



## Course report 2019

Subject	Classical Studies
Level	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 1: Classical literature**

Comments from markers and centres, and statistical analysis, indicated that the paper performed as expected and was challenging but realistic for candidates.

The number of candidates who attempted each essay was almost identical.

The most common texts candidates used in the paper were *Antigone* and *Oedipus the King*; other texts included *Medea*, *Agamemnon*, *Lysistrata* and epic poetry.

### **Question paper 2: Classical society**

The paper performed as expected. Approximately two-thirds of candidates answered the 'power and freedom' questions, although some candidates switched between parts A and B. Candidates who did this tended to attempt questions in 'power and freedom' in the Greek section, and 'religion and belief' in the Roman section.

### **Assignment**

The assignment performed as expected and the average mark was very similar to 2018.

## **Section 2: comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas that candidates performed well in**

#### **Question paper 1: Classical literature**

Candidates performed especially well in the essay on leadership. Many candidates had an in-depth knowledge of texts, characters and key actions, and deployed them appropriately.

Candidates often performed well by referring to one or two texts or characters, using contrasting styles of leadership. The best essays about 'fate and free will' tended to be organised thematically (see section 3).

#### **Question paper 2: Classical society**

The highest-scoring questions were questions 1 and 4, the 'three source questions'. Candidates organised their answers well, and responded to the sources before closing by commenting on omitted material.

There were some good responses to question 3(b), the question on the Delian League, where many candidates gave a balanced response to the experience of allied members of the League.

Similarly in question 10(a), on the Roman festivals of Lupercalia and the Saturnalia, knowledge of the festivals was impressive. The best answers indicated that the festivals had more than one purpose — for example the Saturnalia could be seen both as a festival of merrymaking and a festival centred around sun worship.

In the questions on modern comparison (questions 2 and 5) candidates produced some very good conclusions to their answers, summarising and balancing their findings in the main body of their responses. Candidates also structured their questions well, breaking down their answers into four or five points, taking a quotation from the source as their starting point.

A recurring problem from 2015 to 2018 was the number of candidates who did not complete the question paper. This fell considerably this year, due to the removal of the essay and better time management from candidates.

#### **Assignment**

Markers commented on the increasing effort which candidates were clearly investing in their assignment. For most candidates, the assignment represented their highest mark, sometimes by some way.

A wider range of topics was in evidence this year; the single most common topic was Athenian women. Performance was particularly strong in comparisons where candidates gave responses from modern literature, film, television and politics, which were at a level appropriate for Higher.

There were no issues reported around the use of the resource sheet.

## Areas that candidates found demanding

### Question paper 1: Classical literature

A few candidates decided to use the texts *Antigone* and/or *Medea* to address fate and free will. This is a very challenging approach, especially when a few decided to argue that there is no aspect of fate in these plays, and the characters have complete free will. This does not tend to lead to an essay which achieves high marks.

Other candidates decided arbitrarily that a character's actions are motivated by fate or free will without giving a plausible reason for this view. A few candidates also told the story of Oedipus, but made no reference to the play itself. Candidates should show evidence of knowledge of a specific text, not just the story.

In the essay on leadership, some candidates used *Antigone* as an example of a leader. This can be done, but required justification, which many candidates did not do.

A number of candidates seemed unaware that question 2 was based around a text and not Classical society; they then gave points of comparison discussing women in Classical Athens and Rome rather than from literature. Other candidates used the same example a number of times in their answer. For example, some candidates used the decision of *Antigone* to bury her brother over and over again as their point of comparison from a text. Each comment must have a different example to gain marks.

### Question paper 2: Classical society

In questions 7 and 9, candidates struggled to gain marks around the provenance of the source. Common statements which gained no marks included, 'historians can be relied upon because they will not be biased'; 'Dionysus was a Greek and so would be biased', and general comments about primary and secondary sources.

In question 6(a) some candidates were clearly unsure about the cult of Asclepius. This is now one of the cults which is in the course specification.

In question 6(b) a number of candidates only described the Homeric concept of the afterlife, and even though they gave great detail of the traditional view of the underworld, they did not appreciate the importance of the question stem 'To what extent...'. Without looking at the afterlife in relation to mystery cults and philosophy, candidates were unable to access the full range of marks.

In question 8(a) candidates often only considered the life of upper-class women — describing arranged marriages established for political reasons, the lives of the imperial family, women making clothes at home, and supervising teams of slaves around the home. Few candidates made distinctions between the lives of the privileged minority and the poor majority, nor did they make distinctions between the first century BC and the first century AD. As a result, a good number of answers were unrealistic and inappropriate for a Higher-level examination.

In the questions on modern comparisons (questions 2 and 5), candidates often paraphrased or quoted the source and did not interpret the content.

## **Assignment**

Some candidates achieved a low mark for analysis and evaluation, as some assignments were largely descriptive.

## Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

### Question paper 1: Classical literature

For a fate and free will essay, candidates should be advised to choose an appropriate text. Good essays should seek an approach rather than 'plot tell'. For example, candidates who explained that Sophocles' description of the prophesies of the oracle in *Oedipus the King* can be used to determine fate, or that there are different aspects of fate (as a determinant of life expectancy; as a method to punish the proud; or as a measure to right a previous wrong), tended to perform better.

Good answers can be based around one or two texts or characters. Some candidates used four texts or characters. These answers tended to lack detail. Candidates should be encouraged to seek depth more than breadth. Essays which inter-relate characters and texts in comparisons and contrasts achieve higher marks than those simply taking two texts and discussing them in relation to the essay title but not each other.

### Question paper 2: Classical society

A number of 12-mark answers suffered from a lack of structure. Candidates tended to list points, sometimes in bullet-point form. This can lead to lack of analysis and a lower mark. This sometimes occurred in question 6(b) (life after death); and especially in question 3(b) (the Delian League); question 8(b) (life in the provinces); and question 10(b) (birth and coming of age).

The best approach is for a candidate to divide their answer into three or four areas. Markers understand that these are not essays and there is not time for comprehensive coverage. Candidates may wish to tell the marker at the start of their response by adding a sentence saying which aspects they will cover, for example:

*'This answer will look at the following aspects of the Delian League — the economic and financial impact of membership, both good and bad, the increasing interference of Athens in the internal affairs of the members, and the harsh treatment suffered by members of the League.'*

Candidates should be encouraged to paragraph and structure, and ensure that they give good detail in their answer, often by using specific examples.

In source evaluation questions, candidates should be encouraged to look at the nature of the source in front of them instead of using pre-learned phrases about primary and secondary sources, bias or historians. For example, for question 7, a good comment might be:

*'Although Dionysus was a Greek, the fact that he understood the specific Roman distinction of patrician and plebeian suggests that he has researched the aspect, or has lived in Rome long enough to be relied upon.'*

In question 9 candidates could comment meaningfully on the fact that Livy is writing about events 200 years earlier. For example, *'the source is very detailed, describing very specific*

*instructions to Scipio. This suggests Livy may have invented the detail for dramatic effect (or alternatively that he was able to consult instructions which might have survived)'.*

In the modern comparison questions candidates should concentrate on what they know about the classical world rather than focus on interpreting the source.

The following examples of good approaches would be awarded 2 marks:

#### Question 2

*The source states that victims of slavery can come from many foreign countries, but some can come from Britain. This is similar to Greece in some ways as Athenians did enslave fellow Greeks. For example Athenians would enslave people as a punishment when their city attempted to leave the Delian League. However, similar to the indications in the source, it was often foreigners who were enslaved. Aristotle the philosopher sometimes argued that it was more acceptable to enslave 'barbarians' or foreigners as they lacked the higher intelligence and reasoning of Greeks.*

#### Question 5

*The source states that today many people dismiss the ability to tell the future. There is evidence in classical Greece that some philosophers denied that the gods would ever use the weather or flights of birds to foretell the future, and the character Jocasta in 'Oedipus the King' denies that the oracles from the gods have any effect. On the other hand, a common theme in Greek tragedy or epic poetry is the punishment of those who ignore signs, omens and portents, which suggests that many Greeks did believe it wise to pay attention to them.'*

### **Assignment**

A few candidates are still making a modern comparison the basis of their assignment — for example, 'A comparison between the life of women in Athens and women today'. These candidates tend to score well for comparison, but poorly in analysis and evaluation. It is better practice to form a question as the basis for the assignment.

Centres must ensure that resource sheets, research sheets or processed information sheets are submitted for each candidate for the 2019-20 session. These sheets are not marked but must be submitted to SQA along with the candidate's assignment. A penalty of 20% of the candidate's overall mark for the assignment component will be applied in the case of non-submission. Further information can be found in the Coursework for External Assessment document and the course assessment task on the subject page of the SQA website.

## Grade boundary and statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	400
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	392
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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
<b>Maximum mark</b>				
<b>A</b>	32.1%	32.1%	126	77
<b>B</b>	21.9%	54.1%	86	66
<b>C</b>	22.2%	76.3%	87	55
<b>D</b>	11.2%	87.5%	44	44
<b>No award</b>	12.5%	-	49	-



## 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.