



# **Course report 2025**

## **National 5 Classical Studies**

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative, and to promote better understanding. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2025 appeals process.

# Grade boundary and statistical information

## Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 333

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 310

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	146	47.1	47.1	70
B	66	21.3	68.4	60
C	35	11.3	79.7	50
D	34	11.0	90.6	40
No award	29	9.4	100%	Not applicable

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- 'most' means greater than or equal to 70%
- 'many' means 50% to 69%
- 'some' means 25% to 49%
- 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

# Section 1: comments on the assessment

## Question paper

Overall, most candidates performed well across all sections of the question paper, however, many candidates struggled to explain the content of the source for question 5. Candidates often responded to this question by paraphrasing the source and did not offer explanations of the source content. Candidates did not struggle with this type of question in the Roman sections.

In the Classical literature section, candidates referred to a variety of texts: Homer's *Odyssey*, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone*, and Euripides' *Medea*. Homer's *Odyssey* was the most popular text.

Most candidates chose the Pompeii option for section 3, with a few candidates choosing the Roman Britain option.

Candidates had enough time to complete the question paper and most candidates managed their time accordingly.

Candidate entries were lower than in 2024 but still significantly higher than in 2023.

## Assignment

This is the second year that candidates have completed the assignment since its re-introduction as part of the course assessment.

Candidates presented a large range of topics, indicating that most candidates were able to research and write about a topic of personal interest to them.

Candidates had enough time to complete the assignment and most candidates managed their time accordingly.

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

### **Areas that candidates performed well in**

#### **Question paper**

##### **Life in Classical Greece**

Candidates answered most of the questions in the Life in Classical Greece section well.

Many candidates answered question 1 well, which asked them to describe a religious festival in classical Athens. Most candidates chose to describe the Panathenaia or the City Dionysia, with a similar number of candidates selecting each festival. Candidates were good at describing these festivals rather than merely listing them.

Many candidates answered question 2 very well. This question asked candidates to explain the reasons why parties (*symposia*) were enjoyable events. Many candidates were able to write about the *symposium* at length. Many candidates made direct links back to the question, which helped them structure their responses.

Many candidates answered question 4 very well. This question asked candidates to compare a wedding in classical Greece with a wedding in the modern world. Most candidates provided specific examples of weddings in the modern world and compared them effectively to weddings in classical Greece. Most candidates provided both similarities and differences.

##### **Classical literature**

Most candidates answered questions 7(b) and 7(c) well. Many candidates made direct links back to question 7(a) when writing about leadership in the classical world, which helped them to fulfil the demands of the question.

Many candidates answered question 8(a) well, with many candidates addressing the demands of the question: a conflict which ends badly for one or more of the characters. *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles was a popular text for answering this question and candidates demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the plot and characters involved.

## **Life in the Roman World**

### **Pompeii**

Many candidates answered question 10 very well, with most candidates providing detailed examples for how we know that religion was important to the people of Pompeii, for example temples, household shrines (*lararia*), and mystery religions (Isis).

Many candidates seemed well prepared in their knowledge of the amphitheatre for question 11. Most candidates wrote about a range of aspects relating to the amphitheatre and the extent to which people found it an enjoyable experience. Some candidates provided alternative points of view, for example reasons why a visit to the amphitheatre was not enjoyable. While this is not necessary for responses at National 5 level, it is good practice for candidates who are progressing to Higher level.

Many candidates answered question 12 well, with most candidates demonstrating a detailed knowledge of the processes within the *fullery* (laundry) in Pompeii while making meaningful modern comparisons to these processes.

Many candidates answered question 13 well. Most candidates engaged with both sources, with many candidates addressing various aspects of the picture and how it shows the dangers caused by the eruption.

Many candidates answered question 14 well and it was clear that most candidates were confident in their knowledge of Pliny the Younger as an author. Candidates made meaningful comments about the date of the source, with many candidates avoiding generic comments that could apply to any source.

## **Roman Britain**

Many candidates answered question 17 well and it was evident that many candidates were confident in their knowledge of the religions of Roman Britain and how the people of Roman Britain might have experienced them. Candidates wrote about Mithraism, Druidism, the Imperial Cult, and aspects of religious fusion (*syncretism*) in Roman Britain.

Many candidates answered question 18 well. Many candidates were able to make detailed comments about a visit to the amphitheatre in Roman Britain alongside how this compares with a visit to a sporting event in the modern world. Most candidates wrote about both similarities and differences.

Many candidates answered question 19 well, and it was evident that most candidates were able to access the picture source (Source A) fully. Most candidates wrote fully about different aspects of the picture, for example the process of building roads and the utilisation of native Britons by the Romans for establishing infrastructure. Many candidates explained aspects of the written source well, with many candidates avoiding paraphrasing.

Many candidates answered question 20 well. Many candidates made meaningful comments about the date of the source with some candidates writing in detail about the usefulness of Tacitus as an author.

## **Assignment**

Candidates who framed their question or issue as a 'To what extent...' question performed well in the assignment. Assignments that had a single focus rather than multiple focuses tended to do better as there was greater focus throughout the response.

Candidates who included an aspect for evaluation within their question did well.

Most candidates explained or analysed the knowledge they presented in their assignment, with very few candidates providing irrelevant information or merely listing facts.

Candidates who used primary sources, as opposed to secondary sources, when evaluating the usefulness of the source tended to make more meaningful comments when evaluating the provenance and content of the source. Candidates who used pictorial or photographic primary sources made particularly meaningful comments when evaluating their usefulness for understanding the topic or issue of their assignment. These responses addressed specific aspects shown in the picture or photograph and avoided paraphrasing or generic comments, which are more common when evaluating written sources.

Most candidates presented a conclusion that reflected their line of argument and addressed the aspects in their title or question.



## **Areas that candidates found demanding**

### **Question paper**

#### **Life in Classical Greece**

For question 3, some candidates confused the types of work in classical Greece with the types of work carried out by people in Pompeii. Some candidates did not mention specific jobs as detailed in the [course specification](#) but instead made vague and generalised comments about the work.

For question 5, many candidates merely paraphrased the source rather than explaining its content.

For question 6, some candidates made generic statements that could apply to any classical source evaluation question. These types of comments are not specific to the question and cannot gain marks. Some candidates struggled to make meaningful comments about the provenance of the source, often contradicting themselves throughout their response.

#### **Classical literature**

A few candidates copied their answer from question 7(a) for question 8(a). Candidates gained marks for comments that were relevant and addressed the demands of the question. However, it is not good practice for candidates to simply copy another answer word for word as this significantly increases the risk of not addressing the specifics of the question.

For question 7(a), some candidates did not address the idea of a leader dealing with a problem and instead wrote more generally about leaders in the text(s) they had studied.

## **Life in the Roman World**

### **Pompeii**

For question 9, some candidates listed facts about the theatre rather than describing what would have been seen on the stage. Some candidates confused the amphitheatre with the theatre. A few candidates wrote about the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens rather than the Large Theatre in Pompeii.

### **Roman Britain**

For question 15, as with question 9 in the Pompeii option, some candidates listed facts about the theatre rather than describing what would have been seen on the stage. Some candidates confused the amphitheatre with the theatre. A few candidates wrote about the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens rather than a theatre in Roman Britain.

For question 16, some candidates focused on what it was like to live (dwell) at Vindolanda rather than making a living (working) at Vindolanda. This revealed that most candidates had a secure knowledge of life in Vindolanda but some candidates struggled to make meaningful comments about working or earning a living there.

## **Assignment**

Candidates who included a modern comparison in their title or question were sometimes limited in the number of marks they could achieve for both knowledge for explaining or analysing and modern comparisons.

Some candidates who chose a literature focused title or question, for example on the leadership of Odysseus, drifted into plot telling without providing much or any explanation or analysis. Assignments that focused on the Roman Army also drifted into a narrative that lacked explanation and analysis.

Most candidates who used secondary sources struggled to make meaningful comments when evaluating the usefulness of the secondary source. Many candidates who used secondary sources made generic comments about the author of the source without linking back to their question or title.

Candidates must ensure that all sources in the assignment are accessible to markers. This does not include hyperlinks to websites. Candidates should write the sources, primary and secondary, on the resource sheet or in the body of the assignment or both.

Some candidates only provided differences or similarities as part of their modern comparisons in the assignment. A few candidates did not provide any modern comparisons — mainly in literature focused assignments.

Most candidates presented a conclusion in their assignment but a few candidates did not provide reasons for their conclusion.

Candidates included more examples of potential challenges and counter-arguments than supporting information in the assignments. Until 2024–25, supporting information and potential challenges and counter-arguments were restricted to the conclusion of the assignment. From 2025–26, supporting information and potential challenges and counter-arguments can be used at any point throughout the body of the assignment and are not restricted to the conclusion.

## **Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment**

### **Question paper**

You should remind candidates that listing facts is not the same as describing.

Candidates are reminded that merely paraphrasing the source for the ‘explain what the source tells us’ question is not enough to gain marks. While it is not compulsory, many candidates took the approach of quoting from the source and then explaining what the quotation tells us about the topic or issue in the question.

You should remind candidates that generic and vague comments that do not relate to the question, particularly in the ‘evaluate the usefulness’ questions, do not gain any marks. Comments should be relevant and specific to the demands of the question. For example, ‘Source A is useful because it’s from the time of study’ would not be an appropriate response for question 6. A better response would be ‘Source A

is useful as it was written in the 5th century BC, at the time when the democracy in Athens was functioning’.

Candidates are encouraged to prepare for questions that ask about specific topics or issues as detailed in the ‘Course content’ section in the [course specification](#).

For the Classical literature section, candidates are reminded to read the entire question so that they are aware of its focus. It is not good practice to memorise answers for the literature themes and try to make these fit the questions. It is better to read the entire question and then select the most relevant parts of the text(s) that best address the demands of the question.

## Assignment

We updated the coursework assessment task for National 5 Classical Studies for session 2025–26. The updated document is published on the [National 5 Classical Studies](#) subject page on our website under the ‘coursework’ tab. You and your candidates should ensure you are aware of the changes. An audio presentation that details the changes to the assignment is published on our [Understanding Standards](#) website.

From session 2025–26, candidates can gain marks for writing an introduction.

Candidates can gain 1 mark if they:

- give a context for their chosen topic or issue
- **or**
- state the importance of the topic or issue in the classical world
- **or**
- show how they intend to structure their assignment (signposting)

Candidates can gain 2 marks for an introduction if they:

- give a context for their chosen topic or issue
- **or**
- state the importance of the topic or issue in the classical world
- **and**

- show how they intend to structure their assignment (signposting)

Candidates are encouraged to form a title or question that has a focus rather than a general topic area. For example, the title 'To what extent was the life of an Athenian woman boring?' allows candidates to evaluate the extent to which life for an Athenian woman was or was not boring. A title such as 'The life of women in classical Athens' lacks a focus and increases the risk of the candidate listing facts without explaining and/or analysing.

Candidates should not include modern comparisons in their title or question. There are discrete marks for comparisons separate from knowledge for explaining and analysing. By including a modern comparison in the title or question, candidates often integrate the comparisons into their analysis or explanation and so cannot be dual credited within the discrete comparison marks.

Candidates used some of the following phrases when they demonstrated explanation and/or analysis clearly in their assignments. These phrases supported candidates to use the knowledge they presented to explain and/or analyse in relation to the question:

- 'which shows...'
- 'which proves...'
- 'which contradicts...'
- 'this means...'
- 'this tells us...'
- 'this is important because...'
- 'however...'

Candidates are reminded that generic responses about the usefulness of sources may not gain marks. The skills for evaluating the usefulness of the source in the assignment are the same as they are in the question paper. Candidate responses must be relevant to the question and link directly to the title or question.

Candidates tend to evaluate primary sources more effectively and meaningfully than secondary sources. Candidates also tend to do well when evaluating pictorial or

photographic primary sources. It is best practice to use primary evidence from the classical world rather than artistic interpretations of classical ideas and institutions.

Candidates are reminded that to gain all three comparison marks, they must state at least one similarity and at least one difference plus an additional similarity or difference.

It is good practice for candidates to include details of the modern comparisons and how these link to the classical issue they are discussing. Merely stating that 'this is similar or different to today' is not enough to gain marks.

From session 2025–26 onwards, supporting information and potential challenges and counter-arguments can appear at any point in the assignment and are no longer restricted to the conclusion. Candidates are reminded that to gain all three supporting and challenging marks, they must include at least one piece of supporting information and at least one potential challenge or counter-argument plus an additional supporter or challenge or counter-argument.

Candidates used some of the following phrases to signpost their supporting information and potential challenges and counter-arguments:

- 'for example...'
- 'as evidenced by...'
- 'a fact which supports this is...'
- 'a fact which challenges this is...'
- 'however...'
- 'on the other hand...'

From session 2025–26 onwards, the conclusion for the assignment will be worth 2 marks. Candidates can gain 1 mark for presenting a conclusion that clearly addresses the topic or issue and agrees with their line of argument. Candidates can gain a second mark when providing a key reason for their conclusion. This reason does not have to be new information not contained in the body of their assignment.

Candidates are reminded that there is no requirement for a bibliography.

Candidates are reminded that the resource sheet should be a single side of A4 paper. Candidates should include written, pictorial and photographic sources on the single side of the A4 resource sheet. Written sources are included in the 200 words available for the resource sheet. Candidates are reminded that hyperlinks are not appropriate in place of written or visual sources. Candidates are also reminded that significant copying from the resource sheet is not appropriate. Candidates who used their resource sheets effectively had organised their information in the form of notes and paragraph structures.

# Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

Our main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and to maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, we aim to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, we hold a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of our Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. We can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.



Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).