



## Course Report 2017

Subject	Classical Studies
Level	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**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

The question paper performed in line with expectations. Where choice was given, in Section 2 and in the 12-mark questions, there was no evidence that candidates were avoiding individual questions.

### **Component 2: Assignment**

The assignment also performed in line with expectations.

Analysis of the marks in both components showed that the performance of the 2017 cohort was very similar to that of 2016.

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

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

### **Component 1: Question paper**

Candidates scored very well in Question 1 and Question 2(b). Many answers displayed accurate knowledge on both the Delian League and Athenian democracy, and candidates scored well for analysis in looking at strengths and weaknesses and changes over time.

Candidates scored well in both 20-mark Classical Literature questions, especially Question 5. Centres had generally prepared candidates well in the approaches to these questions, and few candidates told the plot of the texts they chose.

As was noted in last year's report, candidates who discussed two plays tended to do well. The majority of candidates attempted Question 5, perhaps as centres had been anticipating that this topic would be sampled this year. Centres should note that it is possible that the same area may be sampled in consecutive years.

Question 4(b) was also well done, and most candidates effectively discussed a range of beliefs about life after death (traditional, cultic and philosophical).

### **Component 2: Assignment**

Marks in the assignment were marginally higher this year. Most candidates produced very good assignments, and centres had clearly carefully discussed successful approaches with candidates. It was encouraging to note that a number of centres presenting for the first time had given this component considerable attention. Most candidates chose topics within the course prescription, but a number (more than in 2016) chose other topics. Fewer candidates

than last year used the texts as the basis of their assignments, although those who did were often very successful.

There was a marked improvement in the comparison element: more candidates gained full marks by linking their comparisons carefully to the knowledge and analysis and evaluation. However, a small number of candidates had no comparisons whatsoever.

Candidates used their resource sheet successfully, chiefly as a guide to headings and topics, or as a store of sources. More centres used pictorial sources, often to good effect.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

In Question 7 and Question 9 candidates often scored well, but a number struggled in the discussion of the provenance of the sources. Many candidates stated that the sources were primary or added that they were useful as the person experienced the events. However, these comments in themselves do not gain marks.

Many candidates commented on the likely bias in Augustus' *Res Gestae* in Question 7, but few went on to discuss why it was displayed throughout the empire. Similarly, in Question 9 candidates often failed to use the clues that Pliny was a high-ranking Roman soldier or statesman (and hence would actually have performed sacrifices and said prayers in these capacities), or that he was well-educated (and hence belief in the effectiveness of prayers was evident not just in a superstitious minority, but was seen as important to maintain the welfare of the state). Centres might wish to advise candidates that information given around the context of the source is usually there for a reason, and should be given attention by the candidates.

In the 20-mark Classical Literature questions, relatively few candidates gained marks for understanding the significance of the topic in the Classical World. This is a demanding skill, but good candidates did discuss leadership and fate and free will by referring to, for example, the Athenian distrust of tyranny — as shown for example in the portrayal of the Persian kings — or the 'three fates' of Greek mythology, and showed how this related to the text chosen (eg Creon as a tyrant). Some candidates discussed the characters of Medea, Antigone and Clytemnestra in the contexts of leadership, and successfully showed how they represented a threat to the Athenian male view of the position of women. Some candidates also tried to discuss the plays *Medea* and *Lysistrata* in the context of fate and free will, but this was not generally well done. Candidates should be advised to either select an appropriate question for the text they have studied, or to select the correct text to discuss given the context.

Some candidates found Question 8(a) demanding: they discussed life in the provinces, but did not understand the specific role of the governor (eg collecting taxes, administering law). Some candidates gave very good answers to Question 8(b), but a number gave a narrative of the lives of one or two statesman such as Pompey, Julius Caesar or Augustus.

## **Component 2: Assignment**

As was noted in the report last year, the wording of the assignment title sometimes needs to be focused more sharply. In some cases, it was unclear what the candidate was trying to argue, or the topic was too wide and resulted in superficial coverage. Questions tended to be more focused than statements.

As also noted last year, some candidates made the basis of their investigations a comparison. Comparison is a distinct skill in the assignment, and should be addressed as such. Whilst the wording of the assignment title is a choice for candidates, they should be advised not to use a comparison as the basis for their assignment as there can be no double-crediting of marks.

A few candidates included fewer than three sources. Some assignments referred to sources stored on the resource sheet, which is acceptable. However, sometimes candidates discussed pictorial sources such as statues in their resource sheet, only for the resource sheet to say, for example, 'a Greek statue showing a warrior in armour', but not show the statue. This is not considered a source.

Some candidates only listed websites; this is not acceptable practice.

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

### **Component 1: Question paper**

Question 1 and Question 3 (the 'three source' questions) were generally well done, but a number of candidates tried to analyse their worth as sources; no marks are awarded for this in these questions. Other candidates also commented on the deficiencies of each source in turn; sometimes candidates then claimed points of omission which actually appeared in later sources. It is best practice to only begin to discuss points of omission after all sources have been discussed.

It was noted above that some candidates also did well when they chose two texts. However, some candidates tried to discuss up to four or even five texts. This usually resulted in the award of few marks for analysis and evaluation and knowledge, given the lack of depth this approach produced.

Modern comparisons were sometimes not well done and not appropriate to Higher level. Comparisons should be meaningful and tied specifically to the text used, referring to a character, scene or theme in the text.

Centres are reminded that in 12-mark extended responses, candidates would only gain 11 or 12 marks if they can show a difference of interpretation or a change over time. For example, in Question 8(b), a very good candidate might state that the role of individual soldiers and statesmen in the collapse of the Republic was outweighed by economic or social trends (or vice versa); or in Question 10(b) that the relationship of Romans and Christians was not always antagonistic — the Acts of the Apostles claims that the first Gentile converts were

Roman soldiers. A number of candidates are still making conclusions to these questions, for which no marks are awarded.

Candidates should be reminded to plan and manage their time well. Over-long essays or responses to 12-mark questions at the beginning of the paper sometimes resulted in very short final answers, or even in questions not being attempted.

## **Component 2: Assignment**

A wide range of topics were chosen, and the markers appreciated the enthusiasm of many candidates. The majority of centres allowed candidates a choice over a range of topics. In a few centres, the topic chosen was the same for all candidates, although the material was different. Centres are reminded that personalisation and choice is an important consideration.

Some candidates spent a considerable amount of time discussing the accuracy of their source. There are no specific marks attached to this skill at Higher level.

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	422
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Number of resulted entries in 2017	429
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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	27.3%	27.3%	117	63
B	27.0%	54.3%	116	54
C	25.2%	79.5%	108	45
D	6.3%	85.8%	27	40
No award	14.2%	-	61	-

## 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.