5	82.5	52	42
B	9.5	92.1	6	36
C	3.2	95.2	2	30
D	1.6	96.8	1	27
No award	3.2	100.0	2	-

Higher

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 150	-	-	-	-
A	32.3	32.3	90	105
B	23.3	55.6	65	90
C	20.8	76.3	58	75
D	8.2	84.6	23	67
No award	15.4	100.0	43	-

Comments on candidate performance

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 arrangements evolve and change.

General comments

Intermediate 1 and 2

A small number of candidates sat Intermediate 1. These candidates are often older pupils, attempting a crash course, and are well motivated and mature enough to cope with a demanding syllabus and examination. This proved to be the case this year.

Numbers of pupils sitting Intermediate 2 were lower than last year, but are expected to increase as some centres decide to discontinue Standard Grade.

Higher

Interpretation

The majority of candidates performed well, although there were fewer outstanding papers this year. Virgil questions were generally answered better than Cicero questions.

Translation

A good response overall, with most candidates achieving a comfortable pass, and very few doing badly.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Intermediate 1 and 2

Interpretation

At Intermediate 1, Qs 6, 7 and 8, candidates showed empathy with the characters.

At Intermediate 2, the paper was generally well done, especially the Virgil questions.

Higher

Interpretation

Virgil

There was a marked improvement in scansion. Dido's reactions (Q 2) were handled well, and Q 3(a) (the descent to Avernus is easy) was well done.

Plautus

Q 1 (b) (the relationship between Labrax and Charmides), Q 2 (b) and (c) (the character of Daemones) and 3 (a) were done well.

Cicero

Q 1 (Verres and Servilius) and Q 2 (a) (Cicero's techniques – a demanding question) were well done.

Translation

Blocks 1 and 8 were well done.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Intermediate 1 and 2

At Intermediate 1, Q 3 (identity of C. Marcellus) and Q 5 (Catullus' advice to himself).

At Intermediate 2, no real difficulties, although, while answering the question on Sopater's treatment, candidates tended to concentrate on the final part of the story, forgetting his previous interviews with Verres.

In Q 4, the words "mystery and unease" may have caused some difficulty.

Translation

No areas of difficulty reported.

Higher

Interpretation

Essay questions continue to be poorly done. Candidates often rely on prepared answers, and teachers should note that examiners are attempting to set questions which require the candidates to select evidence appropriate to a particular aspect of the prescribed text. The questions are mainstream: they do not attempt to “catch out” the candidate. The 10-mark essay is unlikely to disappear, because it provides an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate familiarity with the prescription as a whole.

However, giving a memorised list of literary devices is not sufficient to assure a good mark. All too often candidates achieve only 2 or 3 marks out of 10 for the essay. This has major implications for a Paper worth 34 marks before conversion. The problem is not ignorance of the material: it is the candidates’ inability to read the question, to consider what is being asked.

Virgil, Q 3 (b) was particularly poorly done.

This question asked if Virgil provided a *clear picture* of the Underworld (which was a place of shadows and mystery). Most candidates answered as if the question asked: “How successful is Virgil in providing an atmosphere of mystery?” They often confined their answer to the first few lines of the Latin prescription (before the pair even enter the Underworld). It could be argued that the wording of the question misdirected candidates under the strain of examination conditions. For this reason the marking instructions were amended to give some credit for this type of answer. However, some candidates failed to achieve even this. They only *seemed* to address the question of mystery and shadows, and, in the words of one marker, used the question “as a vehicle to present essays prepared on techniques, *pietas* and how frightening the Underworld was”.

If only one piece of advice could be given to centres, it would be to concentrate their candidates’ minds on answering what is asked.

Translation

Inability to distinguish singulars and plurals: eg *nautae...colligebant* (lines 4-6) “the sailor gathered..”, *navem reliquit* (line 13) “he abandoned the ships”. Failure to recognise the correct number could result in losing all credit for a block, because the sense of the story is compromised.

Some candidates translated the words in their Latin order, producing nonsense: eg “the sailors...rooted wild palm trees” (here also failing to distinguish a noun from a verb).

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Observations are recorded at the appropriate places in the report.