



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2012

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

This syllabus was first examined in the early eighties. As noted in previous Chief Examiner's Reports, the current syllabus requires revision with the consequent revision of the examination paper. This is particularly pertinent to addressing the differential between the Higher and Ordinary Level papers.

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. While questions set in Parts (a) and (c) on each topic are the same at both levels, a differentiation is made in the Marking Scheme, where appropriate. A separate paper, Paper X, provides photographs and illustrations required for answering some of the questions.

The examination is two and a half hours in duration.

The remainder of this report, which focuses on the 2012 examination, should be read in conjunction with the relevant examination papers and marking schemes which are available on the State Examination Commission website: www.examinations.ie.

2. Ordinary Level

2.1 Introduction

A total of 72 students sat the Classical Studies Ordinary Level examination paper in 2012. This is a slight decrease on 2011 and is consistent with a trend which can be noted from 2007. The following table shows the number and percentage of candidates taking Classical Studies at Ordinary Level and Higher Level in the past 6 years:

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Ordinary Level (no.)	91	83	97	93	79	72
Ordinary Level (%)	15.7	15.6	18.6	19.7	14.9	14.8
Higher Level (no.)	577	530	521	471	530	484
Higher Level (%)	84.3	84.4	81.4	80.3	85.1	85.1

Table 2: Number and percentage of candidates taking Junior Certificate Classical Studies at Ordinary and Higher Levels 2007-2012

It can be seen from these statistics that the numbers taking the Ordinary Level examination paper are consistently lower than those taking the Higher Level examination paper. This statistic is not particularly surprising given that the papers are 66% common in the first place. However, it does raise the question 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 2012 and in the previous five years:

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2007	91	9.9	14.3	15.4	39.6	19.8	29.7	7.7	3.3	40.7
2008	83	3.6	16.9	24.1	44.6	30.1	15.7	7.2	2.4	25.3
2009	97	1.0	9.3	20.6	30.9	29.9	19.6	16.5	3.1	39.2
2010	93	2.2	7.5	19.4	29.0	33.3	14.0	23.7	0.0	37.6
2011	79	1.3	13.9	24.1	39.2	38.0	19.0	1.3	2.5	22.8
2012	72	1.4	15.3	30.6	47.2	26.4	15.3	11.1	0.0	26.4

Table 4: Grade outcomes Classical Studies Junior Certificate (Ordinary Level) 2007-2012

The combined ABC grade rate of 47.2% shows an improvement of recent years. While the EFNG rate of 26.4% is very high it is lower than some rates in recent years. As can be seen from Table 4, the number of candidates awarded a grade E or less has been consistently high on this examination paper. Examiners have noted that the evidence from candidate responses shows that candidates in that grade range approach the examination paper with little interest or preparation. This is one explanation for the poor outcomes at this level. 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.

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. The length and challenge of the prescribed reading material requires rebalancing in the case of Ordinary Level candidates.

2.3. Analysis of candidate performance

Introduction

A general feature seen at Ordinary Level (but not at Higher Level) is the attempt by candidates to answer more than the required five topics and, in a smaller number of cases, attempting fewer than five topics. This year a small number of candidates attempted all ten topics. It was clear in these cases that the candidates were writing at random while attempting to answer questions on topics which they had not studied.

Topic 1: The Wrath of Achilles

Forty three (59.7%) candidates attempted this topic. In part (a) many students avoided questions (i), (ii) and (v) and those who did attempt them often got them wrong. Questions (iii), (iv) and (vi) were far more popular and often answered correctly. Candidate responses to part (b) were mixed as were those in part (c) where the standard of answering varied considerably.

Topic 2: Greece and Persia

Twenty four (33%) candidates attempted this topic. A number struggled with part (a) with many unable to answer questions (i), (iii), (iv) and (vi). Candidates fared much better on questions (ii) and (v). In part (b) questions (i) and (ii) were rarely answered correctly by candidates but they fared much better on questions (iii) and (iv). Most candidates did well on part (c) with questions (i), (ii) and (iii) rarely posing problems. Some struggled to answer questions (iv) but, on balance, the success rate in part (c) impacted positively on the overall results in this topic.

Topic 3: The Life and Death of Socrates

Thirty four (47%) candidates attempted this topic. In part (a) most candidates opted for questions (i), (ii) and (vi) and did well on these particular questions. On the other hand, candidates had difficulty answering questions (iii), (iv) and (v). Candidates tackled part (b) well and many got full or very high marks here. In part (c) most candidates did not know that Apollo was the god associated with Delos in question (i). Question (ii) was answered correctly by almost every candidate but not all candidates could answer (iii). Most answered (iv) correctly and had a large number of examples to draw on in order to support their answer about Socrates being afraid or not afraid of dying.

Topic 4: Mycenae and Troy

Twenty eight (38%) candidates attempted this topic. In general, candidates did not tackle the questions well. The most popular questions in part (a) were (ii) and (iii). The other four questions were typically answered incorrectly or not attempted at all. Most candidates fared very poorly in part (b). Very few answered (b) (i) or (ii) correctly and the success rate in (iii) and (iv) was only marginally better. In part (c) candidates also had some difficulty with (i) and (ii) but fared much better when answering (iii) and (iv).

Topic 5: The Athenian Acropolis

Fifty four (38%) candidates attempted this topic. Most candidates had no difficulty with part (a). The only question which was consistently avoided was (ii). Many candidates had difficulty with (i) and (iv) as they were unfamiliar with the component parts of the Parthenon and were unable to locate the pediment and metopes. On the other hand, most candidates were in a position to acquire marks in questions (ii) and (iii). It is important to note that candidates who presented a labelled sketch frequently gained marks in part (b). Occasionally, a sketch can articulate what is difficult to describe. The standard of answering in part (c) was mixed with a range of knowledge displayed.

Topic 6: The Quest of Aeneas

Thirty seven (51%) candidates attempted this topic. In part (a), with the exception of (vi), candidates answered well. The standard of answering in parts (b) and (c) was mixed with no particular question posing specific difficulty. In general, candidates tackled this topic well. This has been noted by examiners in the past and is surprising given the high literacy levels required to read *The Aeneid*. One possible reason for the success of this topic may be the attraction of the story for students of all intelligences and skills.

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

Twenty two (30%) candidates attempted this topic. The most commonly, and most successfully, answered questions in part (a) were (i), (iii) and (v). Almost all candidates did well in parts (b) and (c). This topic is generally well done at Ordinary Level each year. It is likely that the actual story line and the element of comedy (although of another era) catch the imagination.

Topic 8: The Life and Times of Julius Caesar

Forty three (60%) candidates attempted this topic. The least popular questions in part (a) were (iii) and (vi) but most attempted at least three other questions in part (a). Most candidates found part (b) difficult and were unable to recall some rudimentary facts to attempt to answer the questions. Conversely, most candidates did very well in part (c) with the majority answering questions (i), (ii) and (iii) correctly. Part (c) relied almost entirely on the quoted passage and the candidates did not have to recall their study of the subject to answer most questions.

Topic 9: A Roman City: Pompeii

Fifty six (77%) candidates attempted this topic. Most candidates answered the required three questions in part (a). Questions (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) and (vi) were equally popular. Part (b) posed problems for many candidates. Like the pediments and metopes in Topic 5, candidates could not locate the *peristylum* and *lararium* in a Roman house. The specificity of the questions revealed lacunae in the candidates' knowledge of technical terms such as the names of areas of the house. The result of this was that many candidates left (i) and (iii) unanswered. The performance of candidates in part (c) was better but not as strong as in the part (c) of other topics. Again, lack of knowledge of the well-known painting meant that candidates lost marks. However, most candidates gained full marks in question (iv) by describing the activities that took place in amphitheatres.

Topic 10: The Roman Army

Forty two (58%) candidates attempted this topic. Most candidates opted for question (i), (ii), (iii) and (vi) and did well. In part (b), particularly (ii) and (iii), candidates did quite well although it was common for candidates to write too briefly. Again, part (c) was answered well. Over the years, examiners have noted that candidates answer this topic well, provided they write enough. It is a topic which captures the interest of a significant number of candidates.

2.4. Conclusions

- The length and challenge of the prescribed reading material requires rebalancing in the case of Ordinary Level candidates. A number of topics are so literary based that they prove difficult for some Ordinary Level students. However, this observation comes with a *caveat* in relation to the epic topics as many students clearly enjoy the stories in spite of the challenges involved in their study. It is possible that the element of narrative and the manner in which teachers bring the stories to life is the reason for this.
- Candidates at Ordinary Level would benefit from a commensurate review of the structure of the examination paper. As long as part (c) on the paper remains common to both levels, candidates who struggle with aspects of literacy will be challenged by some comprehension passages.
- The standard of candidate response was quite good in a number of cases. These students are to be commended. However, it was evident from candidate responses that many candidates in the EFNG category approach the examination paper with little interest or preparation. A small number of candidates answered on topics that they obviously had not studied.
- A number of candidates left questions unanswered. This is a feature at Ordinary Level and makes loss of marks inevitable.
- A number of candidates tended to write very little and offered little specific information. This may be due to a lack of relevant information or a lack of perseverance and confidence.
- A number of candidates displayed a lack of specific knowledge of terms and terminology. This was a particular feature in Topics 5 and 9.
- Where sketches were used in responses, marks were usually gained.

2.5. Recommendations to teachers and students

- Students should be encouraged to attempt the required number of questions and write at some length. Students should have confidence in their own knowledge and views. This would allow them to elaborate in areas where they clearly have the knowledge but do not persist in writing.

Students should

- Continue to enjoy the story of the epics, Socrates and The Swaggering Soldier. Knowing the story and the plot means that you are in a position to answer the questions.
- Learn the terms for the different parts of temples and Roman houses.
- Persist in the examination and attempt the questions. When asked for ‘reasons’, give two reasons.
- Attempt the required number of questions. Blank spaces cannot be awarded any marks in the examination.
- If you find it difficult to describe the location of elements of e.g. a temple, draw a labelled sketch.

3. Higher Level

3.1 Introduction

A total of 484 students sat the Classical Studies Higher Level examination paper in 2012. This is lower than in 2011, but in keeping with 2010. It can be seen from the table below that there has been a decrease in the numbers taking the paper in the past six years.

The following table shows the number and percentage of candidates taking Classical Studies at Higher and Ordinary Levels in the past six years:

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Higher Level (no.)	577	530	521	471	530	484
Higher Level %	84.3	84.4	81.4	80.3	85.1	85.2
Ordinary Level (no.)	91	83	97	93	79	72
Ordinary Level %	15.7	15.6	18.6	19.7	14.9	14.8

Table 1: Candidates taking Classical Studies at Higher Level and Ordinary Levels 2007-2012

It can be seen from Table 1 that the numbers taking the Higher Level examination paper are significantly higher than those taking the Ordinary Level examination paper. This statistic is not particularly surprising given that the papers are 66% common in the first place and that students at each level are taught in the same class.

3.2 Performance of candidates

The following table shows the percentage of candidates achieving each grade in the Classical Studies Higher Level examination in 2012 and in the previous five years:

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2007	577	19.9	32.6	26.2	78.7	14.0	5.9	1.2	0.2	7.3
2008	530	19.1	28.1	24.9	72.1	20.0	5.1	2.6	0.2	7.9
2009	521	20.0	33.0	23.6	76.6	16.7	4.2	2.3	0.2	6.7
2010	471	20.2	33.8	24.0	77.9	11.7	6.8	3.0	0.6	10.4
2011	530	21.7	30.2	24.7	76.6	16.6	5.3	1.5	0.0	6.8
2012	484	19.2	32.9	27.1	79.1	13.6	4.8	1.7	0.8	7.2

Table 2: Grade outcomes Classical Studies Junior Certificate (Higher Level) 2007-2012

The results on this paper in 2012 are in line with those of the previous six years. The results in Classical Studies Higher Level are consistently high and an ABC rate of 79% was particularly high this year.

Examiners reported that candidates' answers were generally well-structured and contained much pertinent information. It was clear that the majority of candidates were very well prepared for the examination. The enjoyment of the subject shone through in many of the

answers. A remarkable feature noted by examiners is that this enjoyment appeared to spread across the full range of topics although different topics demand different skill sets. From topics such as *The Life and Death of Socrates* to *The Athenian Acropolis* to *The Roman Army* examiners noted the manner in which candidates' imagination had been fired by the teaching and learning process. In addition, this year some particularly proficient sketches were observed by examiners.

3.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

Introduction

Many candidates attempted more than the required number of questions in part (a) and many achieved full marks. Part (b) of the paper presented most challenges to the candidates and was frequently characterised by a tendency not to match the amount written to the marks awarded for the different questions. In general, the section of the paper on which the candidates scored most marks was part (c). Students are obviously gaining plenty of practice of this type of comprehension of source material in class.

There was very little evidence that candidates found themselves under time pressure at the end of the examination. Candidates had obviously been well prepared for the examination and managed their time effectively.

Where candidates lost marks it was usually due to not elaborating on their ideas and giving brief answers. For example, in both parts (b) and (c), some candidates did not give reasons for an answer when asked to do so, but confined themselves to 'a reason'. A tendency not to address all aspects of a question was also noted in some scripts.

The popularity of each Topic, as set out below in percentages, was calculated on one hundred sample scripts chosen randomly and in progression from the full cohort. These percentages are therefore an estimate.

Topic 1: The Wrath of Achilles

This was the most popular topic on the course with 92% of candidates choosing it. It is the most popular topic on the paper each year. In part (a), with the exception of question (v), most candidates handled the questions well. In part (b) there was a common tendency to write only about Priam's grief at the death of Hector and his retrieval of Hector's body thereby losing marks. A minority of candidates elaborated on other aspects of the part played by Priam in the *Iliad*, and thus gained full marks. A number of candidates wrote at the same length and depth in answer to questions (i) and (ii), in spite of 24 marks being allocated to (i) and 8 marks to (ii). This is a notable example of the tendency by some candidates not to reflect mark allocation in the length and depth of their responses. Candidates fared quite well in part (c) although in question (i) some candidates answered only the first part of the question and did not specify the animals to which Odysseus and the Trojans are compared. Examiners were of the view that many of these candidates could have answered that specific

question but did not do so. This is a feature which occurred in other topics as well and one which needs to be noted by teachers and students.

Topic 2: Greece and Persia

This was one of the least popular topics on the course with 15% of candidates choosing it. In part (a), most candidates answered questions (i), (ii), (v) and (vi) avoiding questions (iii) and (iv). Many answers for part (b) (ii) were either too short or mixed up details from Herodotus with details from the recent film *300*. This lack of elaboration is a feature noted in a number of topics while the ‘interference’ of modern versions of classical material is something to be aware of. In part (b), questions (i) and (iii) were usually answered correctly. Part (c) was well handled in general.

Topic 3: The Life and Death of Socrates

This topic was quite popular (38%) and is one which engages the interest and imagination of some candidates. In part (a), most candidates answered the required three questions for full marks. In general, candidates handled part (b) well but many did lose a small number of marks by not elaborating on their answers for (b) (i) and (ii). This is another example of an instance of answers which were too brief. In part (c), a number of candidates were not able to identify Apollo as the god associated with Delos in question (i) but the other questions in (c) were generally answered well.

Topic 4: Mycenae and Troy

This was one of the least popular topics with 29% of candidates choosing it. In part (a) questions (i), (ii), (iii) and (v) were the most popular. In part (b) question (i) many candidates wrote too little to score high or full marks. Some candidates drew pictures to support their answer even though the drawing of sketches was not asked for in the question. This usually resulted in higher marks for the candidate as, in many cases, these sketches demonstrated valid points. This is something to recommend to students – when unable to explain in words, a labelled sketch will suffice even when not suggested in the question. Part (c) was generally answered well.

Topic 5: The Athenian Acropolis

This topic was quite popular with 54% candidates choosing it. In general, candidates tackled the questions well and were well prepared. In part (a), many candidates answered question (ii) incorrectly but had no difficulty with the other questions in (a). Part (b) was generally answered well although some candidates were not able to name Lord Elgin in question (iii). In part (c) questions (i), (iii) and (iv) were answered correctly by most candidates but many were unable to identify the Erechtheum in question (ii).

Topic 6: The Quest of Aeneas

This was one of the most popular three topics on the course with 72% of candidates opting for it. It was very well answered this year with candidates displaying a good knowledge of the events of *The Aeneid*. It is notable that students really engage with this topic. The only weak area was in (b) question (ii) where some candidates described events long after Aeneas had left Troy such as being shipwrecked near Carthage. Candidates need to be reminded to

read questions carefully and take particular note where events are circumscribed by a time-frame.

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

This topic was quite popular with 50% candidates taking it. In part (a), with the exception of question (vi), candidates did very well. Questions (i), (ii) and (iii) were particularly popular. In part (b), some candidates lost marks as they did not write enough in questions (ii) and (iii) but most candidates scored high marks. In part (c), most candidates answered question (i) correctly but a common error amongst candidates was simply not writing enough to secure full marks in questions (ii) and (iii).

Topic 8: The Life and Times of Julius Caesar

This was one of the less popular topics with 20% candidates taking it. Candidates found this topic difficult, particularly part (b). The standard of answering in part (a) was variable with many students losing marks in questions (ii) (only naming one wife) and (iv) (only having a cursory description of the surrender of Vercingetorix). Very few candidates answered question (iii) correctly. The standard of answering in part (b) was poor with many candidates unable to name all three members of the First Triumvirate in question (i). A number of candidates did not even attempt questions (ii) and (iii). This is surprising given the centrality of the First Triumvirate in the topic. In part (c) candidates gleaned more marks than in the previous two parts. This is significant in that most of the questions were based on the text provided and not on the general study of the topic.

Topic 9: A Roman City - Pompeii

This was a very popular topic (84% attempt rate) and was generally answered well. In part (a) very few candidates answered (v) correctly but had no great difficulty with the rest of the questions in part (a). Part (b) was also handled well by most candidates. A number of candidates opted to use a labelled sketch as part of the answer in question (i) and this enhanced their responses. Question (ii) required candidates to write on what they liked and disliked but a minority of candidates did not address both parts of the question, thereby losing marks unnecessarily. In another instance where candidates did not pay due attention to mark allocation, examiners noted that although part (b) (i) had a mark allocation of 24 marks for 'layout and decoration', some candidates wrote brief responses and wrote at more length in (ii) which had 8 marks allocated.

In part (c), a minority of candidates lost marks in questions (ii) and (iii) but most candidates responded well.

Topic 10: The Roman Army

This was quite a popular topic with 46% of candidates taking it. In part (a) the majority of candidates answered the required three questions successfully. The most popular choices were questions (i), (ii) and (iii). A number of candidates who attempted questions (iv) and (v) did so unsuccessfully. In part (b), responses were generally of a high standard. However, a significant number of candidates did not address the section of the question which required a description of what happened when the Romans captured a town. This is an example of the

need to read the question carefully and to address all elements. In part (c), the majority of candidates did well displaying a detailed knowledge of a Roman fort.

3.4 Conclusions

- Examiners reported that candidates' answers were generally well-structured and contained much pertinent information. Enjoyment of the subject, and engagement with the teaching and learning process was evident in the majority of scripts. Both teachers and students are to be commended in this respect
- It was clear that the majority of candidates were very well prepared for the examination. The enjoyment of the subject shone through in many of the answers. A remarkable feature noted by examiners is that this enjoyment appeared to spread across the full range of topics although different topics demand different skill sets.
- Candidates were generally very well prepared for the examination and managed their time effectively.
- The syllabus and examination continue to serve candidates well at this level. As has been noted above, this is not the case at Ordinary Level.
- Where candidates lost marks it was usually due to not elaborating on their ideas and giving brief answers. For example, in both parts (b) and (c), some candidates did not give reasons for an answer when asked to do so, but confined themselves to 'a reason'.
- Examiners also noted a tendency not to match the breadth and depth of responses to the marks awarded for the different questions. Candidates sometimes wrote at the same length or brevity irrespective of the number of marks allocated for different questions in the same part of a topic.
- Some candidates lost marks when they did not always address all parts of the question or when they did not give reasons for their answer.
- Drawing labelled sketches, even when not specifically suggested in the question, helped to illustrate the location of features of temples and houses in an efficient manner.
- There was evidence that some candidates' understanding of events in prescribed texts was confused by modern film versions of these events.

3.5 Recommendations for Teachers and Students

- Students should always read a question carefully and take note of different elements in the question. Where there are different elements, candidates are expected to address them for full marks.
- Candidates should note carefully the number of marks allocated to a question or sub-question and match the breadth and depth of the response to the marks awarded. This is particularly important in part (b) of each topic.
- Candidates may draw labelled sketches even when not specifically suggested in the question as this can help to illustrate e.g. the location of an architectural feature in an efficient manner.
- Students should attempt all of the questions within a topic. It is impossible for the examiner to award any marks if a question has been left unanswered.
- Students should try to avoid confusing modern films with the prescribed texts.