



## Course Report 2018

Subject	Latin
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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**

## **Summary of the course assessment**

All three components performed as intended. This was reflected in the grade boundary meeting, where the assessment was judged to be in line with standards and notional boundaries were applied.

### **Component 1: question paper: Literary Appreciation**

The Literary Appreciation question paper was structured in a similar way to past papers and the specimen question paper. As always, there were two options, and while 'section 2: Ovid and Latin Love Poetry' continued to prove the more popular, there was a significant increase in the number opting for 'section 1: Letters and Letter-writing'. Each of the options offered a mixture of questions, requiring both short and extended-responses. The shorter questions tested knowledge of the Latin texts, while longer questions tested analytical skills and allowed for the degree of differentiation expected at this level. This was particularly true of the essay question in each option, where a considerable amount of differentiation was evident. All questions were clearly worded and candidates had sufficient time to complete the question paper. Course coverage was thought good, and feedback from markers and centres suggested that the level of demand was very much as expected.

### **Component 2: question paper: Translating**

The translating question paper was challenging but fair. The format was similar to that of previous years, where candidates are required to translate a passage of authentic Latin prose into English with the support of a specific wordlist. This year, for the first time, the wordlist was attached to the question paper instead of being presented separately. This was the only modification and it seemed to work well. Overall, the question paper performed as expected and feedback suggests it was positively received.

### **Component 3: project–dissertation**

The performance of the dissertation is dependent on the ability of the candidates themselves; on their choice of topic and the manner of their approach. Overall, the vast majority produced a competent piece of work of an appropriate length that met all the technical requirements.

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

### **Areas in which candidates performed well**

#### **Component 1: question paper: Literary Appreciation**

Overall, candidates prepared well and were able to display depth of knowledge and a broad range of critical and analytical skills. They generally showed a good grasp of the Latin texts they had studied and were able to write about them thoughtfully. The responses were pleasingly varied, and the questions in both options attainable to all candidates, while also providing opportunity for candidates to display excellent knowledge and understanding. There were several outstanding performances.

Most candidates managed their time well and were able to complete the paper. There were few omissions or incomplete responses. Where questions were missed or incomplete, there were no signs that this was due to a shortage of time. The fact that the essay questions were handled well offers further proof that the majority of candidates were able to manage their time successfully. In the small number of cases where candidates did appear rushed towards the end, it was clearly due either to lack of preparation or the 'over answering' of questions early in the paper.

#### **Letters and Letter-Writing**

Candidates showed skill here, not only in extracting relevant information, as in question 3, but also in drawing out implications and forming conclusions based on their interpretation of the text. This was especially clear in questions 6(a) and (b), where candidates were keen to convey their impression of Cicero's brother and his wife. In doing this, they were also able to demonstrate not only their knowledge, but also how fully they had engaged with the letter.

The majority also engaged effectively with the simile in question 1(b) and were able to offer a considered evaluation of its significance. Candidates' skill in analysing literary technique and in drawing comparisons was also very evident, particularly in question 4(b), where the majority had no difficulty pinpointing and explaining a distinctive way in which Pliny's use of direct speech differed from Seneca's. The treatment of humour produced greater differentiation. It was gratifying to see, particularly in question 2(a), many candidates were able to be flexible in their thinking and adapt their knowledge to fit the requirements of the question. In general, candidates who were thoroughly familiar with the Latin coped well here. Very few scored 0 marks in any question and there were very few 'no responses'.

In question 8, the 20 mark essay was generally handled very well, with many answering extremely well. While half marks could be gained by simply listing a range of relevant points, the better responses imposed some form of organisation and critical structure on their material. The best essays evaluated not only the information contained in the texts, but also the factors that differentiate letters from other historical sources, and makes them such a uniquely valuable resource for the investigation of Roman social history. Again, the range of responses showed that candidates were thinking for themselves, and not just repeating a view they had been taught.

### **Ovid and Latin Love Poetry**

Questions that required some thought and personal engagement were generally handled well. In question 11, the majority were able to evaluate the two similes in a considered and thoughtful way that demonstrated considerable engagement with the poems. Similarly, in question 12, most were able not just to detail the two poets' symptoms, but also to explain at least one distinctive difference. Mythological references caused some a few problems but those who knew the poem thoroughly answered question 9(c)(i) well.

Overall, it was the literary technique question that produced the greatest amount of differentiation. While most candidates had no difficulty in forming a conclusion about Corinna's character from the text in question 10(b), only the most competent, or better prepared, candidates were able to offer an effective analysis of the poet's use of language.

In question 15, the essay was handled extremely well. The open nature of the question allowed candidates of every ability an opportunity to display their knowledge, skill and personal response, while at the same time giving the most competent candidates a real chance to shine. The very best essays not only displayed a thorough and detailed grasp of the texts, but also the ability to manipulate and organise that knowledge in order to produce and sustain a clear line of argument. Discussion often reached quite a sophisticated level and the points made tended to be thoughtful, critical and quite carefully nuanced. Written expression was often remarkably fluent and lucid.

### **Component 2: question paper: Translating**

Candidates' responses in this question paper ranged from excellent to very weak, with the majority falling somewhere in the middle of the marking range. Most were able to grasp the essential idea throughout, but only the stronger candidates could consistently achieve the full 2 marks, block by block. Overall, even candidates who were not able to achieve consistent accuracy managed to follow the storyline and showed a good grasp of the main events. The English sections and the support of the wordlist proved effective in steering candidates through the more challenging aspects of the passage. Very few struggled to complete the paper, and some had time to produce a rough draft as well as a final version.

The syntactical features sampled were fairly straightforward, but the sentences were long, so that a detailed knowledge of basic accidence was of crucial importance. The paper proved very effective in revealing which candidates knew, and were able to apply, the basic paradigms.

Block 21 proved the most accessible and was translated accurately in the vast majority of cases. Only one or two candidates failed to score any marks here. Although the opening and closing sentences were also quite difficult, candidates coped well, and most managed to pick up marks for the essential idea. Verbs and participles were generally handled well.

### **Component 3: project–dissertation**

Almost without exception, candidates engaged enthusiastically with their chosen topic and took pride in producing a substantial and original piece of work. In nearly every case, the finished work was well presented, with the text clearly set out, pages carefully numbered and most, if not all of the expected generic features in place, including footnotes and

bibliography. In other words, the vast majority succeeded in producing a piece of independent research that fulfilled the technical requirements.

Choice of topic and title continued to be a significant factor. The strongest tended to be those that avoided broad surveys in favour of a more targeted or analytical approach. This gave their discussion a distinctive 'angle' and offered plenty of scope for the type of thoughtful evaluation and in-depth discussion required at Advanced Higher. However, there were a few examples of broad topics, which proved that these could be successful if handled in a mature and sophisticated way.

It was pleasing to see candidates continuing to include a considerable amount of Latin text, with many quoting from at least four or five Roman authors. In addition to literary sources, some also used material culture to very good effect. However, only the best were able to integrate the Latin thoroughly and effectively into their discussion, using it as evidence for their argument, rather than simply 'bolting it on' as if an afterthought, or as an added extra.

The use of secondary sources continued to be rather variable. What often distinguished the strongest candidates was their ability to engage with these sources and to evaluate, and even take issue with, their views. Many of these candidates were clearly aware of the most recent study surrounding their topic, and were keen to explore areas of current academic debate and controversy. These candidates also tended to be very accurate and precise in their use of footnotes and were able to provide a full and effective bibliography.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Component 1: question paper: Literary Appreciation**

#### **Letters and Letter-Writing**

Question 1(a) seemed to confuse some candidates, whose answers did address the issue of humour, but with reference to lines other than those specified in the question. Some realised their mistake and were able to retrieve the situation, but others unfortunately persisted in giving the 'right' answer to the wrong question.

'Over answering' was also an issue for a few candidates, with some otherwise strong candidates lingering unnecessarily over questions 2 and 5, which tended to compromise their efforts later in the paper. Likewise, in literary analysis question 4(a), some candidates were too inclined to detail every single literary device within the direct speech, rather than evaluating the use of direct speech itself as a persuasive technique.

#### **Ovid and Latin Love Poetry**

Questions requiring a detailed and specific knowledge of part of a poem, for example questions 9 and 13, caused some candidates issues. The weaker responses were evidently written from vague memory rather than from an accurate knowledge of the Latin passage.

In question 9(c)(i) in particular, some candidates showed very little grasp of the mythological details. Even among those who knew the myths, there was a surprising lack of discrimination in the way they used the terms 'bull' and 'heifer'.

Question 10(a) also proved problematic for some candidates, who tended either to offer their own description of the bedroom, or to answer purely with reference to the meaning of the

words. Only the very best answers identified a clear example of a literary technique and explained its effect.

## **Component 2: question paper: Translating**

The blocks containing gerundives of obligation in indirect speech proved the most challenging, although this construction should have been familiar to candidates from Higher. Even some otherwise strong candidates found this challenging.

At the lower end, candidates struggled with word order and were unable to unpack long and complex sentences. Failing to scan ahead in order to find the main verb, they tended to translate words in the order in which they occurred and seemed to lack the basic knowledge of accident that would have helped them make better sense of the underlying structure. When consulting the wordlist, weaker candidates did not always identify the part of speech correctly, leading them to translate nouns as verbs or even adjectives, for example *audacia*.

More generally, neuter plurals continued to catch out all but the very best candidates. Likewise, active verbs were often translated passively, quite unnecessarily and without any attempt to handle the subject and agent relationship in an appropriate way (done properly, translation of passive for active, or vice versa, may be perfectly acceptable). Participles, particularly the relationship between participles and finite verbs, caused problems for some, whose translations did not accurately reflect the actual sequence of events. Many candidates were able to recognise ablative absolutes but again had difficulty subordinating them, or coordinating them, in a way that properly reflected the sequence of events.

It also became clear that some candidates did not have the command of English that might reasonably be expected at this level, and which was required to reflect the formal register of the original Latin. The greatest care was taken to ensure that the wordlist was as accessible as possible, and in nearly every instance a synonym was offered, but none the less, words like 'devise', 'credulity' and 'promontory' seemed unfamiliar to some candidates.

## **Component 3: project–dissertation**

Candidates whose topic was very broad or too generic, tended to have more difficulty achieving the required depth and complexity. This was especially so when the time frame was also left very open or very vague. Candidates who tried to analyse multiple aspects of such topics, across very broad spectrums of time, almost inevitably fell short in terms of depth and meaningful evaluation.

Secondary sources were not always handled well. Candidates either did not read widely enough, or read texts that were too wide and insufficiently specialised. Where candidates did present an impressive bibliography, all too often there was little evidence within the body of the text to show where, and how, these texts had been used. Many of the weaker candidates offered no substantiating evidence for the claims they made, while others offered a modern author's view as 'proof' of a point about the Roman world as if modern opinion had the status of historical fact.

Modern comparisons were another source of specific difficulty. Unless the topic is a comparative one, there is no requirement to include modern comparisons, although such comparisons can be illuminating and helpful, provided they are properly evidenced and

substantiated. Weaker candidates however, tended to waste time and space in offering broad generalisations and simplistic stereotypes that did little to develop their argument.

In general, it was in terms of 'argument and analysis' that most candidates experienced the greatest difficulty. The weakest candidates tended to favour an overly narrative or descriptive approach. Many others, who were able to offer a line of argument, struggled to draw out and consider its various implications and did little to assess alternative views or other possible interpretations.

## **Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates**

### **Component 1: question paper: Literary Appreciation**

Candidates are generally well prepared for this question paper, but the importance of a thorough knowledge of the prescribed texts can never be over-emphasised. This is a question paper where hard work most definitely wins its reward. There has been a noticeable tendency over the years for candidates to be less familiar with texts towards the end of the prescribed list than with those at the start of the list. Candidates should therefore make sure that they study the whole of the prescribed list with equal thoroughness.

As questions cover style, tone and technique, as well as explanation of content, candidates should be encouraged to practise the skills relevant to each of these areas. Questions on imagery and structure have proved tricky in the past, so some extra practice here might be advisable. Questions can also ask candidates to compare and contrast, so they should be encouraged to give some thought to the themes and generic features that link the texts, as well as the distinctive qualities that differentiate them. Those studying the love poems in particular, should make sure they know and can explain all the mythological references, as questions on this aspect regularly challenge those candidates who do not have the details readily available. The same advice applies to the historical references in the Letters.

As for exam technique, it is worth reminding candidates to base their answers only on the lines cited in the question, and that marks will not be given for answers drawing upon material outside the cited lines. Candidates should also be advised that, due to pressure of time, over-answering questions could be as detrimental to success as under-answering. No extra marks are given to points made after the maximum has been achieved, so writing at disproportionate length risks wasting time and effort. A desire to err on the side of caution is understandable, but candidates must try to resist the temptation to include every single point they know and can remember. The most reliable guide to the desired length is in the number of marks available. Question type is also relevant: a 6 mark question on literary technique demands a more developed response than a 3 mark question on content.

This is especially true of the essay question, where assessment is holistic and marks are available for organisation, structure, argument and developed discussion. It is worth pointing out that a list of twenty points will not necessarily equate to 20 marks. So long as points are relevant and substantiated, a listing approach is probably enough to achieve a convincing pass, but the highest marks are awarded for those that manage to build some analysis and evaluation into their discussion.

## **Component 2: question paper: Translating**

Candidates need a thorough knowledge of the prescribed accidence and syntax, and skill in the application of both. They need to be able to analyse and unpack complex sentences, and be able to scan ahead to find the main verb. In terms of specific constructions, a reminder about how to handle the gerundive of obligation in indirect speech might be useful, as well as some practice in translating and subordinating the perfect passive participle and the ablative absolute.

Candidates may also need some guidance in learning how to make effective use of the wordlist. Care needs to be taken when looking up words that are similar in appearance, and easily confused, for example *manus* and *munus*. Candidates should also be able to recognise, and differentiate between, different parts of speech in both Latin and English, for example in order that they are not tempted to treat the English verb 'devise' as a noun, or to translate the Latin noun *audacia* as an adjective.

The power to identify parts of speech is also crucial to the correct translation of inflected endings. Candidates need to be confident they know what type of word they are dealing with, in order to be able to apply the appropriate paradigm. In particular, candidates should be able to anticipate that where a Latin noun is listed as neuter, the plural will be a form ending in *-a*.

Some of these issues may relate to candidates' command of English, as much as their grasp of Latin. However, as the skill of translation requires competence in both languages, candidates should also be encouraged, as far as possible, to use their study of Latin to expand and develop their knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary.

Finally, it is always worth reminding candidates to take account of the title, and pay careful attention to the introductory and linking passages in English. These are all designed to offer valuable clues and to provide pointers that should help to keep their translation on the right track.

## **Component 3: project–dissertation**

Candidates need to give careful thought to their choice of topic and to the formulation of their title. If candidates choose a topic that is very open or broad, they should be urged to focus on a particular aspect, or to approach the issue from a specific angle. Otherwise, there is a risk that their research results in a very general survey that does not lend itself to detailed analysis and evaluation.

With a few notable exceptions, there was a tendency this year for candidates to play it rather safe, sticking to mainstream topics and taking a slightly formulaic, 'tick box' approach to their writing. Although perfectly understandable, this approach did tend to stifle creativity and originality. It would be good therefore to see future candidates pursuing some more unusual or imaginative themes. The topic must offer scope for in-depth discussion and analysis, and that sufficient primary source material in Latin must be available and accessible. A rich variety of Latin texts can now be accessed online.

Whatever the topic, candidates should bear in mind that this is a language qualification and this needs to be reflected in their dissertation. While simply 'bolting on' several Latin quotations may be enough to earn candidates a pass grade, marks in the higher bands



requires a much more integrated approach. The Latin passages cited need to be carefully selected for their evidence value, so that having been analysed and evaluated they can be used to form the building blocks of the candidate's argument. Latin texts also need to be translated and referenced accurately and quoted at an appropriate length: large chunks should be avoided. Ideally, the translation should be the candidate's own, but where a published translation is used, whether in print or online, this should be acknowledged and referenced in footnotes and bibliography.

Above all, there needs to be some sign of engagement with the Latin that justifies quotation in Latin rather than English. This might involve drawing out an implication, or commenting on a significant word choice or rhetorical device. In other words, the Latin should be integral to the discussion and not be treated as an added extra. It is also desirable that the candidate show some awareness of date and genre, especially when dealing with a historical topic.

In the use of secondary sources, full marks can only be given where there is evidence within the body of the text that these sources have been actively consulted, and not just listed in the bibliography. Quotation is not required or even desired, but candidates need to indicate where their information comes from, so that their claims can be verified and substantiated. This can be done by citing the relevant secondary sources in footnotes or endnotes, using standard referencing conventions. There should be some sign of engagement with the source material and an attempt to consider and evaluate various points of view.

Candidates should be encouraged to refer to printed books as well as material sourced online; although it is appreciated that easy access to libraries can be problematic for some candidates. When accessing material online, candidates need to be urged to use caution. Some supposedly academic journals have not been peer-reviewed and contain information of questionable validity. Wikipedia is becoming more accessible but is best used as a convenient starting point rather than as a definitive authority.

No matter how well researched, a dissertation cannot achieve high marks without detailed analysis and a developed argument. Marks are available here for a clear, programmatic introduction, a logical and coherent structure, and a valid conclusion based on evidence and sound reasoning.

When compiling the bibliography, primary and secondary sources should be clearly differentiated. Primary sources should be cited by author and work and not just, as often happens, by the reference used in the dissertation. Where a Latin text has been accessed online, it is still important to cite the author and the work, as well as the name of the website, the web address and the date last accessed. Clear guidance is available on SQA's website and this should be shared with candidates.

Finally, to do their topic full justice, candidates should aim to make maximum use of the 4,000 words available. It is also worth noting that quotations, footnotes, captions, contents page and bibliography do not need to be included in the final word count.

## Grade boundary and statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	54
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	44
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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	40.9%	40.9%	18	119
B	31.8%	72.7%	14	102
C	11.4%	84.1%	5	85
D	6.8%	90.9%	3	76
No award	9.1%	-	4	-

## **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 which allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and 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 Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from exam 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 exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.