



Course report 2024

Advanced Higher 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 2024 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 35

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 33

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	17	Percentage	51.5	Cumulative percentage	51.5	Minimum mark required	105
B	Number of candidates	7	Percentage	21.2	Cumulative percentage	72.7	Minimum mark required	90
C	Number of candidates	7	Percentage	21.2	Cumulative percentage	93.9	Minimum mark required	75
D	Number of candidates	1	Percentage	3.0	Cumulative percentage	97.0	Minimum mark required	60
No award	Number of candidates	1	Percentage	3.0	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

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 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

The question paper performed as expected with each of the four sections providing candidates with equal opportunity to display their classical studies knowledge and skills at Advanced Higher level.

Section 3: Heroes and heroism was the most popular section, however there were candidate responses for all four sections.

The questions in each section were equally challenging and no questions proved to be unexpectedly demanding or straightforward for candidates.

Consequently, during awarding, the grade boundaries were set at notional level.

Project–dissertation

The project–dissertation performed as expected.

Candidates selected topics that appeared to be of personal interest to them and displayed a wide range of research skills in their work.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper

Section 1 — History and historiography

Part A

Most candidates performed particularly well in the source analysis and evaluation questions (questions 1 and 2). They displayed sound understanding of the skills they were supposed to show by selecting clearly-referenced areas of the sources and analysing or evaluating how these specific elements of the sources related to the question.

Some candidates appeared to find the source comparison question (question 3) more challenging because they seemed to lose focus on displaying the skill of comparison and began analysing and evaluating. Where candidates focused on describing similarities and differences between the way in which each historian used myths, they achieved very high marks.

Most candidates performed very well in the modern source comparison question (question 4) by selecting a range of points made in the modern source and comparing those with their own experience of Polybius. A few candidates did not deal with a range of discrete points from the modern source, preventing them from accessing the highest marks available.

Part B

The essay on Herodotus (question 5) was the most popular choice with candidates who selected this section, and most candidates discussed the structural purpose of Herodotus' digressions well.

Most candidates performed very well in the essay on Polybius (question 7). Most candidates were able to discuss the ways in which different sources informed the account of the beginning of the war.

Most candidates who attempted the question on Livy did well, however a few candidates were less able to clearly show the link from their knowledge of the text to their knowledge of Roman identity.

Section 2 — Individual and community

Part A

The candidate who chose this section performed well, showing solid understanding of the requirements for each of the question types.

Part B

The candidate who chose to answer on this section was able to combine good knowledge of the set texts with an appreciation of the requirements of essay questions.

Section 3 — Heroes and heroism

Part A

Most candidates performed particularly well in the source analysis and evaluation questions (questions 17 and 18). Most candidates were able to select elements from the text and use those effectively to make points about what was asked. Some candidates found it hard to access the highest marks for these questions as they were too focused on characterisation. The candidates who maintained a clear focus on the extracts as sources of evidence to understand the heroic values of classical society created the most effective responses.

Most candidates did well in the source comparison question (question 19).

Most candidates performed very well in the modern source comparison question (question 20) because they were able to clearly identify different discrete points from the modern source and use them as the basis for their comparisons.

Part B

Most candidates who chose question 21 did well, though a few seemed to mix up Heroides 3 with the other two Heroides poems in the prescription, which led to them including material that could gain limited marks.

Most candidates who chose question 22 did well, though a few candidates were unable to access higher marks as they broadly discussed the characteristics of Odysseus rather than maintaining focus on ‘thinking’ and ‘fighting’.

Most candidates who answered question 23 on Trojan Women did very well.

Most candidates who chose question 24 did well, though a few candidates were unable to access higher marks as they were unable to show significant analysis and evaluation of Turnus and the details of Book 12.

Section 4 — Comedy, satire and society

Part A

Most candidates performed particularly well in the source analysis and evaluation questions (questions 25 and 26). Most candidates were able to select elements from the text and use those effectively to make points about what was asked. Some candidates did not manage to access the highest marks as they did not include reference to wider reading in their answers. This does not mean reference to reading that explains the point of the words and actions in the plays they are asked about: it means reference to other texts or events that can deepen or add nuance to the points they are making.

Some candidates did well in the source comparison question (question 27), though a few found it hard to access the higher marks because they seemed to approach the question like a mini-essay rather than commenting on similarities and differences between the way in which a range of aspects were treated in each of the sources, for example, the Megarian decree, the role of Pericles, the involvement of the Spartans, and the responsibility of the Athenians themselves.

Some candidates performed very well in the modern source comparison question (question 27), though a few were unable to access higher marks as they did not show enough precision in describing the detail of Juvenal's specific comments.

Part B

The candidates who chose this section produced strong answers for each of the essays chosen. For questions 29 and 30, candidates demonstrated good knowledge about the meaning and significance of the words and actions within the plays and kept their focus on the social and historical points being made by Aristophanes.

For questions on Roman satire (questions 31 and 32), most candidates were able to provide enough detail in their answers to access higher marks, though a few filled their responses with lots of general points that they could not illustrate with specific references and so were unable to access the higher marks.

Project–dissertation

A — Justifying

Only a few candidates managed to access high marks for this skill. Most were unable to clearly explain their methodology and offer any insightful comments on other titles that they could have chosen on their topic.

B — Using sources

Only a few candidates managed to access the highest marks for this skill. Few candidates made sufficient use of secondary sources, which is a necessity in order to access the highest marks. Few candidates offered sophisticated comment on the usefulness of the sources that they used.

Some candidates seemed unclear on the nature of a secondary source. A secondary source is a source that is written about a primary source: it does not mean a piece of writing done at a later date. For example, Homer's *Iliad* is a primary source, as are the archaeological remains of the site of Troy; and a book about the Homeric poems, or about the archaeology found at Troy, is a secondary source. A modern novelisation of any aspect of the Trojan war, even on retelling the same story as Homer, is not a secondary source because its purpose is not to explain or interpret primary source evidence.

C — Analysing

Most candidates accessed the highest marks for this skill. A few struggled as they had a great number of straightforward pieces of analysis but did not go into the depth required to increase their marks.

D — Comparing

Few candidates did this very well this session. Some did not include any comparisons and some did not go into enough detail to show that their comparisons were insightful or useful to their discussion.

E — Evaluating

Most candidates accessed the highest marks for this skill. A few struggled as they had a great number of straightforward pieces of evaluation but did not go into the depth required to increase their marks.

F — Argument and conclusion

Most candidates accessed the higher marks for this skill. A few struggled to as their dissertation did not address the question they had set out to answer, or contained digression that was not obviously tied to the overall purpose.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

It is important that all candidates clearly understand the specific skills being assessed in each question type. Teachers and lecturers could watch together and then discuss the video presentation on the question paper on the Understanding Standards area of the Advanced Higher Classical Studies subject page on SQA's website.

Any formative tasks completed by pupils during the year to consolidate their learning and knowledge of the texts, should be designed in the format of one of the question types candidates must answer in the assessment. The sooner pupils can link their knowledge to one or more of the skills of knowledge use, the easier they should find it to prepare themselves for the assessment.

Teachers and lecturers could regularly revisit the meanings of analysis, evaluation, and comparison with candidates so that they do not see their responses to questions as following a set formula, but rather as the logical response to what they have been asked to do.

Project–dissertation

It is very important that candidates are aware of the purpose of the project–dissertation within an educational context. It allows them to show that they can use research and presentation skills effectively. Teachers and lecturers should highlight how important it is for candidates to develop these skills.

Candidates should understand the marking criteria, which defines how markers make holistic judgements, and highlights specifically which skills candidates need to demonstrate in the project–dissertation.

A — Justifying

Candidates should complete this section of their project–dissertation last. It should be a carefully composed introduction that explains exactly what is in the dissertation and why it is worth reading, and illustrates the approach that the candidate has taken, clearly indicating the candidate's reasons for the title they chose and how they studied their sources.

B — Using sources

Candidates should use the correct range of sources and clearly comment on them in their work. Candidates should recognise that they will not achieve marks because there is a list of books in a bibliography but because they used sources effectively to make points.

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to comment on the usefulness of their sources. Candidates can gain 2 marks for this skill, which they may have developed in Higher 'how useful' source questions.

C — Analysing and E — Evaluating

Candidates should go into depth with a sufficient number of points rather than accumulating more and more straightforward points. Candidates should be aware that at Advanced Higher level they will achieve marks for depth.

D — Comparing

Candidates should make the effort to find appropriate comparisons and ensure that they explain the detail that makes their comparisons appropriate.

F — Argument and conclusion

Candidates should understand that coherence relates to how well their dissertation is answering the question that they have outlined in their 'justifying' introduction. Structure refers to discussing the most useful balance of evidence, so, for example, a dissertation that focuses mainly on one area of evidence where there are three important areas to consider, would not be well structured to answer the question.

As with the question paper, teachers and lecturers could watch together and discuss the video presentation on the project–dissertation on the Understanding Standards area of the Advanced Higher Classical Studies subject page on SQA's website.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

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

For most National Courses, SQA aims 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, SQA holds 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 SQA's 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. SQA 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.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in [March 2024](#) and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).