



Course report 2024

Advanced Higher Latin

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 in conjunction 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: 38

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 47

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	22	Percentage	46.8	Cumulative percentage	46.8	Minimum mark required	126
B	Number of candidates	13	Percentage	27.7	Cumulative percentage	74.5	Minimum mark required	108
C	Number of candidates	10	Percentage	21.3	Cumulative percentage	95.7	Minimum mark required	90
D	Number of candidates	0	Percentage	0	Cumulative percentage	95.7	Minimum mark required	72
No award	Number of candidates	2	Percentage	4.3	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: Literary appreciation

The question paper performed as expected, offering candidates ample opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Ovid and Latin Love-poetry remained the more popular option, but the number of centres opting for Letters and Letter-writing showed an encouraging increase on previous years.

In both options, most candidates engaged positively with the questions, and it was clear from the quality of their responses that they were well prepared. The 'short answer' questions achieved a balance between accessibility and stretch and challenge. In particular, the language analysis questions proved effective discriminators, as nearly all candidates were able to access some of the available marks, but only the most able achieved the full six.

The essay questions worked well, allowing candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and their thinking skills. The openness of the 20-mark essay questions performed well in allowing 'A' candidates to develop sophisticated lines of argument without denying others a chance to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge and understanding.

Most candidates managed their time well. Very few candidates offered no response to any questions and where they did, the quality of their other responses suggested that the issue was lack of knowledge rather than time.

Question paper: Translating

The re-introduction of verse translating went smoothly and the question paper performed as expected. Candidates coped successfully with the demands on both their time management and linguistic skills. The two passages complemented each other and proved well matched in terms of stretch, challenge and accessibility. Both contained some straightforward blocks that helped those who strayed to get back on track, so that most candidates were able to achieve at least 50% of marks available in each section.

The paper was demanding but candidates seemed to find both sections accessible, although on average they did slightly better in Section 2 (verse) than in Section 1 (prose). There were very few drastic failures and some extremely strong performances.

Project–dissertation

This year, the majority of candidates had a clear understanding of what was expected and were able to present a competent piece of work that met the basic success criteria.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper: Literary appreciation

Letters and Letter-writing

Candidates generally showed a secure knowledge of the texts and dealt well with those questions that asked for elucidation of content questions 1, 6 and 8. The language analysis question acted as a good discriminator as most candidates were able to access some marks but only the most able achieved the full 6 marks.

Candidates also enjoyed assessing Pliny's character (question 4) and his attitude to his freedman Zosimus (question 6(b)). Responses to question 5 showed a good grasp of the different techniques used to seize the reader's attention. Question 7 on the Vindolanda tablets provoked some well thought out answers. Many candidates produced well-argued essays that engaged actively with the terms in the question (personal/political/philosophical).

Ovid and Latin Love-poetry

Candidates engaged well with question 11 and although slightly coloured by modern sensibilities, their responses showed genuine personal engagement with the text.

Many candidates were able to access 4 or 5 of the available marks in the language analysis question, with the 6th mark providing additional stretch and challenge.

Several candidates produced thoughtful and closely argued essays that showed thorough knowledge and higher order thinking skills.

Question paper: Translating

It was noted that several candidates who had struggled to get to grips with parts of the prose passage, fared much better when dealing with verse. The re-introduction of verse gave those candidates a chance to demonstrate translating skills that might otherwise have gone unrewarded. The verse translation is particularly helpful to middling and weaker candidates, pulling their marks up significantly. A few candidates who had taken the prose passage in their stride, stumbled when it came to verse, but the number involved here was very small.

Candidates' use of the word lists was very good. Only a few candidates found the wrong word.

In terms of grammar and syntax, candidates handled ablative absolutes particularly well (Prose blocks 2, 9, 10; verse block 1) and they also dealt well with passive participles and passive verbs. Treatment of the connecting relative was not particularly elegant, but candidates generally conveyed the meaning correctly. The use of *ut* plus the subjunctive to express purpose (prose block 3) was familiar to most candidates and was generally handled effectively. In prose, the more accessible blocks (1, 4, 6, 12 and 20) allowed almost all candidates access to the essential idea, and many scored the full two marks. The most able candidates had a chance to demonstrate their skills in blocks 3, 5, 9, and 15-18.

Likewise in verse, blocks 1, 6, 8 and 10 proved accessible to the majority, whilst 4, 5 and 9 offered more stretch and challenge.

Project–dissertation

Most candidates had identified a fruitful topic for their dissertation, which offered plenty of scope for in-depth analysis and evaluation. It was clear that many candidates had chosen an aspect related to their own interests and academic strengths. Strong dissertations on economic history, science and philosophy showed evidence of candidates transferring and applying their knowledge to good effect.

The majority of candidates had taken on board advice about the need to engage with Latin, with many drawing effectively on a number of relevant Latin sources. Most candidates also made use of appropriate secondary sources. Many candidates had accessed JSTOR or similar, but even if they did not, candidates generally did well in avoiding anonymous or popular blogs.

Most candidates, and all of the stronger ones, were also aware of the need to critically engage with the biases or weaknesses of their primary sources. Some of the discussion of this nature was subtle and very insightful. Most candidates also made a determined effort to use a clear referencing system. Structure and organisation also tended to be strong, as most candidates included a clear introduction and a summative conclusion. Many candidates showed skill in developing and substantiating clear lines of argument that built towards reasoned conclusions.

Regardless of the outcome, every dissertation had good features that showed evidence of the candidate's engagement and enthusiasm for their topic.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper: Literary appreciation

Generally, candidates underperformed in questions where they misread or misunderstood what the question required, or they did not discuss the specified section of text. This was true in question 16, for instance, where several candidates answered with reference to the lines immediately preceding those cited in the question. In Ovid and Latin Love-poetry, a few candidates compared the wrong Catullus poems with the Propertius poem — poems 14 or 17 by Catullus instead of poem 15 (different 'wrong' poems in each case).

A lack of experience or exam technique was evident in some questions, particularly in the comparison question (question 15), where some candidates answered on each author separately. This did not necessarily cost them marks but perhaps cost them time, since this approach was far less efficient.

When discussing an author's use of language (questions 3(b) and 16), some candidates did not sufficiently contextualise their discussion or add enough detail beyond picking out individual words or phrases that by themselves were not necessarily relevant.

In question 10(b), several candidates showed only a limited understanding of the animal examples. Some candidates' knowledge of Tibullus was also a little scant (question 17) and

a few candidates misinterpreted question 18(b), answering with reference to their own emotions rather than the poet's. One or two candidates also struggled with the concept of attitudes in the essay question (question 19).

In the Letters and Letter-writing essay question (question 9), some candidates discussed 'interesting' aspects in a general way that did not engage sufficiently with the specific terms of the question. A few made no reference to either 'politics' or 'philosophy'. Likewise in the Love-poetry essay, some candidates did not identify the poets' attitudes with enough clarity or integrate discussion of attitudes into their treatment of the evidence.

Question paper: Translating

In general, candidates struggled with subordination, the use of participles, and impersonal verbs. Several candidates did not make effective use of the English linking material, especially in the prose section.

Prose

A few candidates had difficulty identifying the subject in complex sentences. A few candidates also struggled with the indirect statement in block 5, probably because it featured a deponent verb and was alongside a present participle — none of these features was difficult in itself but encountering them in combination proved more challenging. Some candidates seemed unfamiliar with the use of *ad* plus the gerund(ive) to express purpose, although this is part of the prescribed grammar and syntax. The substantive use of the possessive adjective *sui* to mean 'his/their own men' confused quite a few, and the dative *suis* (to his/their men) was not handled very confidently. The impersonal use of *poterat* also proved tricky and the comparative adverb *acrius* was not translated accurately.

Verse

Although candidates generally coped well, for those who struggled, the transformation imagery proved the biggest stumbling block. There was a lack of clarity in many candidates' translations of the transformations described in blocks 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Block 9 produced a very wide variety of responses and some very imaginative interpretations. In particular, many candidates seemed to struggle with the meaning of *lacertis* and the simile *ut membra*.

Project–dissertation

There were no areas that were especially or consistently weak. A few candidates chose topics that were overly broad, which meant they struggled to achieve the depth of detail and analysis required for higher marks.

Among candidates who tackled social topics, there was a tendency to conflate different historical periods, treating Republican and Flavian periods as if they were one and the same. Only the strongest candidates demonstrated a degree of historical awareness.

Some candidates had clearly not done enough secondary reading and many candidates who had, did not do enough to cite their secondary sources in the course of their discussion.

A few candidates wrote excessively long conclusions which did little more than restate their findings at length, often in exactly the same words as had been used earlier.

Many candidates did not seem to have proofread their dissertation very carefully, or to have proofread it at all. In many cases, spelling and punctuation were inconsistent, including the spelling of the names of key figures.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper: Literary appreciation

Candidates tackling this component are generally very well prepared, but a few points are worth highlighting.

Candidates must remember to read the question and, if specific lines are cited, they must base their responses on these lines alone and not stray beyond them. Candidates could be encouraged to spend a moment or two unpacking questions before they embark on their response. This is especially true of the 20-mark essay, where candidates might be encouraged to highlight the key terms so that they address the question as fully and effectively as they can.

In questions asking them to ‘compare’, candidates can discuss similarities or differences or a mixture of both; but where ‘contrast’ is also specified, candidates are expected to address at least one difference. In both cases, the particular comparison or contrast should be explicitly made. Sometimes an implied comparison or contrast may be sufficient, but candidates should be discouraged from relying on this approach. It is safest to assume that marks will not be awarded for individual examples until the comparison or contrast has been clearly drawn.

The openness of essay questions lets candidates draw their evidence from a wide range of texts, so that even, or especially those, who have struggled with the shorter questions, have a chance to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. However, candidates do still need to engage with the terms of the question, whatever ‘angle’ they want to take on it. Marks are awarded for relevant and substantiated points, but to gain the highest marks, candidates are expected to include clear evidence of analysis and evaluation.

Question paper: Translating

In general, practice is the best form of preparation for the translating paper.

In terms of the specific issues raised by this year’s paper, training in the use of the wordlist would be worthwhile. Candidates could also be reminded to make active use of all the ‘clues’ available to them, from the introductory and linking sections in English, to the way the Latin text is punctuated.

Prose

As the prescribed grammar and syntax sampled varies from year to year, some of the specific challenges contained in this year’s passage, for example, the use of the gerund(ive) to express purpose — may not arise next year. However, indirect statements using the accusative and infinitive are a regular feature of Latin at this level, so candidates should be ready to recognise and deal with this construction, in whatever form it takes, including examples where the verb of saying is implied or expressed using a deponent verb.

Likewise, participles, in all their tenses and uses, are a frequent feature of Advanced Higher passages, and connecting relatives also figure fairly frequently, so that any targeted practice here will not be wasted.

Verse

Familiarity with extracts from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is probably the best form of preparation. Not every passage selected will contain a transformation scene, but some familiarity with such scenes is bound to be helpful in preparing candidates to cope with Ovid's poetic language.

Project–dissertation

A lot of general advice regarding the dissertation has already been published, but it may be worth re-iterating a few general points.

Content

Choice of topic is often the key to success. Overly broad topics tend not to work well, so candidates who have an interest in, for example, Roman women or the collapse of the Roman Republic, should try to narrow their focus on to specific aspect(s) and set some clear parameters around their research. The title does not have to be framed as a question, but candidates should have a clear 'angle' in mind, which they want to investigate and analyse.

Sources

The research aspect of the project will mostly involve independent reading of both primary and secondary sources. Candidates do need to engage with the Latin they quote, but this engagement can take different forms. In dealing, for instance, with a historical topic, elucidating a quotation and/or drawing out its implications may be more relevant than commentating on the choice of a particular word, which may not be very significant.

Candidates should be encouraged to cite the sources of their information in the course of their discussion. This means not only referencing the Latin they quote, but also acknowledging the secondary sources from which particular points have been drawn. This is good academic practice and constitutes the main proof candidates have that their points are valid but not plagiarised. Such scholarship is all the more important now that generative AI has become so readily accessible. A footnote identifying the work in question, following any of the standard conventions, is all that is needed. If tackling historical topics in particular, candidates should show some awareness of the date and genre of their sources and be able to comment on issues of reliability or bias.

Analysis and Argument

Candidates are expected to develop a clear line of argument, based on their analysis of the evidence, and to reach a reasoned conclusion. In composing their conclusion, there is scope for candidates to summarise their findings, but they should try to keep this section succinct and not simply repeat an earlier discussion. Stronger conclusions tend to include some reasoning based on these findings, and/or some evaluation of the evidence and a final judgement.

Editing

Finally, candidates should be encouraged to proofread their final draft carefully, checking not only for grammar and spelling but also to ensure that what they have written actually makes sense and can be understood. Reading the text aloud is often recommended, whilst a 'critical friend' can be a valuable asset.

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](#).