

## Assessment Report

# New Zealand Scholarship Classical Studies 2021

## Standard 93404

### Part A: Commentary

The current format of the Classical Studies scholarship paper continues to be very effective in ranking candidates fairly. The questions in Section A under each context appeared to attract candidates equally. This is often a challenge to achieve. In Section B, the new context on Gender and Society attracted slightly more candidates than that of Authority and Freedom but, overall, the impression was of a fair and balanced paper based on the choices made by candidates. The combination of context-based essays and close textual analysis remains a great test of critical thinking.

The assessment of candidate answers remains based on critical thinking. If candidates wish to be awarded a scholarship, then answers must address the question through this lens. Candidates who relied on pre-prepared answers that did not address the question asked were not rewarded. Those candidates who wrote cogently and thoughtfully, and who were well versed in the specific content of their chosen context, and who were able to draw on wider reading of specific relevance to the question, reaped the benefit. The integration of primary sources, and, where appropriate, secondary sources, remains essential.

#### Section A

##### Historical topics

Candidates who did not succeed in answering questions on Alexander and Augustus most frequently failed to address key parts of the question (for example, ignoring the personality contrast between Octavian and Antony), or were led off on tangents (for example, in one Alexander question, the reference to Caesar led candidates to introduce material that was irrelevant to the question). Successful answers took note of time constraints within the question – a focus on the Principate of Augustus as opposed to his rise to power. They also applied key concepts to the context of the question, for example focusing on *auctoritas* and *potestas* when discussing the influence of Augustus.

##### Literary topics

Those candidates answering on topics centred on ancient texts must consider, especially in the context of the *Iliad* and *Aeneid*, the entire work. Some issues – for example, in the *Iliad* – saw candidates view the heroic code in black and white terms, with little awareness that Achilles questions this. By not taking into consideration the wider context of the work, there is a danger that an understanding of the development of characters such as Achilles and Aeneas remains piecemeal. Those candidates who understood the context in which the literary work was produced, for example how the 'Frogs' fit within the broader historical context of the Peloponnesian War and could cogently relate this to the question, had greater success.

##### Art topics

Selection of art works to analyse in relation to the question is often critical to success when answering on vase painting and Roman art and architecture. Quotations used to introduce questions can often provide scaffolding to structure an answer but this was often overlooked by candidates – for example, the mythological creatures suggested in a question on



vase painting. Attention should also be paid to time contexts. Some candidates did not select relevant works for a question on Roman art that required examples taken across time.

## Section B

The new context on Gender and Society was attractive to several candidates, but a number introduced anachronistic comparisons to modern issues of gender. Those who made the contrast as part of their conclusions after a close analysis of the relevant source material could enhance their conclusion, but in general it may be wiser to avoid anachronistic comparisons. Those who incorporated such comparisons as part of their analysis were not successful.

### Standard-specific observations

The nature of scholarship means that this is an award only a few, of those who undertake it, achieve. As stated above, to achieve the award candidates must demonstrate critical thinking skills and apply these to the questions asked by the exam.

However, in the last two or more years, a small number of schools appear to be schooling candidates on a “recipe for success”, involving regurgitation of pre-learned material focused on secondary sources. Any belief that sprinkling esoteric terms or name-dropping erudite authors will be rewarded should be discouraged. In many cases the Greek or Latin terms inserted were misspelt and added little to the depth of the discussion. Equally, phrases such as ‘diachronic epic’ are not of guaranteed relevance to the question set, and engagement with source material through a single lens does not equate to scholarship.

Candidates will not gain success by adjusting or even re-writing the question so that they can deliver prepared material on, for example, the nature of Homeric heroism. The focus must remain on the authentic critical thinking of the candidate.

The legibility of candidate answers is an issue for about one in five candidates. To evaluate the critical thinking of candidates, answers must be able to be read. It is of note that one candidate’s paper was returned unmarked as it was unable to be deciphered.

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## Part B: Report on Performance

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with **Outstanding Performance** commonly:

- wrote with a degree of stylistic sophistication
- demonstrated in-depth knowledge of content, based on wider reading
- developed and sustained a cogent argument, discussed alternative viewpoints and reached balanced conclusions
- answered each question in full, engaging critically with its underlying implications and / or assumptions
- showed an ability to think independently and make insightful observations
- showed a good understanding of nuance, contingency, and context in thinking about the ancient world
- defined specific or technical terms
- used analysis of primary sources as the basis for the argument and integrated relevant primary- and secondary-source evidence into their response, and were able to assess these for bias
- used secondary-source arguments cogently and appropriately

in Section B, focused on the context and subtext of the resources provided, avoiding formulaic insertions of pre-prepared background material in Section B, used the source analysis in the context of background knowledge to construct a broader argument, and could place the resources in specific context.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- took the time to read the question and plan the essay
  - paid attention to the quote as well as the essay question
  - wrote fluently and clearly, knew how to spell subject-specific names and terms, and used English vocabulary correctly
  - produced a structured response in essay format and fully answered three questions
  - answered the question set directly and reached valid conclusions based on evidence
  - remained focused on the question and did not get distracted or go off on a tangent
  - had a sound knowledge of the topic based on wider reading
  - supported their argument with relevant primary-source evidence
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- drew on secondary sources effectively and used quotes from them only when relevant
- in Section B, focused on analysis of the resources provided, incorporating background detail when directly relevant to the discussion
- in Section B, focused on the sources, avoiding paraphrase, and used the question to structure their answer to the questions.

Candidates who were **not** awarded Scholarship commonly:

- failed to write clearly and / or structure their argument effectively
- showed limited understanding of the question and / or a weak knowledge of content
- attempted to force a pre-conceptualised essay into a question without engaging critically with the question
- did not consider both sides of the question, or did not consider that the question had more than one side to it
- made assumptions or generalisations about the evidence
- did not provide evidence to justify their conclusions and failed to use primary sources
- introduced irrelevant material not related to the question
- did not sustain an analytical approach, drifting into narrative or (in Section B) paraphrased source material
- in Section B, did not place analysis of the resources provided at the heart of their discussion and / or gave a description rather than analysis
- in Section B, did not focus on the resources, or did not complete an answer to three questions, either because they were unprepared or spent too long on their first two answers.

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## **Subject page**

### **Previous years' reports**

[2020 \(PDF, 232KB\)](#)

[2019 \(PDF, 162KB\)](#)

[2018 \(PDF, 94KB\)](#)

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