



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2008

LATIN

**ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT
HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT**

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1. General Introduction

The current syllabus for Junior Certificate Latin was introduced in 1993 and examined for the first time in 1995.

The Ordinary and Higher Level papers comprise six questions each and the total number of marks for each paper is 400. Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 are allocated 80 marks each, while questions 5 and 6 are allocated 40 marks each.

Question 1 (i) requires candidates to translate a passage of poetry from the prescribed list and (ii) to answer subsidiary questions on the passage and on the course in general.

Question 2 requires candidates to translate a passage of previously unseen Latin into the vernacular.

Question 3 requires candidates to answer questions on a comprehension passage.

Question 4 consists of a choice between sentences for translation from the vernacular into Latin (Section A) and a passage of previously unseen Latin for translation (Section B).

Question 5 consists of Section A (Roman History, 264 – 44 BC) and Section B (based upon personalities in the history of the period). Each section carries 20 marks.

Question 6 consists of two sections. Section A (Roman Social Life and Civilisation) and Section B (requiring a longer answer on Roman Social Life and Civilisation). Each section carries 20 marks.

It is intended that this report be read in conjunction with the relevant examination papers and marking schemes which are available on www.examinations.ie.

2. Ordinary Level

2.1 Introduction

A total of 27 candidates sat the Ordinary Level paper in 2008. The following table shows the number of candidates who have taken the subject at this level in the past five years:

Year	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
Total	27	28	29	57	36

Table 1: Candidature in Junior Certificate Latin (Ordinary Level) 2004-2008

The candidature for this paper has remained consistently low for the past number of years.

2.2 Performance of Candidates

Given the very small candidature, outcomes show some variation from year to year. The ABC rate was particularly high in 2008, while the EFNG rate was lower than in previous years.

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2004	36	0.0	8.3	25.0	33.3	25.0	19.4	16.7	5.6	41.7
2005	57	1.8	19.3	26.3	47.4	33.3	12.3	5.3	1.8	19.3
2006	29	10.3	17.2	31.0	58.6	13.8	17.2	6.9	3.4	27.6
2007	28	3.6	14.3	32.1	50.0	32.1	14.3	3.6	0.0	17.9
2008	27	18.5	18.5	44.4	81.5	11.1	0.0	7.4	0.0	7.4

Table 2: Percentage of candidates achieving each grade in Junior Certificate Latin (Ordinary Level) 2004 – 2008

In general, examiners observed that in 2008 many candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the prescribed text and that they persevered throughout the paper. Those two aspects impacted significantly on the results.

2.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

Question 1 Prescribed poetry

(a) The standard of answering in this question was varied. Some excellent translations were in evidence and almost all candidates were familiar with the passage. Some candidates did not display the precision required. Words which proved to be challenging for candidates included ‘ramosa’ (line 3) and ‘cursu levi’ (line 6).

(b) Sub-questions (a), (b) and (d) were the most popular and examiners noted that these were particularly well done. In (e), there was evidence that some candidates did not understand the meaning of the word ‘moral’.

Question 2 Unseen translation

All candidates made an attempt at this question and a number of candidates gained almost full marks. The sentence ‘*Itaque pastor ... spinam extraxit*’ was well translated by most candidates. However, there was some evidence of a lack of knowledge of some common vocabulary. Words such as *olim*, *errabat*, *tamen*, *enim*, *ingens*, *deinde*, *tristis* and *adiuvare* were not known by many candidates. These words are all in the defined vocabulary for Junior Certificate. Examiners noted that from the evidence of the scripts, it would appear that students are not paying enough attention to that list. This was also noted at Higher Level.

Examiners noted that the link in story between Question 2 and Question 3 seemed to provide an element of continuity which helped to keep the candidates focused.

Question 3 Comprehension

In general, candidates understood the thread of the story and worked through the questions systematically. Questions (i) and (ix) were handled very well. Parts (x) and (xi) were not popular. Examiners noted that candidates used the glossary well but that, as in Question 2, words which appear in the defined vocabulary were not known by many candidates.

Question 4A Composition

This question is rarely attempted at this level and this was also the case in 2008.

Question 4B Unseen translation

This passage is more challenging for many candidates than Question 2. Candidates displayed less perseverance on this than on the earlier question. While the glossary proved helpful and was used to good effect by a number of candidates, a number of words were not known by many. These words, as stated previously in the report, are in the defined vocabulary.

Question 5 Roman History

In Section A, the first five questions, (i) to (v), were the most popular and were quite well answered. The standard of answering varied significantly, while the small number of candidates who wrote on Pompey wrote good answers.

In Section B, Hannibal was the more popular choice.

Question 6 Roman Life and Civilisation

In Section A, questions (ii) and (vi) were well done while (v), (vii) and (x) were rarely attempted. Some candidates appeared not to understand the question cues. For example, in questions (vi) and (viii), the word 'describe' failed to trigger adequate responses.

In Section B, it appeared that some candidates did not read the introduction to the question fully. This resulted in a lack of precise observations on the illustration. However, most candidates engaged with the letter format and gave adequate information.

2.4 Conclusions

- The standard of answering in the 2008 Junior Certificate Latin Ordinary Level was particularly high. This was reflected in the high ABC rate and the low EFNG rate.
- Examiners noted that the majority of candidates were well prepared for the questions on the prescribed text.
- Examiners observed that in 2008, the majority of candidates persevered throughout the paper. This perseverance was reflected in the standard of answering.
- Examiners noted that the link in story between Question 2 and Question 3 seemed to provide an element of continuity which helped to keep the candidates focused.
- In general, in Question 3 candidates understood the thread of the story and worked through the questions systematically. Again, there was evidence of perseverance in candidate responses.
- Examiners noted that throughout the paper, candidates displayed a lack of knowledge of the Junior Certificate Defined Vocabulary.
- In Question 6, some candidates appeared not to understand the question cues. For example, the word ‘describe’ failed to trigger adequate responses. In addition, it was noted that some candidates did not appear to read the introduction to the question fully.

2.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

Teachers are advised to:

- Encourage students to learn the defined vocabulary. Words which appear in the defined vocabulary will not be glossed.
- Encourage students to persevere in the examination.
- Encourage students to make good use of any continuity of story-line which may be on an examination paper.
- Remind students of the differences between question cues such as ‘name’ and ‘describe’.

Students are advised to:

- Prepare the prescribed poetry. This will assist in providing a solid foundation to your responses.
- Learn the vocabulary in the defined list. Knowledge of the vocabulary will greatly assist your understanding of Latin.
- Persevere in the examination and do not leave questions unattempted.
- Read the questions carefully and respond precisely to the question that is asked.

3. Higher Level

3.1 Introduction

A total of 391 candidates sat the Higher Level paper in 2008. This is a significant drop on the numbers taking the paper in 2007 and is the lowest number to have sat this examination in recent decades. Coupled with the low number of candidates at Ordinary Level (27), the total cohort for the subject at Junior Certificate in 2008 was 418.

The following table shows the number of candidates who have taken the subject at Higher Level in the past five years:

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total	433	454	425	469	391

Table 1: Number of candidates taking Junior Certificate Latin (Higher Level) 2004-2008

3.2 Performance of Candidates

The results in 2008 are somewhat out of line with those of recent years. This can be seen from the following table where the ABC rate is lower than the previous two years and the EFNG rate is higher than recent years:

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2004	433	26.1	32.8	19.9	78.8	15.2	3.7	1.4	0.9	6.0
2005	454	21.6	26.0	26.0	73.6	16.7	5.3	3.1	1.3	9.7
2006	425	36.5	28.7	17.9	83.1	11.8	3.8	1.4	0.0	5.2
2007	469	33.9	32.0	19.8	85.7	10.0	2.3	1.7	0.2	4.3
2008	391	35.0	22.5	16.9	74.4	13.6	5.9	4.6	1.5	12.0

Table 2: Percentage of candidates achieving each grade in Junior Certificate Latin (Higher Level) 2004 – 2008

Table 2 illustrates a higher A rate than recent years and a relatively high EFNG rate. Examiners noted an uneven performance by a number of candidates on the paper. For example, some candidates wrote very good responses on Question 1 yet made little attempt on the remaining questions. There was an increase in the number of candidates who had not prepared the prescribed text and in the number who were unable to answer well on Questions 5 and 6. In general, candidates did quite well on Questions 2, 3 and 4. Examiners also noted that a small but significant number of candidates submitted scripts with little or no writing on them.

A number of candidates were very thoroughly prepared for this examination and this is reflected in the A rate of 35%.

3.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

Question 1 Prescribed poetry

(i) Many excellent translations were in evidence. However, a significant number of candidates treated the passage as ‘unseen’. Specific areas of difficulty were *fessa corpora*, the omission of *cum medio ... lapsu, late liquidos*, and *infelix animi*.

(ii) In general, the standard of answering here was high. Sub-questions (a) and (f) were the least popular. The responses to part (f) varied from excellent to somewhat uncertain. Examiners noted that many candidates displayed good knowledge and actively engaged with the questions.

Question 2 Unseen translation

In general, this question was well answered. Examiners noted that candidates used the caption and the glossary to good effect. However, as noted in the Ordinary Level report, there was evidence that many candidates were unfamiliar with the words in the defined vocabulary list. Words such as *fortiter, plurimi, totam, posuit, vicit, pugna* were frequently not known.

The aim of the *Junior Certificate Latin Defined Vocabulary List* is to provide students with an agreed list of basic Latin words. If students do not know these words, they will be unable to translate relatively straightforward sentences of Latin.

Question 3 Comprehension

As in previous years, Examiners noted that candidates engaged well with this question and made good use of the glossary provided. Sub-questions (i) to (ix) were the most popular. The grammar sub-questions (x), (xi) and (xii) grammar were not popular and when attempted were generally not well done.

Question 4A Composition

This question was attempted by 35 (9%) candidates and while the standard varied, a significant number submitted very good translations. As in Question 3, candidates made good use of the glossary provided.

Question 4 B Unseen translation

In general, this question was handled well and good use was made of the caption and the glossary. However, Examiners again noted a lack of knowledge of many words contained in the defined vocabulary list such as *clarissimus, igitur, esset, sensit, frustra*,

solus, litus. By not learning these words students are putting themselves at a disadvantage in the examination, as the words in the defined list will not be glossed.

Question 5 Roman History

Section A

Many candidates provided good, factual and relevant information in this question. As in previous years, a number of candidates attempted more than the required number of questions.

Examiners noted that a small, but significant, number of candidates displayed very little knowledge of this aspect of the course. This is quite unusual on this paper.

Section B

Hannibal was the more popular choice. In general, most candidates engaged fully with the option they chose and Examiners noted that comprehensive answers were in evidence.

Question 6 Roman Life and Civilisation

Section A

In general, this question was well answered. The least popular choices were (v) and (vii). Some candidates gave inadequate responses to (vi).

Section B

While this was generally well answered, Examiners noted a tendency on the part of candidates not to examine the illustration, as was required in the question. Those who did look at and describe the detail in the illustration did well.

In question (ii) the letter format was well used by many candidates and a significant amount of relevant information was provided.

3.4 Conclusions

- A total of 391 candidates sat the Higher Level examination in 2008. This is a significant drop on the numbers taking the examination in 2007.
- Many candidates were thoroughly prepared for this examination and this was reflected in the A rate of 35%.
- The EFNG rate is somewhat higher than in previous years. Examiners noted an uneven performance by a number of candidates on the paper and an increase in the number of candidates who may not have fully prepared the prescribed text.
- Examiners noted that many candidates used the caption and the glossary to good effect in the unseen translations, comprehension and composition.
- There was consistent evidence that many candidates did not know the words in the *Junior Certificate Latin Defined Vocabulary List*.
- A small number of candidates displayed very little knowledge of the history and civilization elements of the course.
- A small number of candidates submitted scripts with little or no responses.

3.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

Teachers are advised to:

- Encourage students to learn the *Junior Certificate Latin Defined Vocabulary List* and to remind them that words which appear in that list will not be glossed on the examination paper.
- Encourage students to persevere in the examination and not to submit unfinished work.
- Continue to encourage students to make good use of captions and glossaries in the examination.

Students are advised to:

- Prepare the prescribed poetry. Well-prepared poetry will ensure a solid foundation to the examination. It will also improve your enjoyment of the course.

- Learn and revise the basic Latin words in the *Junior Certificate Latin Defined Vocabulary List*. You should note that the words in the defined list will not be glossed on the examination paper.
- Prepare the Roman History and Civilisation element of the course.
- Persevere in the examination and complete the required number of questions.