



Course Report 2017

Subject	Classical Studies
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

Both the question paper and the dissertation performed as expected.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

There was presentation of candidates across all four sections of the question paper.

There was a significant improvement in performance in the History and Historiography section, and it was clear that there was parity of demand and performance across all sections.

Candidates did very well in the essay questions.

Component 2: Project: dissertation

Candidates performed very well in the dissertation.

Generally, candidates selected topics that enabled them to easily demonstrate skills at Advanced Higher.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

Many candidates did not appreciate that the questions based on extracts are not essay questions. Where candidates performed badly with these it was because their answers were too wide-ranging. Sometimes candidates did manage to gain full marks in these questions, but did so in answers running over five or six pages with approximately one point per page. Taking so much time to answer these questions, which should be fully answered in one or two pages, seems to have had a detrimental effect on the quality of later answers.

Some candidates were unable to show knowledge of the actual content of text to which they referred, and often did not gain marks as a result. If, for example, candidates want to say that a particular satire shows contempt for women, it is essential that they explain what the satire actually says *and* how that shows contempt for women. A lot of candidates were

unable to gain marks as they did not illustrate their answers with reference to what the text specifically says.

There were a minority of candidates who were unable to gain straightforward marks because they were attempting to write 'essay' responses to every question, rather than simply offering the requisite number of analysis, evaluative, or comparative comments to questions in the Classical Literature section of the paper.

A minority of candidates did not appreciate what was required in the modern comparison question. The extracts from the modern source contain four or five different observations, ideas or aspects that candidates should consider. Where these questions were answered badly, it tended to be because the candidate was attempting to draw a single, one-dimensional conclusion about what the modern source was saying, and then construct an answer comparing that one thought with their classical reading. Candidates should compare four or five different issues/ideas/attitudes that can be drawn from the modern source.

Component 2: Project: dissertation

The dissertations were of a good standard, but many candidates still seemed to find it hard to exhibit all the research and presentation skills that they are asked to show.

Very few dissertations were structured with a tight focus on the marking instructions. Not all candidates seem to have appreciated that the marking instructions are a description of what a good research project needs to contain.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

The most important advice for candidates at Advanced Higher level is to read the entire prescription and be fully aware of what happens in all the texts that are prescribed. Candidates studying non-narrative texts should be especially aware of this. It is still expected that their answers will show awareness of what is said in the texts, not simply awareness of the message that certain texts are supposed to convey.

It is very important that candidates are completely fluent in the different skills being assessed in different question types.

Candidates must also be strongly reminded that questions based on extracts expect responses that are focused on the extracts: writing open responses that are not focused on the extracts will not achieve high marks. If candidates properly embrace this idea, they will find that the analyse and evaluate questions, in particular, can be answered very quickly by linking deeper knowledge of their prescribed text to four points about the extract in the question paper.

Component 2: Project: dissertation

The dissertations were generally of a high standard, but it is always helpful to remind candidates that this component is designed to allow them to exhibit research skills and that when structuring it, they should consciously be thinking about this.

It is important that candidates are aware how marks are allocated and do not continually repeat evidence of the same skill: once they have gained the marks for that skill, there are no more on offer for doing the same thing again and again.

A great deal of importance should be placed on the introduction. It is important that this fully exhibits all that is being looked for in the 'justifying' criterion. Too many candidates are unable to gain these straightforward marks because their work does not have an introduction that shows the correct skills.

Whilst it was pleasing to see that the conditions of assessment for coursework were adhered to in the majority of centres, there were a small number of examples where this may not have been the case. Following feedback from teachers, we have strengthened the conditions of assessment criteria for National 5 subjects and will do so for Higher and Advanced Higher. The criteria are published clearly on our website and in course materials and must be adhered to. SQA takes very seriously its obligation to ensure fairness and equity for all candidates in all qualifications through consistent application of assessment conditions and investigates all cases alerted to us where conditions may not have been met.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	67
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Number of resulted entries in 2017	32
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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	37.5%	37.5%	12	105
B	43.8%	81.3%	14	90
C	15.6%	96.9%	5	75
D	0.0%	96.9%	0	67
No award	3.1%	-	1	-

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.