

Scholarship

2010 Assessment Report

Classical Studies

COMMENTARY

The examination paper for Scholarship Classical Studies provided three questions on each of ten topics, with a range of question types. Four topics attracted large numbers of responses: Virgil (345), Greek Vase Painting (277), Alexander the Great (248) and Art of the Roman Empire (232); two topics were answered by fewer than 20 candidates: Juvenal (19) and Greek Science (15). Question 3 – based on provided source material – was chosen more often in 2010, by both outstanding candidates and those relying on the support of quoted primary source evidence.

Most candidates used their time effectively. Each essay was marked out of eight and candidates who sustained their performance across three answers generally performed well. Successful candidates provided evidence of extensive background reading and produced cogently argued and fluently written essays under examination pressure. Their answers were thoughtful and focused, incorporating both analysis and supporting evidence. Those who failed to reach the standard tended to sidestep the question set, retell the plot in literary questions or lack familiarity with primary source material. Some also found it difficult to write accurately and clearly in English.

Candidates are urged to think carefully about the specific requirements of questions before they begin writing. Although there is no planning space provided in the Answer Booklet, they may wish to note down key words or draft a bulleted outline to ensure that their responses are relevant and cover all aspects of the questions set. This approach is particularly helpful for open-ended questions, where it is sensible to define terms in an introductory paragraph, for example “strategy” in Alexander the Great (Q1) or “morality” in Roman Religion (Q1). It also reduces the possibility of misreading the question – writing about the arch as an architectural structure rather than triumphal arches in Q2, Art of the Roman Empire.

SCHOLARSHIP WITH OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:

- provided evidence of good judgement, imagination and flair, tempered by academic rigour, in their treatment of questions
- wrote carefully planned, well-structured, cogent answers that tackled the question directly
- had an in-depth and specific knowledge of subject matter
- integrated relevant evidence into their arguments, using both ancient sources and modern commentaries
- recognised the limitations of primary source material in some areas
- were able to draw on extensive background reading beyond that required for level 3
- communicated their answers fluently, often with stylistic flair, and considered opposing points of view.

SCHOLARSHIP

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship but not Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:

- analysed the wording of questions carefully, taking all aspects into consideration
- showed evidence of wider reading and used their solid knowledge of the classical world to build a relevant argument
- planned their essays before beginning to write so that they were coherent and well structured
- established the direction of their argument in an introductory paragraph

- were able to reference primary source material and secondary sources accurately
- showed awareness of the differences between ancient and modern cultures
- wrote fluently and precisely in essay format.

OTHER CANDIDATES

Candidates who were not awarded Scholarship or Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:

- did not answer three questions or failed to answer all parts of a question
- did not read the question carefully, and/or misinterpreted it e.g. ignored the resource material included in the third question for all topics
- did not plan their essays or consider the evidence carefully before starting to write
- included irrelevant material, writing all they knew about topics
- relied heavily on narrative and/or generalisations
- made repeated errors of fact or used inaccurate evidence to support a statement
- offered their own opinions, either unsupported or supported by selective sources, without reference to contrary arguments
- were unable to communicate their ideas in accurate English.