



Course report 2019

Subject	Classical Studies
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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 assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper performed as intended, with candidates doing well. Statistical analysis indicated that the level of demand was balanced in the different sections and feedback from centres indicated that candidates found the paper accessible and fair. All themes and prescribed texts were sampled in the question paper.

No candidates chose to answer Section 1 — History and Historiography.

In Section 2 — Individual and Community, all questions performed as expected with candidates gaining good marks. In Part B, no candidate chose to answer question 16.

In Section 3 — Heroes and Heroism, all questions performed as expected with candidates gaining good marks. In Part B, all questions were answered by some of the candidates.

In Section 4 — Comedy, Satire and Society, all questions performed as expected with candidates gaining good marks. In Part B, all candidates chose to answer questions 31 and 32.

Project–dissertation

There was a wide range of topics chosen for dissertations. The standard was largely in line with previous years, although there were few examples of outstanding quality. There is still some indication that some candidates are not fully aware of the requirements of the Advanced Higher project–dissertation and how it differs from the Higher assignment.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Section 2 — Individual and Community

Candidates performed very well in all the questions attempted.

Writing about philosophy can be tricky as it is sometimes hard to recognise that the philosopher's own analysis or evaluation of their society is only narrative. To achieve analysis or evaluation points, candidates must analyse or evaluate the philosopher's analysis and evaluation. On the whole, candidates handled this distinction very well and should be commended.

Section 3 — Heroes and Heroism

Candidates performed well in all the questions attempted.

Candidates performed best when responding to Homer.

Section 4 — Comedy, Satire and Society

Candidates performed very well in all the questions attempted.

Candidates wrote very well about comedy. There was also a marked improvement in detailed reference to the texts in comparison with previous years.

Overall, candidate performance in the modern comparison questions stood out as significantly improved from previous years.

Project–dissertation

Most candidates presented a good range of analytical and evaluative points. Many comparisons were well argued.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Section 2 — Individual and Community

Candidates found the analysis question most demanding (question 10).

Section 3 — Heroes and Heroism

Candidates found the analysis question most demanding (question 18).

Candidates found it difficult to show a depth of knowledge about *The Heroides*.

Section 4 — Comedy, Satire and Society

Candidates found the evaluating question most demanding (question 26).

Candidates wrote much better about comedy than satire.

Overall, some candidates seemed to struggle with the style of questions set in the question paper and seemed to waste time and effort on unnecessary content in their answers. Particularly concerning was the number of candidates who wrote their own examples of modern comparisons for the modern comparison question.

Project–dissertation

Some candidates included one or two examples of each type of feature mentioned in the marking instructions. The marking grid should not be seen as a checklist however, since the dissertation is marked holistically.

Several candidates did not engage with enough sources as indicated in the course assessment specification.

Some dissertations lacked focus: the argument proceeded with a range of points which gained marks, but the fact that the argument lost its focus on the title, meant that it was difficult to gain high marks for ‘argument and conclusion’.

Dissertations generally presented comparisons well but two key points must be considered. Firstly, candidates must choose the comparisons for their appropriateness rather than forcing them into the context of the dissertation; and secondly, the comparisons must be clearly explained, both the classical aspect and that of later times.

Many dissertations wasted too many words on narrative — candidates must pay attention to what marks are awarded for, and spend as few words as possible on extraneous elements.

Few candidates produced a good introduction which justified and explained the research properly.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates should be given considerable practice in answering the different question types in the question paper so they are aware that different questions assess different skills.

Detailed knowledge of the prescribed texts makes a huge difference to the quality of candidates' answers, so it would be advisable for teachers and lecturers to spend teaching time reading the texts with candidates, or setting tasks that will help candidates develop detailed knowledge of content.

Teachers and lecturers should emphasise to candidates that memorised responses are unlikely to gain high marks, as most of the questions ask candidates to specifically analyse, evaluate or compare sources which are presented in the question paper.

Teachers and lecturers should stress the importance of reading the questions carefully and responding appropriately, rather than assuming there is a formula to apply to answering questions.

In the analysis and evaluation questions, candidates should be encouraged to engage closely with the extracts given in the question paper. Considerable practice of this type of task is recommended. Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates understand that while an evaluation question (one which begins, 'To what extent...?') could allow them to make creditable comments about a limitation of the source, an analysis question (one which begins 'In what ways...?') does not: it asks them to consider what **this** source is communicating, and/or how **this** source does that.

In the comparison questions, teachers and lecturers should remind candidates that their comparisons should be specific to the question and should refer to details of the classical texts in order to gain marks.

For comparison with a modern source questions, teachers and lecturers must make candidates aware that there are no marks to be gained from presenting their own examples from the modern world. Candidates must compare what they have learnt about the classical world with the modern source given to them in the question paper.

Candidates are advised to practice communicating their points succinctly in essay questions. There is no virtue in a long introduction which indicates that the candidate knows some broad facts about the text and is going to answer the question which has been asked.

Project–dissertation

Teachers and lecturers should try to make sure that candidates follow a programme of research in order to produce their dissertation. If candidates genuinely do this, they will find it more straightforward to gain high marks in justifying and engagement with sources.

When they are composing the dissertation, candidates should pay attention to how they show sufficient skill in the different marking criteria: for example, they should make sure they effectively engage with at least five primary sources and two secondary sources within their text.

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to pay close attention to their chosen title, making sure that the line of argument in their dissertation adheres closely to the title. Teachers and lecturers should also encourage candidates to choose specific questions for their dissertation title as this makes it easier to frame an argument clearly based upon it. However, candidates should be wary of broad questions such as, ‘what was life like for a Roman slave?’ This type of question is so broad, that it is very difficult to create a tight, coherent argument based upon it.

When guiding candidates in how to write an introduction, teachers and lecturers should emphasise to them that it is an introduction to their work, not a general introduction to the topic at large: their introduction should be written last, with the intention of showing the reader what the dissertation is about, how it was researched, and why the dissertation proceeds as it does.

Candidates should be discouraged from excessive length in their work: this can often be self-penalising, as it may affect the quality of their argument structure.

Candidates should bear in mind that no marks are given for use of rhetorical flourishes or over-elaborate language.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	47
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	38
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	36.8%	36.8%	14	105
B	44.7%	81.6%	17	90
C	18.4%	100.0%	7	75
D	0.0%	100.0%	0	67
No award	0.0%	-	0	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ 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.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.