



Course report 2019

Subject	Classical Studies
Level	National 5

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 consists of three sections. The three sections total 80 marks. The final section provides a choice of two topics (Pompeii or Roman Britain). In 2019, all candidates answered on Pompeii.

The question paper generally performed in line with expectations and was deemed fair in terms of the level of demand and the coverage of topics. Candidates were well prepared for the questions, and made good comparison and contrast with the topics, making it relevant to the modern world. Candidates were able to complete all three sections in the allocated time.

Assignment

Candidates performed in line with expectations and, overall, there was a good spread of marks with some outstanding pieces presented. It was clear to see that candidates had engaged with their chosen topics and had completed thorough research.

It was good to see that centres had taken advice on board from last session, with fewer candidates relying on secondary sources. Many candidates are still struggling to include a challenge or counter argument for their topics.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Candidates demonstrated a good level of knowledge across the three sections, with the 'Greece' element performing particularly well. Candidates were most successful in responding to the 'Compare' questions (questions 4 and 12). The 'Explain what Source A tells us' in the 'Greece' section (question 5) was answered very well, with candidates demonstrating a good knowledge of the different groups in society and their various roles. Question 10 ('Explain') was also answered well, with candidates exploring the social reasons why the baths were popular, as well as the aesthetic and practical reasons. This was clearly a popular subject matter.

Candidates approached both the 'Greece' and 'Pompeii' topics with a vast amount of knowledge and understanding of how the ancient and modern worlds compare.

In Section 2, question 7(a) was answered well, particularly where candidates had studied *Antigone*. There were interesting comparisons made between the conflict discussed and the modern world.

Assignment

Candidates demonstrated a wealth of knowledge on their chosen topics with the majority of candidates achieving full marks for Section A (Drawing on straightforward, mainly factual, knowledge and understanding to explain and analyse key features of the topic or issue).

Candidates also included a high level of analysis in comparing and contrasting their topic with the modern world, and including supporting evidence for their conclusion.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 1: a number of candidates missed out this question completely.

Question 2: candidates often listed jobs that people had in classical Athens but they did not explain why it was a good place to make a living.

Questions 6 and 14: candidates focused on omissions from the sources and what the sources said. Candidates need to address the range of prompts to achieve full marks. Many candidates repeated information that was provided in the question paper for 'who wrote it' and 'when it was written'. Candidates need to respond to the information with evaluative comments to achieve marks for their observations.

Question 8(b): candidates did not always refer to the examples in the text mentioned when comparing the modern world and the classical world.

Question 11: candidates often wrote about events in the amphitheatre but did not compare the amphitheatre to the theatre, and missed the key words — 'more exciting' and 'eventful'.

Assignment

Section E (Reference to both supporting information and potential challenges or counter-arguments): some candidates did not include a potential challenge or counter argument to their conclusion. A clearly thought out topic or question would have prevented this.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates were clearly well prepared for the question paper as the majority of candidates demonstrated a strong depth of knowledge across the three sections. Candidates were also well prepared for the different skills that they would have to demonstrate.

Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions carefully and focus on key words. For example, many candidates missed the two elements in question 3 — a Greek house designed ‘to suit the climate’ and ‘the lives of the people who lived in it’, and in question 11 the ‘more exciting’ and ‘eventful’ element.

Candidates need to think more carefully about the ‘Explain the source...’ questions. Candidates will not gain marks for repeating what is written in the source. The information must be examined and explained.

Candidates also struggled to comment on ‘who wrote it’ and ‘when they wrote it’ in questions 6 and 14. Candidates will not gain marks for repeating information that is provided in the question paper.

Assignment

Candidates were clearly well prepared and had been provided with the time to complete detailed research prior to the write-up.

Careful advice on topic choices and questions will provide candidates with the potential to achieve high marks.

Candidates should consider the counter arguments and challenges more carefully.

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	78
Number of resulted entries in 2019	108

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	50.9%	50.9%	55	73
B	14.8%	65.7%	16	63
C	13.9%	79.6%	15	53
D	12.0%	91.7%	13	43
No award	8.3%	-	9	-

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.