



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2011

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

The current syllabus for Leaving Certificate Classical Studies was first examined in 1985. No review of the syllabus has taken place since that time. However, 2011 saw a change in the requirements of the examination paper. This change, introduced without revision of the syllabus, meant that candidates were required to answer six questions instead of eight. The rubrics on the choice of topics within groups remained as before but the change in what was required of candidates resulted in more choice on the paper. The intention of this change was to allow candidates time to reflect on their answers and to structure discourse.

1.2 The Examination

The Leaving Certificate Classical Studies examination at both Ordinary Level and Higher Level comprises four questions on each of ten topics. The topics are divided into three groups. Candidates are required to answer questions on four topics as follows: one topic must be chosen from each of the three groups and the fourth topic may be chosen from any one of the three groups. Candidates are required to answer one or two questions from each of their chosen topics. Each question carries fifty marks. The total number of marks for the paper is 300.

2. Ordinary Level

2.1 Introduction

The results in Ordinary Level Classical Studies have been characterised in recent years by a high EFNG rate. Previous Chief Examiner’s Reports have set out the reasons for the low results. It was expected that the additional time resulting from the reduction in the number of questions to be attempted by the candidates would ameliorate the situation in 2011 and thereafter.

2.2 Performance of Candidates

Contrary to expectations, the results, as set out in Figure 1 below, indicate a similar trend to previous years. This report will highlight the reasons for these results.

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2006	75	9.3	8.0	24.0	41.3	32.0	18.7	5.3	2.7	26.7
2007	106	2.8	16.0	24.5	43.4	33.0	13.2	7.5	2.8	23.6
2008	83	1.2	6.0	26.5	33.7	31.3	9.6	14.5	10.8	34.9
2009	96	0.0	14.6	18.8	33.3	25.0	18.8	15.6	7.3	41.7
2010	106	1.9	10.4	19.8	32.1	35.8	16.0	13.2	2.8	32.1
2011	57	1.8	5.3	24.6	31.6	35.1	17.5	8.8	7.0	33.3

Figure 1: Leaving Certificate Ordinary Level results in Classical Studies 2006 - 2011

It can be seen from Figure 1 that the numbers taking the paper at this level dropped significantly in 2011. This is the lowest number taking the paper since 1985.

The results are in keeping with previous years, in spite of the change in the number of questions required to be attempted on the paper and the subsequent additional time available to candidates vis-à-vis previous years. The EFNG rate remains high and reflects the overall poor standard of answering.

Figure 2 outlines the number of questions attempted by the candidates on this paper:

No. of Questions	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	16
No. of Candidates	5	5	22	10	5	2	1	1	1	1	3	1

Figure 2 The number of questions attempted by candidates (Leaving Certificate Ordinary Level 2011)

It is seen in Figure 2 that only 22 candidates attempted the required six questions. Of the remaining 35 candidates, 10 (almost 20%) attempted fewer than the required number of questions. Five candidates attempted four questions while another five attempted five questions.

On the other hand, a number of candidates attempted far more than the required six questions – generally with just a word or two on each. In fact, in many cases the more questions attempted the lower the mark attained by candidates.

Examiners noted that the candidates found the paper clear; there was, for instance, no evidence of difficulty in the interpretation of the questions by candidates. There was, however, evidence that the main difficulty for many candidates stemmed from poor knowledge of the course.

In the most popular topics (see below) some candidates answered the questions well, showing a good knowledge of the relevant parts of the course. However, few candidates wrote enough to achieve a very high mark. Candidates were either satisfied to stop at writing a minimum or were unable to engage with the question in greater depth and detail.

An unusual feature of the answering this year was the fact that all topics were attempted by a small number of candidates. However, some candidates answered very briefly on topics that, it would appear, they had not studied.

There were occasions where it was clear that the candidates had the knowledge required to answer the question but they did not apply that knowledge to develop points. This may indicate a lack of practice at writing answers to questions which require development.

2.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

The most popular topics were:

Topic 2 (Alexander the Great),
Topic 5 (Greek Drama),
Topic 6 (Ancient Epic),
Topic 8 (Art and Architecture in Greek Society), and
Topic 10 (Roman Art and Architecture).

Topic 7 (Augustan Literature) was not popular. Topics 1 (Athens at War) and Topic 9 (The Philosopher in Society) were answered by very few, while no candidates chose Topics 3 (Life and Thought in the Late Roman Republic) or Topic 4 (Roman Historians) in a serious manner.

Topic 1:

A small number of candidates chose this topic and, in general, the quality of answering was not very high. Questions (i) and (ii) were most popular and those candidates who attempted these achieved reasonably well.

Topic 2:

Most candidates attempted this topic with all four questions proving equally popular. Question (i), (a) and (b), was well answered by candidates who showed familiarity with the battle and its aftermath. Question (ii), (a) and (b), was also answered quite well by those who chose it. Candidates' knowledge of the crossing of the Gedrosian Desert was good. In general, the remaining two questions were poorly answered.

Topic 3:

Candidates did not make any serious attempt at the questions on this topic. Those who did attempt some questions on the topic tended to attempt a number of other topics and questions with equal lack of success.

Topic 4:

Candidates did not make any serious attempt at the questions on this topic. Those who did attempt some questions on the topic tended to attempt a number of other topics and questions with equal lack of success.

Topic 5:

All four questions on this topic were popular with candidates. Candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the outline of both plays. Some very good candidates were well rewarded here for greater familiarity with both plays; on the other hand, some other candidates tended to write at some length but with little or no relevance to the question or even the play in question.

Topic 6:

This was another popular topic and the results were similar to those of Topic 5. All questions were attempted with equal popularity. Candidates' knowledge of both epics ranged from very good to poor.

Topic 7:

Very few candidates chose this topic. The few who attempted these questions favoured questions (i), (ii) and (iii). Many candidates showed a degree of familiarity with the prescribed texts, but some tended to give undeveloped answers which did not yield them high marks.

Topic 8:

All four questions were attempted by candidates who chose this topic. In general, the standard of answering was not good. Although the candidates demonstrated some familiarity with the pieces of sculpture in questions (i), (ii) and (iv), they had little understanding of the period of Greek

sculpture to which they belonged and the typical features of that period. The question on the Treasury was poorly answered.

Topic 9:

This topic was chosen by very few candidates. Those who did attempt the questions here did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the topic.

Topic 10:

The questions on this topic were all equally popular with the candidates. Candidates scored relatively well in these questions, showing familiarity with all of the pieces featured on Paper X.

2.4 Conclusions

- The number of candidates taking Ordinary Level Classical Studies in 2011 was significantly lower than in previous years.
- The results are in line with those of previous years.
- The additional time available to candidates in 2011, due to the reduction in the number of questions requiring to be attempted, did not appear to have had an impact on the results.
- While the general standard of answering was somewhat low, a number of candidates handled the paper quite well and showed a serious application of knowledge in their answers.
- Where candidates knew the material they were able to answer straightforward questions at some length and thus gain marks.
- A failure to develop answers militated against many candidates achieving high marks.
- Poor knowledge of the course was evident in a number of answers.

2.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

- Teachers are encouraged to ensure that students have sufficient practice in applying their knowledge of the prescribed material to essay-type questions. It is also essential that students have adequate practice in persisting in writing at some length in order to develop points.
- There is extensive choice on the examination paper and the level of choice has increased with the reduction in the number of questions to be attempted. In preparing for the examination, students should be aware of this choice and the need to read the questions carefully before choosing.
- Students are encouraged to have confidence in their knowledge of the course and to persist when answering questions.
- Students are also encouraged to address the question directly without straying from the point.
- Students are reminded that nothing will replace knowledge and study of the course. Where this knowledge exists, candidates will do well on this paper.

3. Higher Level

3.1 Introduction

As previously stated in this report, 2011 saw the reduction in the number of questions required to be answered by candidates – from eight to six. The rubrics regarding choice of topics remained as before and so candidates were required to answer questions drawn from the four topics they had studied as follows: two from each of two topics and one from each of the remaining two topics.

3.2 Performance of Candidates

Figure 1 shows the number of candidates and the results in Classical Studies Higher Level for the past six years.

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2006	721	8.2	24.5	33.1	65.9	21.4	8.2	3.2	1.4	12.8
2007	695	7.9	25.6	30.9	64.5	24.3	6.6	3.6	1.0	11.2
2008	683	9.4	26.2	30.0	65.6	20.5	8.3	4.1	1.5	13.9
2009	700	8.9	26.9	35.1	70.9	20.1	6.6	2.1	0.3	9.0
2010	739	8.7	25.8	29.5	64.0	21.7	9.5	3.4	1.5	14.3
2011	588	10.0	27.6	29.3	66.8	21.4	7.5	3.2	1.0	11.7

Figure 1: Leaving Certificate Higher Level results in Classical Studies 2006 - 2011

It will be seen in Figure 1 that the numbers taking the Higher Level paper were significantly lower this year. The other notable feature was the similarity of the results vis-à-vis previous years.

In general, the standard of answering was satisfactory and a higher number of candidates achieved an A grade than in previous years. However, a significant percentage of the candidates who attempted this paper were not as prepared for the examination as they should have been. These candidates displayed a scant knowledge of the core texts. This was evidenced by the relatively high EFNG rate. A number of candidates who presented for the Higher Level examination would appear to have been better suited to the Ordinary Level examination

The majority of candidates completed the paper and fulfilled the requirement of answering six questions. A significant number of candidates answered more than six questions but not more than eight.

Reliance upon prepared notes was apparent in some candidates' responses. This resulted in lack of real engagement with the actual questions and the presentation of information which was not always relevant.

Some candidates answered very well on three or four questions but fared less well in the remaining two or three questions. It had been expected that the additional time afforded to candidates in 2011 would improve this situation. It is possible, however, that some candidates had limited the range of their preparation for all four topics this year in the mistaken belief that the reduced number of questions to be answered allowed such 'cutting of the course'.

Questions which required more factual answers yielded higher marks to candidates for the most part than the questions which demanded analysis, discussion, evaluation or informed opinion. A number of candidates relied upon retelling the story of the core texts rather than engaging with the question as asked. While this showed that these candidates knew the course and allowed the achievement of mid-range marks, it also showed that they did not apply their knowledge in analysis and reflection.

However, a number of candidates did very well on this paper, as evidenced by the 10% A rate and the 66.8% ABC rate. These candidates addressed the questions directly and displayed a comfortable approach to analysing, evaluating and offering an opinion based on reflection combined with knowledge.

3.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

Topic 1.

(i): The vast majority of the candidates who chose this question performed quite well in Part (a). Candidates were acquainted with the effects of the plague on the people of Athens, both physical and social. However, the qualities of Thucydides as an historian posed a greater challenge to them with the resulting loss of marks in Part (b).

(ii): Excellent knowledge of the Battle of Mantinea yielded high marks for a number of candidates who chose to answer this topic.

(iii): Very few candidates chose this question. Those who did attempt it answered it quite badly.

(iv): This question was attempted by very few candidates.

Topic 2:

(i): This question was a popular choice among candidates. There were some good responses, focusing on key moments in Alexander's life relevant to the question. However, candidates often struggled to discuss the significance of his relationships in relation to his character.

(ii): This question was a very popular choice for candidates who studied this topic and was answered to a very high standard. Most candidates agreed with the statement upon which the question was based and pointed out Darius' shortcomings in relation to the battles of Granicus, Issos and Gaugamela, as well as referring to his correspondence with Alexander. Candidates also dealt very well with Part (b).

(iii): This question was not answered consistently well by the candidates who attempted it. While the majority of candidates fared well in Part (a), stating correctly what induced Alexander to attempt to take the Rock, many lost marks in Part (b) due to poor knowledge of the detail of the challenges presented by this particular location. A number of candidates also confused the location with other siege sites.

(iv): This was also a very popular choice of question. Most candidates did well in Part (a) but fared less well in Part (b). The problems in Part (b) stemmed from the failure of many candidates to structure a coherent analysis of the reasons for Alexander's victory and their lack of detailed knowledge of the battle itself.

Topic 3:

The small number of candidates who chose this topic did not achieve high marks. This was largely due to the brevity of answers coupled with a poor grasp of the prescribed material. There was no discernible popularity of questions among the candidates who attempted this topic.

Topic 4:

Questions (ii) and (iv) were the most popular among the small number of candidates who presented this topic. In general, the standard of answering was fair.

Topic 5:

(i): Candidates answered Part (a) well in this question. However, in Part (b), while candidates knew why the Thebans admired Oedipus, many found it difficult to argue in a coherent way that his great qualities contributed to Oedipus' downfall. Many responses consisted mainly of narrative with little or no attempt at analysis.

(ii): Very few candidates attempted this question. Those who did attempt it did not achieve high marks.

(iii): This was a very popular choice among those candidates who presented this topic. While candidates had a good knowledge of the various aspects of Jason's character, many struggled to apply this knowledge effectively in answering the question. An inability to analyse the aspects of Jason's character which led to his downfall was evident in many answers. As a result many good candidates who did well in most of their other questions scored a lower mark in this question.

(iv): This question, although far more popular than *The Frogs* question, was not chosen by candidates as frequently as the other two plays. Those candidates who did attempt this question did well for the most part. These demonstrated a good knowledge of the play and were able to discuss the views of the human race revealed by the characters in *Prometheus Bound*.

Topic 6:

(i): This question proved very popular with those candidates who chose to attempt questions on this topic. Most did well in Part (a) but some failed to identify two aspects of the Phaeacian way of life which did not suit Odysseus.

(ii): This was another popular question. The role of Anchises was outlined well by many candidates. However, Part (b) presented some difficulties for candidates in discussing the importance of fathers. Many tended to summarise events in which fathers featured, without offering any personal comment on them or, indeed, on why Virgil focused on fathers.

(iii): This question was very well handled by candidates. Most candidates showed an excellent knowledge of both texts and compared them very well. However, some candidates erred by discussing events which occurred after the voyages.

(iv): Very few candidates attempted this question, and while good knowledge of *The Odyssey* was evident, knowledge of *The Táin* was not evident.

Topic 7:

(i): This was a very popular question among those who chose this topic. In Part (a) those who showed detailed knowledge of at least three poems and highlighted Propertius' attitude to love gained high marks. However, some candidates fared less well by writing quotations from his poems without any meaningful comment on Propertius. In Part (b) candidates fared less well in offering examples of the poet's sense of humour. In general, candidates either scored very well or quite poorly on this question.

(ii): Very few candidates attempted this question. Those who did attempt it showed a lack of familiarity with the writings of Livy and the qualities which the historian most admired in the early Romans.

(iii): For the most part those candidates who opted to answer this question showed a good knowledge of the poem *The Journey to Brundisium* in Part (a) and scored well. Equally the ability of the majority of candidates to outline what the poem revealed about the character of Horace yielded them high marks here also.

(iv): Candidates who chose this question generally fared better in Part (a) than in Part (b). There was evidence that candidates knew the poem *Misery in Exile* as required in (a), but found it challenging to find evidence of the different moods of Horace in his other poems.

Topic 8:

(i): Very few of the candidates who chose this topic attempted this question. In general, a number of candidates had difficulty both in describing what was depicted on the vase and in commenting on its artistic quality. Candidates also displayed a lack of clarity in their understanding of the technique used in the production of Black Figure vases.

(ii): This question elicited very different responses. On the one hand, a number of candidates had a good knowledge of the theatre at Epidauros and gained high marks. On the other hand, a number of candidates had little knowledge and appeared to be attempting to answer with little or no preparation.

(iii): The candidates who chose this question answered well in Parts (a) and (c) and (d). However, there was a noticeable lack of appreciation of the different elements of the style and the need to use correct terminology.

(iv): This was a popular choice among candidates and a number gained high marks. However, some candidates failed to identify the statue accurately and this led to a loss of marks. While the majority of candidates knew what purpose it served, few could give more than two features typical of its period and so lost marks in Part (c). There were some excellent answers to Part (d) on the method of 'hollow casting' used in making bronze statues.

Topic 9:

(i): This was a very popular choice of question among the candidates who chose this topic and many candidates gained high marks. Many displayed a very good knowledge of the 'magnificent myth' and of Socrates' view. A significant proportion of candidates also engaged fully with Part (d) and presented informed views of their own.

(ii): This question was not attempted by any candidate. This may indicate that candidates are not studying the *Life of Dion* which is prescribed material.

(iii): This was a very popular choice of question. In general, candidates displayed good knowledge of what Plato proposed to ban in the education of children and as a result scored high marks here. Candidates also engaged well with Part (d).

(iv): This question was attempted by a small minority of the candidates who chose this topic. Most did not achieve high marks due to a tendency to make general statements with little or no substantiation based on the prescribed material. This type of question may appear attractive to some candidates but it is essential that answers are supported by sound knowledge of the course.

Topic 10:

(i): Although not the most popular question in this topic, the majority of candidates who attempted this question achieved high marks. They ably identified the labelled features in Part (a) and their subsequent knowledge of the town's development and leisure facilities enabled them to score well in Parts (b) and (c).

(ii): This was a popular choice of question among the candidates who chose this topic. There was some loss of marks where candidates referred to the stage/*scaena* rather than the stage backdrop/*scaenae frons* in Part (a). However, most candidates displayed a good knowledge of this theatre and Roman theatres in general to score high marks.

(iii): The candidates who chose this very popular question generally achieved high marks. Many identified the bust correctly and assessed the depiction of Commodus very well. A great number of these candidates also handled the comparison with the *Ara Pacis* very well.

(iv): This question was not as popular as questions (ii) and (iii) in this topic. A significant number of candidates who did opt to attempt this question lost marks in Part (a) as they did not fully explain what was happening in the painting. Although most fared better in Part (b), very few were able to discuss Woodford's view on Roman painting in a meaningful way in Part (c) and thus lost marks.

3.4 Conclusions

- The numbers taking Classical Studies Higher Level in 2011 were significantly lower than in previous years.
- In general, the standard of answering was satisfactory with a higher number of A grades than in previous years.
- The majority of candidates completed the paper and fulfilled the requirement of answering six questions.
- A significant number of candidates answered more than six questions but not more than eight.
- A number of candidates did very well on this paper, as evidenced by the 10% A rate and the 66.8% ABC rate. These candidates addressed the questions directly and displayed a comfortable approach to analysing, evaluating and offering an opinion based on reflection combined with knowledge.
- A number of candidates who attempted this paper were not adequately prepared for the examination. These candidates displayed poor knowledge of the core texts. This is evidenced by the relatively high EFNG rate of 11.7%.
- A number of candidates who presented for the Higher Level examination would have been better served by taking the Ordinary Level examination.
- There was some evidence that candidates had not adequate practice in applying their knowledge of the prescribed material to essay-type questions. In these instances, it was clear that some good candidates did in fact have the knowledge but did not apply that knowledge to the specific question, as required.
- There was also evidence that some candidates may not have had adequate practice in persisting in writing at some length in order to develop points. This was clear from the short comments made by candidates which, although pertinent to the question, remained underdeveloped and unsupported.
- Reliance upon prepared notes was apparent in some candidates' responses. This resulted in a lack of real engagement with the actual question and the presentation of information which was not pertinent to the actual question.
- Some candidates answered very well on three or four questions but fared less well in the remaining two or three questions. It had been expected that the additional time afforded to candidates in 2011 would improve this situation. However, this did not occur. It is

possible that some candidates had limited the range of their preparation for all four topics this year in the mistaken belief that the reduced number of questions to be answered allowed such ‘cutting of the course’.

- Questions which required more factual answers yielded higher marks to candidates for the most part than the questions which demanded analysis, discussion, evaluation or informed opinion.
- A number of candidates relied upon retelling the story of the core texts rather than engaging with the question as asked. While this showed that the candidate knew the course and allowed the achievement of mid-range marks, it also showed that they did not apply their knowledge in analysis and reflection.
- In the topics on art and architecture a lack of the use of correct terminology led to the loss of marks by some candidates.

3.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students:

- Practice at writing focussed answers to questions is essential preparation for this examination. Candidates will do well on this paper if they address the questions and focus their answers accordingly.
- Discussion, analysis and evaluation are important aspects of this paper. Students require time to develop these skills in essay writing in the course of their study of the subject. Where candidates can do this with the ease of familiarity, they do well on this paper.
- A number of questions call for opinion supported by knowledge of texts. Oral discussion in the class-room fosters the confidence and skill required to address such questions successfully.
- Students who show solid knowledge of the course can handle this paper well. However, for very high marks this knowledge must be applied to the question as asked. In this respect the tendency to rely on narrative must be avoided. Where discussion or analysis is called for and a candidate simply presents narrative, there is a mid-range limit to the number of marks accorded for that answer.
- Reliance on notes rather than sound knowledge of the core texts militates against full engagement with this subject and may seriously disadvantage candidates in the examination.
- It is essential that students cover the course and do not see the reduction in questions to be answered as an opportunity to ‘cut’ the course.
- The increase in choice on the paper has created a concomitant increase in decisions to be taken on the day of the examination. Students are encouraged to read the questions carefully and to make a judicious choice.
- Students who are finding the subject especially challenging at this level are urged to sit the Ordinary Level paper. This would be a positive choice for these students as they would not be taking the significant risk of sitting the Higher Level paper.
- Students should pay particular attention to command words and phrases such as ‘discuss’, ‘analyse’, ‘assess’, ‘compare’ and ‘in your opinion’; it is essential that answers to such questions are developed appropriately and in line with the question.
- Students should develop a clear understanding of the correct terminology used in the study of art and architecture.

