



## Course Report 2016

Subject	Latin
Level	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

# Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

## Summary of the course assessment

The introduction of the new Advanced Higher Latin has seen an encouraging increase in numbers of candidates being presented compared to numbers presented in 2015. There was also a slight rise in the number of centres presenting candidates, including one centre presenting for the first time, which was very welcome; but the most significant increase was in the number of candidates entered per centre.

## Component 1: question paper – Literary Appreciation

Candidates also coped well with the increased amount of Latin in the Literary Appreciation paper. Although the format of the paper remained largely unchanged, alterations to the literary prescription meant that a greater proportion of the questions were directed towards the Latin texts rather than those translated into English. This kept the overall degree of challenge high and proved particularly effective in discriminating between those candidates at the top end of the scale.

As intended, the more open style of essay question allowed the most capable candidates to develop their own, often sophisticated, lines of argument, without disadvantaging the others, who were still able to demonstrate considerable knowledge and skill.

## Component 2: question paper – Translating

As intended, changes to the **Translating** paper made it more accessible to candidates across a wider ability range. Nearly every candidate was successful. Whereas, in the past, performance here tended to be weaker, it was now more in keeping with candidates' performance in the other components.

## Component 3: project – Dissertation

The Dissertation had very minor changes this year. Almost without exception, the candidates engaged enthusiastically with their topic and clearly took pleasure in producing an original piece of work. However, as in the past, the standard they achieved varied considerably, from fairly weak to truly excellent. A sufficient degree of variation was evident within centres to show that the results reflected the students' own efforts. However, it was clear that those who had received proper guidance generally fared better than those who had not.

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

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

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

Candidates on the whole were well prepared; they engaged with the questions and were able to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the prescribed texts.

Although they still had to work hard to complete the paper, very few failed to finish; where a paper was unfinished, it was generally due to a lack of knowledge rather than pressure of time.

There were still a few candidates who did not manage their time effectively and ended up rushing the essay question. However this was not true of the majority and in general the candidates' essays were interesting, well informed and insightful.

#### **Letters and Letter-writing**

The total number of candidates choosing this option showed a significant increase. Numbers had been in decline for several years and it was to reverse this trend that the course was substantially remodelled and refreshed. The increase was therefore very positive and encouraging, especially as it included two centres that had switched to the Letters.

The metaphor question 2 (a) was handled well, and candidates clearly enjoyed commenting on Cicero's grim humour. Likewise, nearly every candidate responded well to the question on Seneca's use of language in question 3 (b) and many were able to analyse his literary techniques with considerable flair. Question 3 (c) also prompted some very thoughtful responses that showed deep engagement with Seneca's arguments and the ability to formulate a point of view in clear and cogent terms. Question 4 (c) on role-reversal also sparked a lot of interest. Opinion here was very much divided but, whichever side they took, candidates were able support their position with reference to the evidence.

The best essays were those that took an analytical approach, examining, for instance, the different reasons the historian, the literary critic and general reader might have for reading the letters; or the ways in which the letters both confirm and challenge our stereotypes about life in the Roman world.

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

There were many very good performances here and some that were excellent.

Almost without exception, every candidate could clearly explain the reasons for Ovid's supposed anger in question 7 (a). Candidates also tackled the evaluation questions 7 (c) and 8 (b) with a good degree of enthusiasm, as well as skill. Question 7 (c) prompted some particularly strong responses. Many candidates clearly enjoyed evaluating Ovid's use of humour and did so with knowledge and keen critical judgement. Candidates were also very ready and willing to expose Ovid's insincerity in question 8 (b).

Again the best essays were those that imposed their own analytical structure on the theme, considering for instance the ways in which the poets both idealise and objectify women; or the differences between one poet's portrayal of women and that of the others.

### **Component 2: Question Paper – Translating**

Overall, the changes to this paper seemed to have worked well. The majority of candidates were well prepared and their performance was good. They engaged effectively with the passage and were able to demonstrate a good command of grammar and syntax. The storyline held their interest and encouraged them to stay on track, without being so transparent that they could easily guess what was coming next.

Compared to past performance, it was generally more difficult for the weaker candidates to fail, but at the same time it was not easy to achieve full marks — and indeed none did: 49/50 was the highest mark. This did mean that there were more marks in the middle range but, to a large extent, that was what the changes were designed to produce.

Good use was made of the word-list, and the fact that it was formatted more like a dictionary did not appear to pose any problems.

### **Component 3: project – Dissertation**

Choice of topic was perhaps the most significant factor in determining success. The strongest were generally those that avoided broad surveys in favour of more targeted or analytical titles, which were more likely to generate the type of thoughtful evaluation and in-depth discussion expected at Advanced Higher.

The best dissertations also showed considerable competence in the handling of Latin source material. Most had consulted, quoted, translated and evaluated at least five Latin sources, if not considerably more.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

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

#### **Letters and Letter-writing**

It was surprising how many candidates disregarded the instruction in question 1 (a) to refer to the cited lines and drew their answer from the passage as a whole instead. Quite a few candidates struggled to generalise from the particular in question 1 (b), and only the most able offered an evaluative comment on the reliability of literary evidence. Answers to question 5 tended to be a little thin or sketchy, suggesting that many candidates were not as familiar with these later letters as with those at the start of the course.

Weaker essays tended to read like a long list of points rather than a coherent discussion.

## **Ovid and Latin Love Poetry**

Here too, a surprising number of candidates ignored the lines cited in question 9 (b) and based their answer on material drawn from other parts of the poem. Quite a few were also a little vague in their response to the imagery question 9 (c), suggesting they were not quite as familiar with the Latin text of Catullus as they were with Ovid. Likewise, quite a few candidates did not have the firm grasp of detail needed to achieve full marks in the Propertius questions 10 (a) & (b), although most were still able to go on and deal well with the Tibullus question 10 (c).

Again, essays that just made a series of points did not fare so well as those that took a more analytical approach.

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

Where there were slip-ups, it was generally longer sentences with embedded subordinate clauses that caused the problems. Quite a few candidates did not scan ahead, so that they lost sight of the overarching structure. Many, for instance, knew what to expect after the phrase *tam trepido cursu ut ...*, but by the time they reached the subjunctive verb, they had forgotten where they started and very few translated the result clause correctly. Some candidates found it difficult to differentiate between result and purpose clauses and it was surprising, especially given the vocabulary support, how many candidates forgot that 'in' + accusative indicates motion towards.

## **Component 3: project – Dissertation**

Those who stuck to very broad topics, like Slavery or Women, tended to have more difficulty achieving the required depth and complexity. Some of those on broader topics were also rather brief, which tended to compound the problem.

Quite a few candidates did not seem to have been made aware of all the technical features required in a dissertation, which put them at a disadvantage. Several did not consult a sufficient number of sources, and even those who did often lost marks because they did not quote in Latin, despite the fact that this is an essential requirement, as clearly stated in the published guidance. In this regard, a certain consistency was observable within centres, which was concerning.

On the other hand, there is no requirement to draw modern comparisons, so it was sad to see some candidates waste time and space on unnecessary comparisons that added very little of value. Likewise, it was disheartening to see candidates, who had clearly engaged well with their topic, present their findings in such a narrative or descriptive fashion that they could hardly be awarded any marks for argument and analysis. A little more guidance might have been enough to set all of these candidates on the right track.

More generally, referencing was an area of weakness across the mark range. Even some otherwise strong dissertations had their efforts compromised by inadequate or inaccurate referencing, in both footnotes and bibliography.

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

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

Learning and teaching should prepare candidates to answer questions on content, style technique and tone. Since even the briefest questions require an accurate grasp of detail, a thorough knowledge of the prescribed texts is of prime importance. Considerable practice in the skills of analysis and evaluations is also advisable.

As candidates can often be asked to compare and contrast, the themes and generic features that link the texts should be studied as well as the differences and distinctive features that differentiate them. Although not so much of an issue this year, questions on imagery and structure often prove taxing, so these are areas where some targeted support might be useful.

What this year's experience does show is that it is worth emphasising to candidates that they must pay close attention to the lines referenced in a question, as no credit can be given to material drawn from outside the cited lines. If questions demand reference to the text, then only answers that make such reference can achieve full marks. However, referring to the text does not require quotation in Latin except in the case of language questions, where features such as word-choice or alliteration cannot be analysed properly without quoting in Latin.

Finally, some guidance may be helpful to prevent candidates writing at disproportionate length. Whilst formulaic answers are as undesirable as excessive length, and no assessor wants to read responses devoid of genuine engagement, some broad guidelines may be offered to candidates to help them stay on track. As a rough rule of thumb:

- ◆ Most questions, especially those worth an odd number of marks, require one substantiated point per mark, although a second mark is always available for a well-developed point.
- ◆ Questions on style and technique however, usually worth an even number of marks (eg analyse Seneca's use of language (6); evaluate Ovid's use of humour (6)), generally make two marks available per point: one for identifying and exemplifying the point itself, another for offering an appropriate critical or evaluative comment. Thus, three points handled appropriately would be sufficient to gain the full six marks.

Candidates can be forgiven for wanting to take a 'belt and braces' approach but they should be discouraged from writing down every example they can remember, since their time and energies would be better spent elsewhere. The essay is judged very much as a whole, so a long list of points is unlikely to achieve full marks, whereas depth, detail, analysis and evaluation will be rewarded.

### **Component 2: Question Paper – Translating**

The provision of vocabulary support means that this paper is now more squarely focused on assessing candidates' knowledge and understanding of the way the language works, particularly their understanding of longer and more complex sentences.

As well as a working knowledge of accidence and morphology, candidates need to be equipped with a firm grasp of the prescribed grammar and syntax and to be well versed in its application.

To judge from this year's experience, scanning ahead is a useful skill that candidates might be encouraged to develop. Effective use of the word list is also a skill that may require training and practice, especially under timed conditions. Finally, it is always worth reminding candidates to read the introductory and linking passages in English, since these will often contain valuable clues, not least as to whether the subject is singular or plural.

### **Component 3: project – Dissertation**

Candidates need to choose their topic wisely and research it thoroughly. If candidates' interests lead them towards broad topics (eg women) or well-worn themes (eg the fall of the Roman Republic), they should be urged to focus on a particular aspect (eg the impact of legislation on women's lives) or to tackle it from a specific angle (eg the extent to which the senate was responsible for its own downfall). Otherwise, there is a risk that their research will result in a very general survey that does not lend itself to the type of detailed analysis and evaluation expected at this level. Twenty marks are available for analysis and argument, which will be lost if a dissertation on any topic is too heavily reliant on narrative and description. However, it should be noted (and communicated to candidates) that modern comparisons are not required and do not need to be included, unless the topic of the dissertation is itself a comparative one.

Effective use of source material is also crucial. Candidates are expected to support their argument by drawing on a wide range of primary and secondary source material. Depending on the topic, this may include images of archaeological remains, coins, original art work, artefacts and architecture. However, whatever other primary sources are cited, the dissertation needs to make substantial use of sources in Latin. Centres must make it clear to candidates that quotation in Latin is an essential requirement. If the Latin text cannot easily be located in book form, candidates should be advised that all but the most obscure texts are now readily available and easily accessible online.

Latin quotations should also be translated into English, ideally by the candidate's own efforts, but if a published translation is used, whether in print or on-line, this should be acknowledged and referenced in the footnotes and the bibliography. It is also often considered good practice to present the translation in a footnote rather than the main body of the text, so as not to disrupt the flow of the discussion. There is no need for a detailed evaluation of provenance and reliability, but a few comments on a source's date, genre and possible bias are to be desired, to show that the candidate understands the nature of the evidence they are dealing with. Such comments are awarded credit.

As for the use of secondary sources, full credit can only be given where there is evidence within the body of the text that these have been actively consulted and not just listed in the bibliography. When a particular point has been drawn from a secondary source, this should be acknowledged and referenced in a footnote. Quotation is not necessary. Again, it is considered good practice to refer to printed books as well as material sourced online, although it is appreciated that access to these can be a problem here. When accessing

material online, candidates do need to be urged to use caution. Some supposed journals have not been peer-reviewed and contain information of questionable validity.

This year's experience shows that accurate referencing is one area where improvement could be made. Clear guidance is given in the advice to centres published online, 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 and the 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 2015	0
------------------------------------	---

Number of resulted entries in 2016	79
------------------------------------	----

### Statistical information: Performance of candidates

#### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	53.2%	53.2%	42	119
B	22.8%	75.9%	18	102
C	12.7%	88.6%	10	85
D	2.5%	91.1%	2	76
No award	8.9%	-	7	0

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will 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.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings 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.
- ◆ 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, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this 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.
- ◆ 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.