



**LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

**2000**

***LATIN***

**HIGHER AND ORDINARY LEVELS**

**CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT**

# HIGHER LEVEL

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Leaving Certificate Latin examination paper comprises five questions. Question 1 consists of a choice between a passage for composition and a comprehension passage, each worth 75 marks. Question 2 offers four Latin passages, two prose and two poetry, for translation into the vernacular: candidates must choose three of those four passages. Question 2 carries 130 marks. Question 3 requires candidates to translate a passage and to answer subsidiary questions from either of the two prescribed texts. (In 2000 the prescribed texts were Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, Book XXI and Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IX.) Question 3 carries 90 marks. Question 4 comprises three subsections which examine grammar and scansion. Question 4 carries 30 marks. Question 5 consists of Section A (History) and B (Art and Literature), each of which offer three questions. Candidates must choose to answer one question from each section, and a third from either section. Question 5 carries 75 marks. The total number of marks for the paper is 400.

## 2. PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES

A total of 146 students sat the Latin Higher Level paper in 2000. This is an increase on last year as **Appendix 1** shows. It would be wrong to assume that this means that the tide has turned and that there is a revival of interest in Latin. **Appendix 1** also shows that this is the first time the numbers have increased since 1972. Those Tables also outline the dramatic decline in the number of students taking Latin in the past thirty years. An increase such as that experienced in 2000 is statistically insignificant when dealing with such small numbers.

The percentage results of the 2000 Higher Level examination were as follows:

Total	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
146	11.6	15.0	10.3	13.0	17.8	8.9	8.9	5.5	4.1	1.3	2.0	0.7	-	0.7

This represents a C+ rate of 91.1% and an E- rate of 1.4%.

The results by subgrade for 1997, 1998 and 1999 are given in **Appendix 2**.

The results of the 2000 Higher Level Latin paper were in keeping with recent years. The standard of answering was very high with evidence of strong commitment and extremely hard work on the part of this small cohort of students and their teachers. This is particularly commendable as some teachers work in conditions that are less than ideal – during lunch time and after normal school hours.

## 3. ANALYSIS OF PAPER

### Question 1

Section A, Prose composition, was the more popular choice this year. It was taken by a higher percentage of the total number of candidates than in the last few years. The standard of answering was very high, with the vocabulary presenting only a few problems. The word for ‘very great’ was often incorrectly given as *magnus*, and the

adverbs ‘secretly’ and ‘silently’ were poorly known. The preposition ‘inside’ in the penultimate line of the passage also caused problems. These are surprising difficulties as candidates would be expected to be familiar with such vocabulary.

Most candidates easily identified and translated the constructions in the passage. In general, there was a very good standard of grammatical and vocabulary knowledge evident in the answers to Section A.

Section B was attempted by fewer than one third of the candidates. The general standard of answering of this section was weak with many candidates answering without precision. Candidates found difficulty translating key words throughout the passage; for example, *beatus*, *delectat*, *degustare* and *cervicibus* proved problematic.

A small minority of candidates achieved very high marks in Section B. However, the unusually high number opting for Section A would seem to suggest that many candidates approach the examination prepared to choose their option on seeing the paper.

### **Question 2**

In general, the standard of answering on all the unseen passages was good. Passage D (Ovid) was by far the most popular while passage B (Virgil) proved to be the most challenging for the students.

Examiners have noted that students sometimes tend to forget that a poet may have employed great brevity of expression. This hampers their ability to translate well. In this year’s prose passages, examiners also noted that candidates showed a lack of familiarity with military vocabulary such as *castra*, *infestis signis*, *in prima acie*, and many similar words and phrases. The examiners have highlighted two other areas of note: firstly, it is very important for candidates to complete the required number of unseen passages, and, secondly, that they make full use of both captions and vocabulary aids.

### **Question 3**

#### **Section A (i) and (ii).**

This section was answered by only a very small number of candidates. (This is consistent with the trend in recent years where Virgil is by far the more popular choice of study.) The standard of answering was excellent. The students showed a firm knowledge of the text and the background information required.

#### **Section B (i)**

The Virgil prescribed text was presented by the great majority of students. In general, the standard of answering was excellent. The students are required to translate the prescribed passage with accuracy.

**(ii)** The standard of answering of the questions on the text was also high. Examiners note that occasionally candidates do not answer these questions with the degree of relevance required. For example, question (d) required reference to the *characters* of Nisus and Euryalus, and not simply to their various actions in Book IX. On the other hand, this year saw excellent answers on Virgil’s use of similes with reference to, and evaluation of, examples of the similes in Book IX.

#### **Question 4**

- (i) (a) and (b). This grammar question continues to prove difficult for candidates. However, answers this year were of a higher standard than in the recent past.
- (ii) While this was very well answered in general, students would be well advised to write out each part of the verb in full and to avoid all abbreviation as it can lead to lack of clarity in answers.
- (iii) The standard of answering here was excellent.

#### **Question 5**

In general, candidates answered this question very well, showing an ability to provide relevant information and to concentrate on what was asked.

#### **Section A**

- (i) The system of external and internal rule established by Augustus was not a popular choice. Candidates referred to the social policy of Augustus and his developments in administration when dealing with internal rule. Some reference to the manner in which Augustus ruled abroad was essential but not always present in answers.
- (ii) This question on Caligula and Titus was very popular. Answers made reference to the refreshing start to Caligula's reign followed by his rapid change in outlook and the disastrous consequences that followed. The eruption of Mount Vesuvius and the Great Fire of AD 80 were the events during the reign of Titus most frequently referred to by candidates.
- (iii) In writing notes on two of these questions candidates experienced difficulty with the questions on Tiberius and emperor worship. In writing on Tiberius most candidates referred to the increased influence of Sejanus as a result of Tiberius' departure to Capri and some also referred to the decline in Tiberius' mental health during his time away from Rome.

A good answer on emperor worship might have included the attitude of Augustus towards this and how it varied throughout the Roman Empire. Reference to any other emperor who claimed divinity could also be included in such an answer – for example, how Gaius announced himself as a god ruler.

#### **Section B**

- (i) This question on Catullus was very popular. Good answers referred to the three events which dominated the life of Catullus (relationship with his brother, civil service post, and his love for Lesbia.) Reference to poems other than those written to Lesbia was necessary and could have included his Elegiac poetry, *epyllion* or *epithalamia*.
- (ii) This question on Roman architecture was attempted by a minority of candidates. Among the good answers received were those which described four elements of Roman architecture such as temples, theatres, bridges, and aqueducts while emphasising the practical, ornamental and impressive qualities of the structures.
- (iii) This question was a very popular choice. In general, candidates took care to ensure that they answered the questions with precision.

#### **4. OVERALL GENERAL COMMENTS**

Candidates taking Leaving Certificate Latin, Higher Level, continue to display excellent knowledge of the prescribed texts and of Roman history and civilisation. In general, in recent years, candidates' efforts at prose composition have been good. They were particularly good this year. Candidates' answering of the Comprehension question is variable, as it is clear that occasionally answers are not rooted in a full understanding of the text. The Unseen texts provide the most challenging aspect of the paper. There are gaps in the knowledge of vocabulary which hinder even very good students from following the trend of a passage. This may be due to the fact that school managers, teachers and students are occasionally struggling against other calls on the timetable and may not have the same allocation of hours as Latin received in the past. It could also indicate the move away from learning vocabulary by rote.

The calibre of student taking Latin and the commitment to the subject by their teachers is shown by the consistently high results achieved at this level.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS**

The examiners recommend that students continue the recent trend of answering the question asked and not simply writing all they know on a particular topic. This is especially relevant to question 5.

Students should pay particular attention to the acquisition of a broad knowledge of vocabulary. This is particularly important when translating unseen texts.

Candidates are reminded of the brevity of expression employed by poets, and the need to allow for that when translating into English.

Candidates are encouraged to make full use of captions and vocabulary aid.

## APPENDIX 1

Year	Boys		Girls		Total
	Higher	Ordinary	Higher	Ordinary	
1969	2414	2902	1204	931	7461
1972	2319	3136	1875	1776	9106
1975	1797	1330	1614	554	5295
1978	1133	425	519	99	2176
1980	856	183	375	75	1489
1983	676	100	209	31	1016

### COMMON ENTRIES\* - HIGHER AND ORDINARY LEVELS

Year	Higher	Ordinary	Total
1987	741	103	844
1990	461	42	503
1993	255	8	263
1996	151	9	160
1999	120	2	125

\* The Department of Education changed its method of recording statistics in the early eighties.

## APPENDIX 2

Percentage breakdown of candidates by grade Leaving Certificate, Higher Level **LATIN**

Year	Total	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
97	151	2.60	13.9	13.9	11.3	15.9	9.30	9.30	7.30	3.30	2.60	5.30	4.60	0.00	0.70
98	150	14.0	10.0	9.30	10.7	14.0	13.3	9.30	6.70	4.00	2.00	4.00	0.70	1.30	0.70
99	125	9.60	9.60	8.00	19.2	13.6	8.80	10.4	11.2	4.00	0.80	4.00	0.80	0.00	0.00

# ORDINARY LEVEL

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Leaving Certificate Latin examination paper comprises five questions. Question 1 consists of a choice between five sentences for translation into Latin and a comprehension passage, each worth seventy-five marks. Question 2 offers four Latin passages, two prose and two poetry, for translation into the vernacular: candidates must choose one prose and one poetry extract for translation. Question 2 carries 130 marks. Question 3 requires candidates to translate a passage and to answer subsidiary questions from either of the two prescribed texts. (In 2000 the prescribed texts were Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, Book XXI and Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IX.). Question 3 carries ninety marks. Question 4 comprises three subsections which examine grammar and scansion. Question 4 carries thirty marks. Question 5 consists of Section A (History) and B (Art and Literature), each of which offer three questions. Candidates must choose to answer one question from each section, and a third from either section. Question 5 carries seventy-five marks. The total number of marks for the paper is 400.

## 2. PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES

A total of 12 students sat the 2000 Latin Ordinary Level paper in 2000. This is an increase on last year as **Appendix 1** shows. The numbers taking this paper have been very small in recent years. **Appendix 1** shows the dramatic decline in the number of students taking Latin in the past thirty years. An increase such as that experienced in 2000 is statistically insignificant when dealing with such small numbers.

The percentage results of the 2000 Ordinary Level examination were as follows:

Total	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
12	-	-	8.3	-	-	25.0	-	16.6	8.3	41.6	-	-	-	-

Even with such small numbers, it is encouraging that no candidate got E- on this year's paper.

The results for 1997, 1998 and 1999 are given in **Appendix 3**.

The results of the 2000 Ordinary Level Latin paper are evidence of a judicious choice of level by candidates.

## 3. ANALYSIS OF PAPER

### QUESTION 1

#### Section A

The small number of candidates who did this question also attempted the Comprehension (Section B) and achieved higher marks on the latter.

#### Section B

In general, candidates did well in their answers to this question. They seemed to have a good understanding of the passage with only (viii) proving really problematic.

## **QUESTION 2**

**Section A (i).** This passage was the choice of the majority of candidates. Good use was made of the vocabulary aid.

**Section A (ii).** This was the less popular choice in this section. Candidates found it challenging.

**Section B (i).** This passage was the more popular choice in this section. The vocabulary aid was well used and good translation was presented.

**Section B (ii).** The small number who chose this passage found it challenging.

## **QUESTION 3**

**Section A (i) and (ii).** No candidate attempted this section. This is in keeping with the trend in recent years.

**Section B (i).** Candidates displayed good knowledge of the Virgil text. This would have had a significant bearing on the overall results. Knowledge of the prescribed text allows a candidate to acquire a substantial percentage of the marks available for the whole paper.

**Section B (ii).** Questions (a), (b) and (c) were the more popular choices and candidates did well in them.

## **QUESTION 4**

As has been the trend over the past number of years, this question was not well answered. However, there were some good attempts at the scansion this year.

## **QUESTION 5**

**Section A:** (i) and (ii) were popular with those candidates who had a fair knowledge of the history course.

**Section B:** (i) and (ii) were very popular and posed little difficulty for candidates. (i) was particularly well answered.

## **4. OVERALL GENERAL COMMENT**

The numbers taking this paper have all but disappeared in recent years. For that reason it was encouraging that the twelve students who did sit the paper in 2000 did so with a seriousness of approach and preparatory work. Their knowledge of the prescribed text was evidence of this. They, and their teachers, are to be commended for their judicious choice of level.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS**

Students at this level are encouraged to use their knowledge of the prescribed text as a foundation for success in the examination.

Candidates are reminded to make full use of the captions and vocabulary aid.

Valuable marks can be lost on question 4. Students are encouraged to make a positive attempt at this question.





## APPENDIX 3

### PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF CANDIDATES IN LEAVING CERTIFICATE LATIN ORDINARY LEVEL, 1997-1999

Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
1997	10	0	30.0	10.0	20.0	40.0	0	0
1998	7	0	0	28.6	71.4	0	0	0
1999	2	0	0	50.0	0	50.0	0	0