



Course Report 2015

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| 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 examinations. 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 and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question paper

Centres had a clear understanding of the demands of the new Higher, and had prepared candidates appropriately.

Performance was even throughout the examination paper, and questions were accessible.

Component 2: Assignment

Candidates and centres had a clear understanding of the requirements for the assessment.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question paper

Candidates performed very well overall.

Component 2: Assignment

The Assignment was well-handled and the vast majority of candidates had prepared conscientiously and had been appropriately supported by their centres.

The majority of candidates chose a topic from Religion and Belief or Power and Freedom, but some used a topic based on their study of literature; these candidates performed particularly strongly.

No candidates chose topics outside the Course content.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

In the literature questions there were a wide variety of texts used; some centres used the texts from the existing Higher, whilst others used new texts such as Euripides's *Bacchae* and Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*.

Candidate response was generally at a very impressive level; candidates who used more than one text in their answer scored well as they could more easily compare and contrast. Candidates effectively used a wide variety of comparisons between the themes of the texts such as film, recent history, science and literature.

Component 2: Assignment

Candidates met the requirements well. Most candidates scored full marks for knowledge, and provided good examples of modern comparison. Sources were used effectively. Centres should note that evaluation is of an issue not sources.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

Few candidates attempted the questions on propaganda — Question 8 (b) or how religion could be used to support the state — Question 10 (b).

Component 2: Assignment

Markers felt that some candidates chose topics more appropriate to National 5 (for example Life of a Roman Woman or Jobs of Slaves). As a result the quality of analysis and evaluation sometimes fell below what was required at Higher level.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

Candidate performance was very strong overall. However, markers reported finding difficulty in distinguishing candidate performance at the top end of attainment using the existing criteria. This was also indicated by the need to raise the grade boundaries. Consequently, in future examinations, questions are likely to be more tightly focused, and less open-ended. For example, questions on slavery or women may focus on a specific aspect of their lives, and philosophy will be more prominent in Religion and Belief.

Marking criteria will focus on the quality and nuance of analysis and evaluation in twelve mark and essay questions. However, centres should be assured that the paper will remain accessible and the approaches to marking fair.

Component 2: Assignment

Most candidates used the A4 support sheet effectively; some used it to store their sources, others as a general plan.

Centres are reminded that candidates should not copy extended pieces of text/narrative from their Resource Sheet to their finished Assignment. The purpose of the Classical Studies Resource Sheet is to help candidates use their evidence and references, collected during the research stage, to address their chosen question or issue.

Revised marking criteria will be available in September which centres should refer to in preparation for next year, it is important to note however that the format and nature of the candidate task has not changed.

Statistical information: update on Courses

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| Number of resulted entries in 2014 | 0 |
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| Number of resulted entries in 2015 | 97 |
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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 - 90 | | | | |
| A | 41.2% | 41.2% | 40 | 75 |
| B | 17.5% | 58.8% | 17 | 66 |
| C | 27.8% | 86.6% | 27 | 57 |
| D | 8.2% | 94.8% | 8 | 52 |
| No award | 5.2% | - | 5 | - |

Overall the course assessment proved to be less demanding than intended. Grade Boundaries were raised accordingly. (The grade boundaries at C and A were raised by 12 marks and the upper A was raised by 10 marks).

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.