Course Report 2016

Subject	Latin
Level	Higher

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: question paper: Literary Appreciation

Candidates are required to choose any two authors from five (Catullus, Ovid, Virgil, Pliny, Cicero) and answer questions on prescribed texts. Both the questions and the answers are in English. Each section is worth 30 marks and this component is worth 60 marks in total. The allotted time is two hours.

Each author's section of questions assesses the same skills: identifying and explaining main ideas and themes; identifying and explaining literary techniques; communicating appropriate critical responses; and identifying and explaining aspects of Roman culture.

Most candidates seemed well prepared for the assessment, with very few showing evidence of inadequate knowledge of the texts. Most candidates seemed confident in understanding and engaging with the questions in a thoughtful way. Most candidates understood and were familiar with the literary techniques under consideration. The component performed as expected.

Component 2: question paper: Translating

Candidates are required to translate into English a passage of Latin of approximately 120 words, and with the support of a specific word-list. This component is worth 40 marks and the allotted time is one hour.

For marking purposes, the passage is always divided into twenty blocks and each block is worth 2,1 or 0 marks. If candidates translate the block correctly or almost correctly, they are awarded two marks for the block. If they just get the 'essential idea', they are awarded one mark. If they do not get the essential idea, they receive no marks.

A block review is also used at the marking stage and '+1' is available, if it is felt that a candidate deserves more than 0, even if he/she has not translated the essential idea.

The component performed as expected.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper: Literary Appreciation

As in 2015, the majority of candidates and centres had elected to answer on Cicero and Virgil, reflecting familiarity with these authors in previous years and also to provide progression where candidates had previously taken National 5 courses. However, there were substantial and increased numbers taking Ovid and Pliny, and some candidates chose

Catullus for the first time. Most candidates demonstrated familiarity and confidence with the texts studied.

Section 2 (Ovid)

This section attracted a high overall average score, reflecting the conceptual accessibility of the stories and their intrinsic interest.

Question 7(a), 8(a), 8(c), 9, 10(a), 10(b), 11: The majority of candidates scored highly in these questions and showed evidence of engagement in the stories and the human experiences reflected. Question 11 gave opportunities for a wide range of literary analysis and considerable creative freedom for candidates.

Section 3 (Virgil)

This section had fewer questions that consistently attracted high scores, but candidates consistently did well in Questions 12, 13 and 14(a). In particular, they engaged well with the cultural question 12 on the role of the gods and were able to deduce relevant characteristics from the text. Candidates also engaged well with the literary technique question 13. Question 14(a) may have been too straightforward and allowed too wide an interpretation.

Section 4 (Pliny)

Candidates consistently scored highly in the factual question 1 which gave a good introduction. 19(b) was also addressed well, requiring the candidates to locate and evaluate evidence. Candidates also scored well in the evaluation question 21 and generally well in question 22, which suggested that they were well prepared for literary technique questions. Candidates also performed well in 23 and 24, both of which required engagement with the story and the human experiences and invited a creative and reflective response.

Section 5 (Cicero)

Candidates performed particularly well in Questions 27 (cultural), 28 (rhetorical techniques) and 30 (interpretation of evidence).

Component 2: question paper: Translating

Candidates consistently performed well in this component.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper: Literary Appreciation

Section 1: (Catullus)

Question 2(b): evidence that Catullus does not like Sestius' speech. Many candidates only identified one item of evidence.

Question 4: Language. This question challenged candidates as it required detailed analysis of the linguistic techniques, which are not as obvious as in Ovid or Virgil. This will be reappraised in future assessments.

Section 3: (Virgil)

Question 15: Candidates had difficulty in identifying the separate points Aeneas makes in his reply to Dido.

Question 18: In many cases candidates engaged creatively and well with this question, identifying the dramatic qualities of the text and its suitability for the cinema. However, some misunderstood the question. It is seen as desirable to include creative questions that allow candidates to relate their studies to their own cultural experiences, but there is also a need to reflect the maturity and experience (or lack of it) of the candidates. Future questions will be subject to reappraisal.

All other questions attracted a satisfactory average score.

Component 2: question paper: Translating

Overall the Translating component did not contain anomalies in respect of level of demand.

Two blocks attracted a significantly lower average score:

Block 3 (*itaque Nero eam honore et potestate privavit*) was translated by some candidates as if Nero was the subject of a passive rather than active verb, and was himself deprived of honours and power. Candidates who misinterpreted the block in this way seemed to be confused as to the meaning of the pronoun *eam*.

Block 11 (*ita Nero reconciliatione simulato eam Baias evocavit*): a significant number of candidates incorrectly translated the ablative absolute and some misinterpreted *eam*.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper: Literary Appreciation

There were some instances of candidates answering on parts of the texts that were outside the section referred to in the question wording: this is a common mistake which can penalise good candidates unnecessarily. Practice assessments should include emphasis on how to read and interpret the question accurately.

In addition, candidates should be encouraged to use the mark allocation as a guide for the number of points of evidence to be included.

Literary technique questions may draw on language, content and structure.

In tackling the eight-mark extended response question, candidates should be encouraged to engage creatively and imaginatively with the text, write concisely, and focus on evidence in support of statements. There is no need to put excessive emphasis on the structure, with each point concluded with a reference to the question. These questions are designed to allow candidates to synthesise content, literary techniques, language, characterisation, personal impressions and cultural background to support judgments and opinions; there is generally no hard and fast 'right answer', but an opportunity for the candidate to show deductive reasoning and explain a personal response using valid argument and evidence.

Component 2: question paper: Translating

Most candidates produced a good translation of the passage. As indicated above, pronouns have a tendency to cause trouble, because the form in which they are given in the word list may not directly resemble the form encountered in the passage. It is worth encouraging candidates to develop a basic working knowledge of vocabulary rather than expecting to rely too heavily on the word list.

Knowledge of verb, noun and pronoun forms as given in the Prescribed Accidence and Syntax continues to be essential.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	168

Number of resulted entries in 2016	310

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	67.4%	67.4%	209	71
B	18.1%	85.5%	56	61
C	9.4%	94.8%	29	51
D	1.3%	96.1%	4	46
No award	3.9%	-	12	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.