



## Course Report 2018

Subject	Classical Studies
Level	Higher

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

# **Section 1: comments on the assessment**

## **Summary of the course assessment**

### **Component 1: question paper**

The question paper performed as expected, with candidates performing well. Statistical analysis indicated that the level of demand was balanced in the different sections and contexts. Feedback from centres indicated that candidates found the paper accessible and fair.

In part A: Power and Freedom in section 1: Life in classical Greece, all areas were sampled with the exception of slavery and political propaganda.

In part A: Power and Freedom in section 3: Life in the Roman world, sampling covered Roman citizenship, government structures, slavery and political propaganda.

In part B: Religion and Belief in section 1: Life in classical Greece, sampling was drawn from gender roles, and state and domestic religion.

In part B: Religion and Belief in section 3: Life in the Roman world, sampling included death and the afterlife, state religion, mystery religions and religious tolerance.

In Classical literature, candidates were offered a choice of essays on heroism and gender roles.

### **Component 2: assignment**

Candidates completed an assignment on a topic of their choice. Most candidates drew on course content for their assignment title, but a few candidates successfully looked at topics in the wider classical world.

Candidate performance overall in both areas was strong, and as a result there was a rise in the number of candidates who accessed upper A, and A grades.

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

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

#### **Component 1: question paper**

In section 1, candidates scored well in question 2(a); most candidates chose to look at the Delian League but the strongest answers also referred to Athens' relationship with Persia and Sparta. In section 3, candidates also performed well when discussing Augustus' use of propaganda and mystery religions in questions 8(b) and 10(b) respectively. More candidates understood the importance of organising answers using paragraphing to cover at least three aspects of each sampled area, and that the highest marks in 12 mark responses are awarded to candidates who analysed, and showed change, range of experience and different interpretations.

Both questions in section 2: Classical literature were generally well attempted, and candidates were using appropriate texts and referring to appropriate characters and actions. The depth and range of knowledge was impressive. There were fewer instances of candidates running out of time by completing overly long essays.

#### **Component 2: assignment**

Markers noted that more centres were allowing candidates to access a wider range of topics. Many candidates understood that this was an opportunity to display their best work, and took full advantage of this. More candidates were accessing marks in the range of 25–30, showing that centres understood how to show their candidates to access the full range of marks, especially in the analysis and evaluation of the topic where performance was particularly encouraging. The depth of the argument was very impressive from some candidates, and more candidates than in previous years gave excellent conclusions and accessed the third mark, which is awarded for the range of judgements, balancing and weighing, and selection of the most important aspects of the topic.

### **Areas which candidates found demanding**

#### **Component 1: question paper**

In questions 1 and 3 (source evaluation) candidates are often concentrating on the fact that the sources are primary, and trying to gain marks through comments such as 'the person would have witnessed the event' or 'the person was there'. While that might be the starting point for an answer, these comments need to be developed. In question 3, some candidates thought the source was discussing a festival such as the Skira or Panathenaic festival, and others answered as if the question was asking about mystery cults. These candidates did not think it was about the role of women, which was signalled in the source and in the question.

A number of candidates didn't perform well in question 4(a), which discussed the nature of the gods. These candidates often listed gods and the areas they covered (for example 'Ares was the god of war'). A good approach would be to discuss the Homeric description of the gods and their anthropomorphic nature using appropriate examples, and then to look at how philosophers such as Plato argued that this was inaccurate.

Some candidates also found question 8(a) challenging. The question expected knowledge of the Roman constitution, looking at the role of the assemblies and senate, offices such as the tribune and dictator, and the changes in the imperial period. A number of candidates referred to Athenian institutions such as the boule and ostracism.

A number of candidates in the 'three source' questions, especially in question 7, were merely quoting or paraphrasing the content of the sources. This is awarded no marks. A number of candidates are commenting on the value of the written sources, discussing whether they are valuable or not. No marks are awarded for this in these sources.

Some candidates were still running out of time. As a result, they failed to complete the final 12 mark question (either question 8 or 10). A fault in the approach to answering 12 mark questions is the writing of conclusions. This rarely results in the awarding of marks, as they are invariably summaries of what has already been discussed and presented. The 12 mark question is an extended response, not an essay.

In essays on classical literature, a good number of candidates did not attempt to show how the social issue related to the wider classical world.

A small number of candidates scored very low marks. A small number of candidates also attempted to answer all questions.

## **Component 2: assignment**

Candidates who tried to handle too many variables in their assignments did not score well. Candidates who tried to compare the entire experience of Athenian women with Roman women, or slaves in Athens with slaves in Rome, simply ended up showing that they had different experiences as the contexts were too similar. It might have been more appropriate to compare the experience within each context (for example Athenian women with Spartan women, Roman women of the first century BC with women of the first century AD). This would allow candidates to look at the process of change, or different interpretations within each context.

There are a number of candidates who seem to believe that all Athenian women had the same experience irrespective of class.

A few candidates spent considerable time discussing the value of their sources. No matter how many times this is done, it results in the awarding of 1 mark under analysis and evaluating. This skill is assessed at Advanced Higher, but not at Higher.

## Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

### Component 1: question paper

As above, in source evaluation questions (questions 1 and 3), candidates will not gain marks by merely stating that the sources are primary. Candidates should be encouraged to discuss the provenance of the source to gain more marks, unless there is a clear issue regarding the date of the source (for example the source dates from considerably later). For example in question 1, candidates would gain marks for exploring the fact that the source is written by a man who is issuing instructions to a woman, even though the organisation of the household is her responsibility. This shows that this is in line with attitudes in Athenian society in the fifth century BC, or that it shows what happens in upper-class families by the very nature of the source coming from a literate man. In question 3, candidates should note the implication that the source is an extract from a play, and look at the possibilities of exaggeration, and support this by looking at the content and context.

In the source questions, candidates should be encouraged to look at the content and explain or amplify, not just repeat or paraphrase. For example in source A of question 7, the candidate would gain marks for discussing what type of slaves would be most likely to be issued with this collar. In source B of question 9, candidates would gain marks for discussing the implications of the description of the Elysian fields, or, that the Roman underworld contained an element of judgement, or for discussing other parts of the underworld.

For 2019 and beyond, the content of the Classical Society element has been clarified for the examination. A consequence of this is that candidates may be asked more specific questions. For example in section 2: Life in the Roman world, part A: Power and Freedom, under 'The Roman Republic up to 44 BC', elected officials are now listed and it would be legitimate to ask candidates to discuss the role of a dictator, or for a generic question to be asked on the role of elected officials. In section 1: Life in classical Greece, part B: Religion and Belief, under 'Cults and mystery religions', candidates might be asked about the cult of Asclepius. Centres should refer to the new *Higher Classical Studies Course Specification* on the [Higher Classical Studies subject page](#).

Centres should also be aware of the division of the current question paper into two question papers, the introduction of 10 mark comparison questions, the changes to the marking of the essay and of the 12 mark questions. It would be helpful to refer to the specimen question paper and marking instructions, which will be published on the Higher Classical Studies subject page. In the classical literature question paper, three areas are now sampled and the 10 mark comparison response is now compulsory. Centres may wish to consider whether their choice of text will prepare candidates for this.

It was noticeable that many more candidates attempted the essay on women than on heroism. Centres may have advised candidates that an essay on women was likely to be set due to the pattern of sampling. In order to ensure fairness, the setting of the question paper from 2019 onwards may involve the repetition of a sampling area in classical literature from the previous year.

## **Component 2: assignment**

Good advice for centres to give candidates:

- ◆ Consider if the topic provides opportunities for presenting arguments rather than simply describing.
- ◆ Consider if the topic is too wide. Candidates who seek to go into depth tend to score more highly than those who give general descriptions of, for example the 'life' of Greek and/or Roman slaves.
- ◆ Consider if the topic, or approach to the topic, is appropriate for Higher rather than National 5.
- ◆ Remember that the assignment is the result of personal choice and sufficient time should be provided for research. Markers expect knowledge to be more accurate and detailed than in an unseen essay in examination conditions.

Centres should look closely at the marking instructions for knowledge. Candidates are not simply awarded 1 mark for each piece of knowledge. If this were the case, nearly all candidates would gain 8 marks. Candidates gain marks for the quantity, nuance and exemplification of the knowledge and understanding provided.

## Grade boundary and statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	429
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	400
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### Statistical information: performance of candidates

#### Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	37.3%	37.3%	149	64
B	22.5%	59.8%	90	55
C	21.3%	81.0%	85	46
D	8.8%	89.8%	35	41
No award	10.3%	-	41	-

## **General commentary on grade boundaries**

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which 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.

Therefore SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.