



# **Course report 2024**

## **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: 490

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 540

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

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

<b>A</b>	Number of candidates	162	Percentage	30.0	Cumulative percentage	30.0	Minimum mark required	77
<b>B</b>	Number of candidates	118	Percentage	21.9	Cumulative percentage	51.9	Minimum mark required	66
<b>C</b>	Number of candidates	105	Percentage	19.4	Cumulative percentage	71.3	Minimum mark required	55
<b>D</b>	Number of candidates	86	Percentage	15.9	Cumulative percentage	87.2	Minimum mark required	44
<b>No award</b>	Number of candidates	69	Percentage	12.8	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

This year there was a return to full course assessment with full course coverage and the re-introduction of the assignment.

All parts of the course assessment performed as expected. As a result, grade boundaries were fixed on the notional grade boundaries.

### Question paper 1 — Classical literature

Candidates used a variety of texts to answer both the essay questions and the modern comparison question. Most candidates discussed *Oedipus the King* in question 1(a), although some referred to other dramas or to epic poetry. More candidates attempted question 1(b). Most candidates based their answer on *Antigone*, with some candidates using *Medea*, and a few referring to *Lysistrata*, *Agamemnon*, *the Iliad*, *the Odyssey*, and *the Aeneid*. Candidate performance was similar in both essays.

### Question paper 2 — Classical society

More candidates chose to answer on 'Power and freedom' than 'Religion and belief'. Some candidates answered the 'Power and freedom' questions in one section and the 'Religion and belief' questions in the other. Where this happened, candidates tended to tackle the questions on 'Power and freedom' in the context of classical Greece and the 'Religion and belief' questions in the context of the Roman world.

### Assignment

The assignment was re-introduced this year. Most candidates based their assignment topic on an aspect of the course content, and most commonly on aspects of classical society. A few candidates chose topics outside of the course content but still related to an aspect of the classical world.

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

### **Question paper 1 — Classical literature**

Many candidates performed well in the essay, structuring their answers well and demonstrating good knowledge of the text(s) they chose. There was an improvement this year in candidates selecting texts appropriate to the aspect, for example in question 1(a) choosing to discuss texts that had fate and freewill as a core issue.

Most candidates paid attention to the wording of the essay title and structured their essays appropriately, for example in question 1(b) it was important to show the consequences of the actions of leaders. However, a few candidates based their argument on whether leadership was good or effective, which was not the focus of this essay.

Many candidates, while still performing well, found it challenging to access marks for differing interpretation in analysis and evaluation.

Some candidates did not gain marks for contextualising the theme in their introduction.

Many candidates performed well in question 2, although some candidates did not give enough detail of the text(s) to gain high marks. Some candidates interpreted the source content, which has not been allocated marks since 2019. This was highlighted in previous course reports and in Understanding Standards events. The general marking instructions for question 2 state that candidates should simply 'identify' (quote or paraphrase the source content) rather than 'interpret'. Both marks available for each comparison are awarded on the candidate's knowledge of the classical text.

### **Question paper 2 — Classical society**

#### **8-mark source comparison questions (question 1 and question 3)**

Candidates performed well in both questions. Most candidates used an effective structure and approached these questions systematically, dealing with each source in turn, and identifying points of omission from the sources. Some candidates put points of omission after each source, which is another valid approach, provided the candidate avoids referring to aspects of the topic discussed in later sources. Some candidates were unclear of the purpose of the Telesterion in source A in question 3.

#### **12-mark responses (question 2, question 4, question 7 and question 10)**

Most candidates performed well in the 12-mark extended responses. They structured their answers into three or four aspects, displayed their knowledge well and used it to develop analysis and evaluation.

In question 2, many candidates showed excellent knowledge of whatever question they chose. In question 2(a) some candidates looked at the role of different women within the home (for example poor, rich and enslaved women), while others looked at different aspects of free women within the home. In question 2(b) a few candidates confused the legal system with other Athenian institutions of government, and although there are some valid points of crossover, this cost some candidates knowledge marks.

In question 4, (a) was chosen by most candidates rather than (b), although many candidates answered question 4(b) well. In question 4(a) a few candidates focused on describing the Panathenaic festival generally without referring specifically to Athenian women. Most candidates realised that a good approach to question 4(a) was to discuss other festivals such as the Haloa.

In question 7, (b) was chosen by more candidates than (a). While some candidates had good knowledge of the roles of elected officials, some did not have enough specific knowledge to perform well. Overall candidates did well in question 7(b). Some candidates concentrated heavily on the water supply provided by the Romans, which was an important aspect, but lacked detail of other areas. Some candidates made debatable comments about how much Latin was the language used by the majority of the population of Roman Britain.

In question 10, candidates gave good responses to both questions. Most candidates focused on the specific wording of each question, for example question 10(b) was focused on the attitude towards mystery cults, and by looking at changing attitudes over time by the Roman authorities, or different attitudes to individual cults, some candidates took the opportunity to gain marks for differing interpretations. Most candidates used the three examples given in each question, which helped them to structure good responses, although some candidates recognised that the term 'such as' allowed them to use other emperors, for example discussing Claudius in question 10(a). In question 10(b) a few candidates discussed Christianity in the context of a mystery religion, which gained marks because there is evidence that some Romans seemed to have had this view.

### **8-mark source evaluation questions (question 5 and question 8)**

Candidates generally did well in these questions. Candidates effectively discussed the provenance of these sources, making well-judged comments about their reliability and value, for example the limitations of using a comedy to understand contemporary society, and the strengths and weaknesses of Roman historians. Some candidates referred to the likelihood of Tacitus being biased against the Iceni tribe. If a candidate makes such a statement, they should show how the source content shows this bias (in fact the source does not show this and focuses on the brutality of the Roman authorities). Markers noted that candidates tended to paraphrase less than in previous years, which is encouraging. Candidates often performed well in discussing omissions, for example in question 8, by discussing other household gods such as Janus and Vesta.

### **10-mark comparison questions (question 6 and question 9)**

Candidates should simply 'identify' (quote or paraphrase the source content) rather than 'interpret'.

Many candidates demonstrated good knowledge in both questions. In question 6, some candidates had only very generalised knowledge of the legal status of Roman women, and simply stated that Roman women could not be citizens, could not vote, could not stand for political office and so on, which limited the number of marks they could achieve. A better approach was to make more informed comments such as that although Roman women could not hold office, some women such as the wives and mistresses of politicians and emperors could exercise power, for example Livia the wife of Augustus. Some candidates

confused Stoicism and Epicureanism in question 9, but overall candidates had impressive knowledge of the teachings of both philosophies.

## **Assignment**

Markers commented on the good quality of the assignments. Candidate performance was impressive, which was very encouraging as, due to the increase in the number of centres presenting Higher Classical Studies since 2018, this would be the first time some centres had prepared candidates for the assignment. For most candidates, the assignment was the best mark of the three assessed components.

## Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

### Question paper 1 — Classical literature

Markers noted that it was sometimes difficult to clearly identify when a candidate was offering a different interpretation in the essay. The most straightforward way to do this is to use wording such as ‘a different interpretation to this could be...’. Some candidates did this very effectively. Candidates could also use this method in the assignment and in the 12-mark analysis responses where this skill is also assessed.

Some candidates were unsure of what a different interpretation was, and a good approach is to think of what motivates a character, or a judgement readers can draw from a character’s actions. Examples from some of the most commonly-used texts could be:

- ◆ What motivates Antigone to give her brother appropriate funeral rites — is it family duty or a desire to challenge Creon’s rule?
- ◆ Is Oedipus motivated chiefly by a desire to serve his people in Thebes or is he driven by his own arrogance?
- ◆ Does Odysseus prove to be an effective leader in relation to the crew of his ship, given the ultimate destruction of his ship?

Sometimes candidates referred in their answers to characters such as Perseus and Hercules, and it was unclear if candidates were drawing their information about such characters from general knowledge of them as mythological characters, or from specific texts. It is good practice to refer to specific texts, especially when using characters that do not feature in texts that are commonly used.

In the 10-mark comparison response, a clear way for a candidate to access both available marks is to give a conclusion that gives both points of similarities and differences between the modern and classical worlds. If a candidate only finds similarities or differences, they could access both marks by pointing out which similarities or differences are most important and giving a justification for this. This method would also apply to the comparison response in question paper 2.

### Question paper 2 — Classical society

Most candidates used their time well in this paper, but there were instances of poor time management. Markers reported that a few candidates wrote lengthy introductions and conclusions to 12-mark responses, which are neither required nor desired, and then ran out of time.

Candidates were successful in the 12-mark questions that suggested areas to cover in the question. However, it may be helpful for centres to indicate to candidates the importance of the words ‘such as’, which indicates that there are other relevant points and approaches candidates may wish to discuss other than those indicated in the wording of the question. Although it is improving each year, a few candidates’ handwriting was very difficult to read, most commonly in question paper 2. Such candidates risk losing out on marks, so centres are encouraged to offer candidates support.

## Assignment

Markers reported some issues around the use of resource sheets, and centres are reminded that:

- ◆ a resource sheet must be included with the assignment
- ◆ the resource sheet must be on one side of A4 paper
- ◆ it must not exceed 250 words
- ◆ any illustrations or pictures must be attached directly to the resource sheet, and be part of the one-page limit
- ◆ no part of the assignment, apart from short primary sources, must be directly lifted word-for-word from the resource sheet

Centres are also reminded that personalisation and choice is an important part of the course, and candidates should be encouraged to research a topic of their own choice. A few centres seemed to present candidates who had studied the same topic. Furthermore, while candidates may work on the same topic, their assignment should clearly be produced independently.

Some candidates appeared to have approached the assignment by researching issues that are more pertinent to the modern world and their own views, and then finding out how these issues applied to the classical world. This is approaching the assignment the wrong way round. Two problems with this approach are firstly that candidates often focus their attention on their own views rather than researching the classical world, and secondly that they find it very difficult to access enough knowledge of the topic in the classical world. A few candidates stated in their assignment that they had chosen a topic that they could not find out much about in the classical world, which should be a signal that this topic is unlikely to be successful. Centres should advise candidates that if they cannot find information on a topic, they should look again at their subject choice.



## 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](#).