



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2007

CLASSICAL STUDIES

ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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1. General Introduction

1.1 The syllabus

All classical subjects are currently under revision by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

Previous Chief Examiner's reports have alluded to the need to review aspects of the course and the examination which are common to both Higher and Ordinary Levels. It is envisaged that these, and other issues, will be addressed in the revision of the syllabus currently being undertaken by the NCCA.

1.2 The examination

The Ordinary Level and Higher Level Classical Studies papers for Junior Certificate comprise questions based on ten topics. Five topics are drawn from the Greek World and five from the Roman World. Students are expected to have studied five topics – two from the Greek World, two from the Roman World, and one further topic from either the Greek World or the Roman World.

The total number of marks available at each level is 400. Each topic carries an allocation of 80 marks. Questions set in Part (b) of each topic are less demanding on the Ordinary Level examination paper than on the Higher Level examination paper. Questions set in Parts (a) and (c) on each topic are the same at both levels.

2. Ordinary Level

2.1 Introduction

A total of 91 students opted for the Classical Studies Ordinary Level examination paper in 2007. This is a significant decrease on 2006 and is also a decrease on previous years. The following table shows the numbers taking this paper in the past 6 years:

| Year | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total | 128 | 147 | 124 | 111 | 122 | 91 |

Table I: Number of candidates taking Junior Certificate Classical Studies (Ordinary Level) 2002-2007

The following table shows the number and percentage of candidates taking Classical Studies at Ordinary Level and Higher Level:

| Year | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Ordinary Level (no.) | 128 | 147 | 124 | 111 | 122 | 91 |
| Ordinary Level (%) | 21.2 | 25.3 | 27.9 | 20.9 | 20.9 | 15.7 |
| Higher Level (no.) | 476 | 433 | 443 | 531 | 583 | 577 |
| Higher Level (%) | 78.8 | 74.6 | 72.1 | 79.1 | 79.1 | 84.3 |

Table II: Number and percentage of candidates taking Junior Certificate Classical Studies at Ordinary and Higher Levels 2002-2007

It can be seen from these statistics that the numbers taking the Ordinary Level examination paper are significantly smaller than those taking the Higher Level examination paper, and that 2007 saw a further drop in those numbers. This statistic is not particularly surprising given that the papers are 66% common in the first place. However, it does raise the question as to whether this high percentage of commonality is discouraging even more candidates from studying Classical Studies, particularly at Ordinary Level.

2.2 Performance of Candidates

The following table shows the percentage of candidates achieving each grade in the Classical Studies Ordinary Level examination paper in 2007:

| Total | A | B | C | D | E | F | NG |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 91 | 9.9 | 14.3 | 15.4 | 24.2 | 24.2 | 8.8 | 3.3 |

Table III: Grade outcomes Classical Studies Junior Certificate (Ordinary Level) 2007

The following table illustrates the outcomes at Ordinary Level from 2002-2007:

| Year | Total | A | B | C | ABC | D | E | F | NG | EFNG |
|-------------|--------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| 2002 | 128 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 13.3 | 17.9 | 12.5 | 26.6 | 26.6 | 16.4 | 69.6 |
| 2003 | 147 | 3.4 | 10.9 | 13.6 | 27.9 | 28.6 | 26.5 | 12.2 | 4.8 | 43.5 |
| 2004 | 124 | 2.4 | 17.7 | 22.6 | 42.7 | 23.4 | 15.3 | 12.9 | 5.6 | 33.8 |
| 2005 | 111 | 10.8 | 23.4 | 16.2 | 50.5 | 17.1 | 18.0 | 9.9 | 4.5 | 32.4 |
| 2006 | 122 | 3.3 | 9.0 | 28.7 | 41.0 | 29.5 | 18.0 | 6.6 | 4.9 | 29.5 |
| 2007 | 91 | 9.9 | 14.3 | 15.4 | 39.6 | 19.8 | 29.7 | 7.7 | 3.3 | 40.7 |

Table IV: Grade outcomes Classical Studies Junior Certificate (Ordinary Level) 2002-2007

While it is positive to note an ABC grade rate of 39.6%, it is to be noted that the EFNG rate is 40.7%. This rate is higher than it has been for a number of years.

The number of candidates achieving a grade E or less has been consistently high on this examination paper. Examiners have noted that the evidence from candidate responses shows that many candidates appear to approach the examination paper with little interest or preparation. This is one explanation for the poor outcomes for so many candidates. Another possible explanation is that the 66% of the Ordinary Level examination paper is common with the Higher Level; parts (a) and (c) of each Topic are differentiated only in the Marking Scheme. However, Examiners have also noted that Ordinary Level candidates also perform poorly in Part (b) – a section that is designed for Ordinary Level candidates.

In the context of the current revision of the syllabus, it is timely to debate whether a different type of examination paper may be more appropriate for Ordinary Level candidates. At the moment, the section of the examination paper where students do least well is Part (c), where the original source material seems to pose difficulties of comprehension and reading for some candidates. It has also been suggested that the length and challenge of the prescribed reading material may require some rebalancing in the case of Ordinary Level candidates.

Examiners noted that an encouraging feature of this year's results was the number of candidates who achieved grade A compared to previous years.

2.3 Analysis of candidate performance

Section A: The Greek World

Topic 1: The Wrath of Achilles

This is a very popular topic and is usually taken by more than 85% of candidates. In general, candidates did not perform as well as expected in Part (a). Examiners noted that where candidates attempted only three questions, they did not perform as well as those who attempted more than the required number of questions.

In Part (b), those who knew the text gained very high marks.

In Part (c), a significant number of students did not use the passage presented to search for answers, but answered from the perspective of their prior knowledge.

Topic 2: Greece and Persia

This topic was attempted by almost 25% of candidates. In general, Part (a) was not well answered with many candidates showing a lack of detailed knowledge of the course.

Part (b) elicited some very general answers which were awarded some marks.

In contrast, Part (c) was very well answered by most candidates who attempted the topic.

Topic 3: The Life and Death of Socrates

This topic was attempted by almost 30% of candidates.

The answers of many candidates to Part (a) showed a lack of specific knowledge of the topic. Part (b) elicited some very good responses and in general, Part (c) was well answered, with the exception of question (iv).

Topic 4: Mycenae and Troy

This was a very popular topic and was answered well overall.

As in a number of other topics, Part (a) was answered the least well. Candidates were unable to provide few relevant facts over the range of questions. At Ordinary Level, this is a relatively common occurrence across topics.

On the other hand, candidates who knew the facts of Schliemann's excavations at Troy gained very high marks in Part (b).

The answers to Part (c) were also of a high standard in a significant number of cases.

Topic 5: The Athenian Acropolis

This was a very popular topic and Examiners noted that candidate responses tended to be either very good or very poor. In contrast to a number of other topics, Part (a) was well answered. As in Topic 1, those who attempted more than the required number in Part (a) tended to gain more marks.

Part (b) was not answered well by a number of candidates. The specific nature of the questions meant that those who had a sound knowledge of the topic did very well while those who were unsure of their information did badly.

Part (c) was answered well by most candidates. In this topic, the candidates used the passage presented to search for the answers where appropriate.

Topic 6: The Quest of Aeneas

This is one of the most popular topics with almost 70% of candidates selecting it. In general, Examiners noted that some Ordinary Level candidates who studied both Topics 1 and 6 tended to confuse characters and events.

Part (a) was not well answered, with many candidates unable to display factual information.

Part (b) was poorly answered by a number of candidates. However, a few candidates did gain very high marks because of their thorough knowledge of the text.

Part (c) proved very challenging for the majority of candidates. Previous Chief Examiner's reports have alluded to the need to review these aspects of the course and the examination which are common to both Higher and Ordinary Levels. There is some evidence that the details and the language of the *Aeneid* are particularly challenging for Ordinary Level candidates.

Topic 7: The Roman Theatre – Comedy: The Swaggering Soldier

This topic was taken by almost 25% of candidates. In general, candidates did well in their answers in the three parts.

Part (a) was quite well answered by the majority of candidates.

Part (b) was well answered. Examiners noted differences in the length of candidate responses in this part. Examiners also noted that this tended to be characteristic of responses generally at this level.

Part (c) was well answered.

Topic 8: The Life and Times of Julius Caesar

This topic was taken by almost 40% of candidates and was generally well answered.

As in other topics, in Part (a) a number of candidates attempted more than the required three questions and tended to gain high marks by doing so.

In Part (b), candidates presented good factual information.

Part (c) was also well answered with candidates focusing on the passage where required to do so.

Topic 9: A Roman City – Pompeii

This was a very popular choice of topic and was answered well by the majority of candidates.

In Part (a), questions (i), (ii), (iv) and (v) were the most popular and, in general, were well answered. Many candidates answered more than the required three questions and tended to gain high marks by doing so.

Part (b) was well answered by most with question (i) being the only question which some candidates found problematic. Examiners noted some confusion between ‘amphitheatres’ and ‘theatres’ in a number of responses.

In Part (c), candidates answered questions (i) and (iii) and these were answered very well while (ii) and (iv) were not answered well by some candidates.

Topic 10: The Roman Army

This was a very popular topic. Examiners noted that many of the responses were very short and this brevity was the main cause of the low scoring of many candidates in this topic.

Part (a) was not well answered in general and Examiners noted a lack of precision in many candidates’ responses.

In Part (b), many responses were too brief, with many candidates treating just one point under each heading. In questions (iii) and (iv), a number of answers comprised general comments rather than specific information.

In Part (c), many candidates again gave general comments rather than specific information.

2.4 Conclusions

- Examiners noted the broad range of student outcomes in the subject at Ordinary Level in 2007. Examiners noted that some students had engaged with the subject and had prepared fully for the examination, while the evidence suggested that some candidates were somewhat less prepared for the examination. A small percentage of those candidates attempted all ten topics.
- The main reason for the low grades awarded to many candidates was the lack of relevant information in brief answers. Many candidates tended to write very little and offered little specific information.
- Examiners noted that the short questions in Part (a) of many topics were not answered well. This was generally due to a lack of concrete knowledge over the range of the topic.
- Examiners noted that some students who studied both epics (*The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid*) tended to confuse them.
- Some candidates appeared not to have read the stimulus material in Part (c) of topics. While not all questions necessarily relate to that material, there will always be at least one that does.

2.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students.

- Students should work on acquiring factual information across the range of each topic. This will allow them to answer the straightforward questions in Part (a) of the topics.
- In Part (c) of topics, candidates should read source/stimulus material and relate their answers to the material as appropriate.
- If students are studying both Topics 1 and 6 a clear distinction should be made between characters and events.
- In all topics, candidates should make every effort to write at some length.

3. Higher Level

3.1 Introduction

A total of 577 students sat the Classical Studies Higher Level examination paper in 2007. This is in keeping with the previous year, but it can be seen from the table below that there has been a significant increase in the numbers taking the paper in the past six years. The following table shows the numbers taking this paper in the past six years:

| Year | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total | 476 | 433 | 443 | 531 | 583 | 577 |

Table I: Number of candidates taking Classical Studies Junior Certificate (Higher Level) 2002-2007

The following table shows the number and percentage of candidates taking Classical Studies at Higher and Ordinary Levels.

| Year | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Higher Level (no.) | 476 | 433 | 443 | 531 | 583 | 577 |
| Higher Level % | 78.8 | 74.6 | 72.1 | 79.1 | 79.1 | 84.3 |
| Ordinary Level (no.) | 128 | 147 | 124 | 111 | 122 | 91 |
| Ordinary Level % | 21.2 | 25.3 | 27.9 | 20.9 | 20.9 | 15.7 |

Table II: Candidates taking Classical Studies at Higher Level and Ordinary Levels 2002-2007

It is clear that the numbers taking the Higher Level examination paper are significantly higher than those taking the Ordinary Level examination paper, and that 2007 saw a further increase in those numbers. This statistic is not particularly surprising given that the papers are 66% common in the first place.

3.2 Performance of Candidates

The following table shows the percentage of candidates achieving each grade in the Classical Studies Higher Level paper in 2007:

| Total | A | B | C | D | E | F | NG |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 91 | 19.9 | 32.6 | 26.7 | 14.0 | 5.9 | 1.2 | 0.2 |

Table III: Grade outcomes Junior Certificate Classical Studies (Higher Level) 2007

The following table shows the percentage of candidates achieving each grade in the previous five years:

| Year | Total | A | B | C | ABC | D | E | F | NG | EFNG |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| 2002 | 476 | 13.7 | 32.1 | 26.5 | 72.3 | 17.4 | 6.7 | 2.5 | 1.1 | 10.3 |
| 2003 | 433 | 16.9 | 26.1 | 30.3 | 73.2 | 19.4 | 5.1 | 2.1 | 0.2 | 7.4 |
| 2004 | 443 | 16.7 | 35.7 | 24.8 | 77.2 | 14.4 | 5.9 | 1.8 | 0.7 | 8.4 |
| 2005 | 531 | 15.3 | 37.3 | 30.3 | 82.9 | 12.6 | 3.4 | 0.8 | 0.4 | 4.5 |
| 2006 | 583 | 17.3 | 30.5 | 27.3 | 75.1 | 16.6 | 7.7 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 8.2 |
| 2007 | 577 | 19.9 | 32.6 | 26.2 | 78.7 | 14.0 | 5.9 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 7.3 |

Table IV: Grade outcomes Junior Certificate Classical Studies (Higher Level) 2002-2007

The results on this paper are consistently high and the A rate of 19.9% was particularly high this year. It is very encouraging that while the numbers taking the paper have increased, so has the quality of candidates' responses to the paper.

Examiners reported that candidates' answers were generally well-structured and contained much pertinent information. There is a tendency on this examination paper for the majority of candidates to attempt more than the required number of questions in Part (a). Candidates appear to be comfortable with the time available for the completion of the paper.

Many candidates displayed an in-depth knowledge of the topics and in many cases gained full marks in different parts of their chosen topics.

3.3 Analysis of candidate performance

Section A: The Greek World

Topic 1: The Wrath of Achilles

This was a very popular topic and was taken by more than 85% of candidates.

The majority of candidates answered Part (a) very well, and no question presenting any particular difficulty for them.

In response to the questions in Part (b), some candidates gave general answers and did not direct their responses to the specific role of the chosen character.

Part (c) was well answered.

Topic 2: Greece and Persia

This topic remains one of the least popular and the standard of answering was somewhat uneven among those candidates who chose the topic.

In general, Part (a) was well answered but Part (b) elicited a number of vague answers where candidates showed a lack of depth of knowledge of the topic.

In contrast, Part (c) was very well answered by most candidates who attempted the topic.

Topic 3: The Life and Death of Socrates

While this is not among the most popular topics, it is generally answered well by those who choose it. Examiners noted an engagement with this topic among the candidates who studied it. Answers to all three parts were of a high standard, particularly in Parts (b) and (c).

Topic 4: Mycenae and Troy

This is not among the most popular topics. In general, the standard of answering in Parts (a), (b) and (c) in 2007 was not particularly high. Examiners noted some areas of concern including:

- the limited knowledge of mythology shown by some candidates;
- unfamiliarity with key figures such as Blegen and Ventris;
- confusion between the two sites, Mycenae and Troy.

Topic 5: The Athenian Acropolis

This was a very popular topic and, in general, was well answered with Parts (a) and (c) being particularly well answered.

In Part (b), candidates displayed a good knowledge of the stories depicted on the interior and exterior of the temple. However, in (b) (iii) and (c) (iv), answers tended to be rather vague and displayed a lack of knowledge of the techniques of sculpting and of the Athenian influence on the modern world.

Topic 6: The Quest of Aeneas

This is one of the most popular topics on the course and Examiners noted a high degree of engagement with the topic on the part of candidates. All three Parts (a), (b) and (c) elicited responses which showed detailed knowledge of the epic. In Part (b), candidates used the structure of the questions to maximize marks.

Topic 7: The Roman Theatre – Comedy: The Swaggering Soldier

This topic is moderately popular. The standard of answering was quite high in 2007.

Part (a) presented few difficulties for candidates, while in Part (b), some candidates tended to confuse Palaestrio and Artotrogus. Some answers to Part (b) (i) lacked sufficient depth and development.

In Part (c), a small number of candidates had some difficulty when being tested on a general knowledge of the theatre.

Topic 8: The Life and Times of Julius Caesar

There was a moderate increase in the up-take of this topic in 2007. Answers to the topic have tended to be somewhat uneven in recent years. This year, examiners noted a slight overall improvement in answers

In Part (a) some candidates had difficulty providing the specific answers required, while Parts (b) and (c) were generally quite well answered.

Topic 9: A Roman City – Pompeii

Along with Topic 1, this topic remains one of the most popular on the course. Parts (a) and (c) saw many candidates answering to a high standard, although there were some candidates who had a limited knowledge of the fulling industry.

In Part (b), question (i) on public entertainment was very well answered, but answers to (ii) and (ii) were more general and, in some cases, lacked specificity.

Topic 10: The Roman Army

This was quite a popular topic and was well answered in general.

In Part (a), Latin terms (*corona civica*, *ballista*) were not familiar to some candidates while in Part (b), some did not give the Latin terms for items of armour and weapons. In Part (c), many candidates could not name the *groma*. Examiners expect this level of knowledge of Latin terms in this topic.

3.4 Conclusions

- Candidate outcomes in this examination paper are consistently high. It is encouraging to note that while the numbers taking the paper have increased, so also has the quality of candidates' responses to the paper.
- Examiners reported answers that were well-structured and that contained much pertinent information. Many candidates displayed an in-depth knowledge of the topics.
- The vast majority of candidates made every effort to exhibit as much as they knew on each topic. In this context, examiners noted that it appeared that most candidates made effective use of time management in the examination.
- A small number of candidates displayed a lack of specific knowledge in areas of some topics such as, for example, mythology (Topic 4), key persons (Topics 4 and 8) and technical terms (Topics 5 and 10).
- In Topic 4, examiners noted some confusion between the excavations at Mycenae and Troy.

3.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students.

The high standard of many candidates' answers reflect not only the candidates' own abilities, but also the professional manner in which they have been taught by their teachers. Candidates' ongoing enjoyment of the subject was clearly manifest from their examination scripts.

Recommendations

- Candidates should not disregard the mythology they have read in the first year of Classical Studies. This knowledge can be applied to a number of topics and can enrich the candidates' experience of the subject.
- In Topic 4, candidates should expand their knowledge of Schliemann's discoveries in *both* Troy and Mycenae and should differentiate clearly between them.
- Candidates should pay particular attention to the use of technical terms in Topic 5 *The Athenian Acropolis*, and in respect of weaponry and equipment in Topic 10 *The Roman Army*.
- In all topics, a high degree of specificity should be maintained in answering questions.