Advanced Higher Latin common questions

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Question paper: Literary appreciation

Are there some skills which are more important than others in literary appreciation?

No, all skills are equally important. When creating question papers, SQA ensures there is a spread of questions across all the skills.

Are there certain types of question that candidates should expect in their chosen genre?

Candidates should expect to answer at least one question on literary techniques as well as questions on content, including mythological and historical references, themes, style, technique and tone.

There will not necessarily be a question that specifically tests knowledge of the Roman world. At Advanced Higher level, the response to almost every question type requires an understanding of the Roman world, whether explicitly stated, or by implication. This allows a more integrated way of assessing this knowledge. There may be questions with a focus on the Roman world (particularly in the letters option) but only where the text lends itself to this approach.

Candidates should become familiar with the command words 'identify', 'explain', 'analyse', 'evaluate' and 'discuss'. These words, together with the number of available marks, provide the best guide to the length and depth of response expected. Questions only use a command word when it is appropriate for the style of question.

The extended-response, or essay question, is designed to be open and accessible to allow candidates to demonstrate the breadth of their knowledge and understanding. Up to 3 marks are available for organisation and structure, with the highest marks available to those who build some analysis and evaluation into their responses.

How can we be confident that the questions on each genre are equally challenging?

SQA's quality assurance checks, carried out by experienced Latin subject specialists, ensure this. For example, the subject specialists check that for each genre there is at least one question on authors' literary techniques, and that some questions allow candidates to make developed points. They check there is an appropriate mix of question types covering understanding, analysis and evaluation skills. SQA carries out these checks to ensure all candidates have an opportunity to access questions appropriate to their level of understanding of the texts.

How are marks awarded for making developed points?

For each genre, the style of question and the number of marks available give an indication of the number of points candidates should include in their response. Marks are available either

for a new valid point, or for a valid point which has been developed further (or for a mixture of both).

We generally no longer ask candidates to 'give three reasons for your answer …' as this wording suggests we are looking for them to say three different things. If we say 'explain your answer…' candidates could make one point and develop it further, and perhaps make another point.

In 'evaluation' and 'discuss' questions, how do I know a response to a question is correct?

Markers mark positively. This means they mark according to the validity of a candidate's response, rather than expecting it to match a pre-determined answer. Valid and relevant comments gain marks.

Is it acceptable to argue for both sides of an evaluation question?

Yes. Candidates may choose to argue for or against an assertion, or to evaluate both sides of the issue. For example, 'Does the author succeed…' might receive the response 'No' or 'Yes' with relevant supporting comments, or it may attract an assessment of both points of view.

Can candidates use bullet points in extended-response questions or are candidates expected to write in continuous prose?

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to write in continuous prose in their answers to the 20-mark extended-response question. Candidates cannot easily show the depth of understanding expected here in a bullet list. The quality of a candidate's argument depends not just on the points they make, but on how they link them together. They can do this most easily and effectively in continuous prose. However, in cases where a candidate is about to run out of time, bullet points are acceptable. Bullet points are also acceptable in the shorter question types, especially those that ask candidates to 'identify'.

Should candidates quote Latin alongside a translation or paraphrase in English? Or should they give a translation or paraphrase in English?

Candidates must quote Latin when answering questions on literary technique. They must be able to show they understand the Latin, either by translating or framing their response in a way that their understanding is clear. Translation is usually the easier option.

This also applies to the 20-mark extended-response question if candidates are commenting on style or technique. Otherwise, Latin quotation is not an absolute requirement, but markers expect that most candidates are able to include some Latin (with an appropriate translation or evidence of understanding).

In other question types, 'reference to the text' does not require quotation of Latin, but candidates must be able to demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of the text.

Question paper: Translating

Will candidates be penalised if they get the tenses wrong in their translations?

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to learn and recognise tenses. If they get a tense wrong in their translation, whether they gain a mark depends on the type of tense error and its effect on the overall meaning of the block. Markers consider each instance on an individual basis. However, candidates should be aware of the importance of using the correct tenses in order to gain the full 2 marks for the block.

The same is true of singulars and plurals. Teachers and lecturers should make candidates aware of the importance of recognising these in their translations.

Should we encourage candidates to look up every word in the wordlist, even if they are confident that they know the meaning?

The wordlist is specific to the passage and contains each word's meaning in the context of that passage. Teachers and lecturers should advise candidates to check the specific meanings. However, if candidates use the meaning they know, and not the meaning in the wordlist, they will gain the mark, so long as their translation makes sense in context.

Candidates should check the wordlist for any proper names which appear in the passage as it will identify what type of name it is, for example name of a man, name of a city, name of a place.

Is the process of 'block review' used when marking the translating paper?

Yes. Markers can review a block and either add or deduct a mark depending on the sense of the whole block. Blocks which are technically correct but make no sense may not gain marks. Blocks, particularly long ones, which are almost correct but did not get 2 marks on first marking, may gain the lost mark.

Markers usually carry out the block review in consultation with the principal assessor at the time of marking.

Coursework: project–dissertation

How much time should teachers and lecturers spend supervising the dissertation with candidates?

This varies over the course of the project. At the start, teachers and lecturers can give guidance on the choice of topic, availability of an appropriate range of sources, and some generic guidance on carrying out the research. Guidance for candidates on the conduct of the stages of the research project, and an exemplar log book, is in the [coursework assessment task](). Teachers and lecturers should make candidates aware of this guidance.

Teachers and lecturers can further engage with, and give feedback to, candidates when they reach the stage of writing a first draft of their dissertation. Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to proofread their work to ensure there are no spelling, or other errors that may detract from the quality of their dissertation. Candidates should use paragraphs and signposting appropriately and ensure their referencing is accurate.

How should candidates choose the topic for their dissertations?

The topic and title for the dissertation are very important. Candidates should choose a topic which lends itself to the type of in-depth analysis, argument and evaluation required at Advanced Higher level. The topic and title must be broad enough for detailed discussion, but not so broad that it is impossible to do a thorough analysis within the 4,000 word limit.

As Advanced Higher Latin is a language qualification, the topic and title of the dissertation should allow substantial use of primary sources in Latin. Identifying a specific area of focus within a broader topic may require some initial secondary reading to find out the key issues and current avenues of inquiry.

Candidates should do a substantial amount of reading of secondary sources around the topic at the start of the project.

Do candidates need to quote Latin in their dissertations?

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to attempt their own translations. However, candidates can use commentaries and published translations to check and improve the accuracy of their work.

An accurate understanding is essential if candidates are to be able to engage with the Latin in a meaningful way. This engagement might involve drawing out implications or commenting on a significant word choice.

The level of engagement is dependent on the topic and amount of material available for research. Candidates must thoroughly engage with the Latin and demonstrate an understanding of its significance. Latin should be integral to the topic and title.

If candidates use a published translation, they should acknowledge and reference it in the footnotes. If they use their own translation, they should indicate this so markers know they have not omitted to reference a published translation.

How important is the use of secondary sources in the project–dissertation compared to primary sources?

It is not easy to quantify their relative importance, as a successful dissertation needs both. The nature of the topic plays a part, for example candidates researching an unusual topic on which less information is available, are not expected to consult as many sources as a candidate doing a mainstream topic. Whatever the topic, the dissertation is meant to be a research exercise and not just a long essay.

For most candidates, that research takes the form of secondary reading and teachers and lecturers should encourage them to read widely. Candidates should seek out material which focuses on their specific area of interest, and not rely too heavily on works of more general interest. It is also important that candidates use secondary sources that are reasonably academic and reliable. Candidates should treat material drawn from the internet with caution and check for reliability.

To gain full marks for their secondary sources, candidates must refer to these sources in their discussion. Candidates do not need to use quotation, but any point which is central to a candidate's argument, or which might be controversial or unclear, needs the backing of a relevant secondary source. Candidates should reference the relevant secondary sources in footnotes using standard referencing conventions.

How many primary and secondary sources are appropriate for the dissertation?

For historical or cultural topics and titles, candidates should expect to use a wide range of primary sources, possibly upwards of five or six. If an aspect of Virgil's poetry is the focus, then most of the primary source material would be from Virgil. However, it may be useful to include comparison with another author.

It would be appropriate for a candidate to use upwards of seven or eight secondary sources, depending on the nature of the topic and quality of the material consulted. These numbers are intended as a guide. Assessment is holistic and focuses on how effectively candidates use sources, rather than how many.

What matters most is that candidates have enough material to be able to discuss their topic in considerable depth.

What is the best advice for candidates to prepare them for writing their dissertations after the research phase?

A dissertation cannot achieve high marks without detailed analysis and a developed argument, regardless of how much research is done. Marks are available for a clear introduction, a logical and coherent structure and a valid conclusion based on evidence and sound reasoning.

Candidates are not likely to reach conclusions that are new. The originality of their argument lies in the evidence they select, and the way they express and sequence their thoughts and ideas. It is important that candidates think carefully not only about the overall structure of their dissertation, for example its division into chapters or sections, but also to the order and organisation of individual paragraphs. Each paragraph should make a clear and specific point, backed up by evidence and examples, and follow on from the one before in a way that shows some logical progression.

When compiling the bibliography, candidates should list primary and secondary sources separately. If candidates access a text online, they should include in the reference the author, title of the work, name of the website, web address and the date last accessed.

Finally, candidates need to make effective use of the 4,000 words available. The final word count should exclude quotations, footnotes, captions, bibliography and contents page.

Is there an automatic penalty if a candidate's word count exceeds the 3,000 to 4,000 word count?

Yes. If the word count exceeds the maximum by more than 10%, a penalty is applied. The word length is appropriate to the complexity of the task and allows candidates to conduct an in-depth study of their chosen area of interest.

National Qualification questions and answers can be found on the [frequently asked questions section](#) of SQA's website.