



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Latin
Level(s)	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers 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 question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

There was a 92.3 % increase in presentations to forty eight in 2013. There was also a rise in the number of presenting centres from fourteen to eighteen. Three centres returned to present at this level after a gap of several years, and there were three new centres.

In the Interpretation and Dissertation components, there were many good and very good performances. The Translation was the least strong of the three components, but nonetheless it produced a considerable number of good and some very good performances.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Interpretation

Cicero and letter-writing

One centre presented two candidates for this option. The prescription had been very thoroughly prepared and both candidates answered with flair and confidence. Questions 1a)i), 2a)i) and 3a)ii) were answered especially well. One candidate chose essay 4a) and the other 4b), in each case demonstrating genuine involvement and keen insight. One candidate scored over 70%, the other over 90%.

Ovid and Latin love-poetry

The overall quality of answers was high. Twenty eight candidates scored more than 70%, 11 of whom scored between 80 and 89%, and 7 more than 90%. 91.3% passed overall.

Candidates appeared to have enjoyed the paper and engaged with the questions in a very positive manner. Most candidates answered questions on style and technique as effectively as they did those on content.

Question 1b)ii) on stylistic features generated very good responses from the majority of candidates. In question 2b)i), most candidates confidently identified differences in tone and content and successfully found aspects of style on which to comment. Question 3, on the less attractive aspects of Ovid and Horace's personalities produced spirited responses. Not only did candidates appear to relish this opportunity to analyse the poets' defects, but they were also adept at drawing on their own insights to produce perceptive answers. Several candidates who had struggled elsewhere were able to shine here.

Essays 4a) and 4b) proved equally popular and stimulated candidates to supply an impressive range of relevant evidence and demonstrate their enthusiasm for and involvement with the prescribed poems. Four candidates scored full marks for their essay.

Translation

Candidates followed the Livy storyline very well and made full and appropriate use of the glossed vocabulary. Whereas Livy translations can be problematic because of lengthy

sentences, this piece encouraged more confident translation because of the relative brevity of its sense units, marked by frequent punctuation divisions. 68.7% of candidates passed the Livy. 12 candidates scored over 70%, seven of whom scored between 80 and 89% and one over 90%.

Candidates found the Virgil story straightforward to understand, and used the English introduction and glossed vocabulary effectively. 81.2% passed this translation, 12 candidates scoring over 70%, five of whom scored between 80 and 89% and one over 90%.

In both translations, most candidates demonstrated effective time management techniques.

Dissertation

93.7 % of candidates passed the Dissertation. Thirty candidates scored 70% or more, fourteen of whom scored between 80 and 89%, and three more than 90%. From the weakest to the strongest, it was clear that each candidate had engaged actively and enthusiastically with their chosen topic. The best dissertations drew on careful analysis and a sustained line of argument, taking account of wider implications and engaging critically with current scholarship and academic debate.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Interpretation

Cicero and letter-writing

Candidates did not appear to find any aspects of the question paper too demanding, losing only occasional marks for small omissions.

Ovid and Latin love-poetry

No particular area of difficulty stood out and any problems were particular to individual students rather than to the design of the question paper. Despite clear instructions, two candidates looked up the wrong poems in question 3ii). Likewise, in some other questions, a few candidates did not pay sufficient attention to the lines cited.

Translation

Command of grammar and syntax in the Livy was stronger than in some recent years, problems only arising for some candidates with, for example, *concursum est* in line 3, *militem avidum certaminis* in line 7, *legionibus circumdatis* in line 9 and *quo confugerant hostes* in line 10. For some candidates, difficulties occurred with correct location of vocabulary, for example *educit* in line 1, *proxima* in line 2, *exercitus* in lines 3 and 11, *reliquum* in line 4, *apparebat* in line 6, *pulsi* in line 7 and *capta* in line 9.

In the Virgil translation, looking up vocabulary posed very few problems, although some candidates had difficulty with, for example, *ostro* in line 2, *populea* in line 3, *umeros* in line 4 and *cupido* in line 7. Errors made by candidates were not related to plot components but to grammatical issues such as not recognising certain noun cases, especially accusatives and ablatives, and not linking adjectives to appropriate nouns.

Dissertation

Some candidates' dissertations were compromised because they seemed unaware of the technical requirements. A lack of sources, both primary and secondary, and of adequate referencing, did most to undermine their efforts. Even some otherwise strong discussions suffered from inadequate referencing and inaccurate bibliographies. Some candidates failed to include the minimum required five quotations in Latin. Whereas almost all conclusions were effective, some introductions were surprisingly weak: without any overview or clear statement of aims, it was often hard to tell where the introduction stopped and the main discussion began.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Interpretation

Candidates should be prepared to answer textual questions on content, significance and author's intention in considerable detail. It is essential that work covered early in the Course is thoroughly revisited for the final exam. Although the prescription in Latin may dominate the learning and teaching schedule, it is most unwise to underestimate the time and effort that should be put into studying the extensive amount of the prescription presented in English translation. It is also highly inadvisable to ask candidates to study these English sections without support from the teacher, since they may well misinterpret content, fail to understand or take account of context, and misunderstand mood and tone.

Questions on structural analysis require guidance and considerable practice, since this is frequently an area of weakness. It cannot be overemphasised to candidates that they must focus answers to short questions on the lines referenced. To answer outwith these lines loses potential marks and wastes time. Candidates must ensure that they refer to the text, if the question states that this is required, to score the maximum marks available.

Translation

Translation of both authors demands careful application of dictionary skills, which should be practised regularly in timed conditions. Confident and accurate knowledge of grammar and syntax is paramount.

Livy presents the challenge of long and complex sentences; Virgil of terseness, poetic nuance and vocabulary, and abstraction. Translation of both authors would be most effectively supported by a structured programme of teacher-led practice, when stylistic features can be actively analysed and discussed.

Dissertation

Choice of topic is all-important. It is not advisable to choose a topic that is too closely related to the Higher or Advanced Higher Interpretation prescriptions since it might appear that the Dissertation lacks fresh research. It is inadvisable to choose a topic that seems more appropriate for Standard Grade in its simplicity. In a centre with several candidates, it is inadvisable for them to choose identical or similar topics: each topic chosen should clearly demonstrate individual research.

The wording of the title must be carefully crafted and must state clearly and precisely what the content and focus of the Dissertation will be. Since there is no requirement to submit titles in advance for approval, there is no excuse for a Dissertation and its title not to be a perfect match. If the title states that two historical figures are to be compared, it is completely inadequate to make comparisons only in the concluding paragraph.

In many topics, archaeological evidence can play a valuable part in strengthening argument and should be actively researched for inclusion where relevant. Use of reliable internet resources should be made to locate the most recent academic findings. Dissertations must avoid over-reliance on narrative: analysis and argument are key requirements. A full range of primary sources appropriate to the chosen topic should be used, in the form both of quotations and of relevant referencing, to support content and argument. Secondary sources should not appear only in the bibliography, but should be actively discussed in the body of the text. Both primary and secondary sources must be attributed in the bibliography and footnotes, and set out using the format prescribed in the Dissertation guidelines.

The two weakest areas to be improved are those of critical comment on sources (worth 5% of the total) and quotation of Roman authors in Latin as well as in English translation (worth 5% of the total). It is essential that candidates are not disadvantaged because they have not been alerted to the requirement for each of these two components. Candidates who do not have access to the Latin of source authors in book form should be advised that all but the most obscure texts are easily found on various user-friendly websites. Centres and candidates are strongly advised to consult the published Dissertation marking scheme.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	26
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	48
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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 300				
A	54.2%	54.2%	26	210
B	20.8%	75.0%	10	180
C	12.5%	87.5%	6	150
D	8.3%	95.8%	4	135
No award	4.2%	100.0%	2	-

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.