



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2015

ANCIENT GREEK

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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1. Introduction

1.1 Syllabus Structure

The current syllabus for Leaving Certificate Ancient Greek was introduced in the 1980s, was revised in 1998 and again in 2009. The syllabus is designed to include a knowledge of the Ancient Greek language, an ability to translate passages from Ancient Greek authors into the vernacular, a knowledge of Ancient Greek history, and an appreciation of Ancient Greek literature and art.

The syllabus is offered at two levels, Higher and Ordinary. The levels differ in the amount of knowledge of the language that is required, and also in the depth of analytical assessment of the materials that is expected. Unlike most other subjects it is not easy for a candidate to switch from one level to another as the prescribed text for the Ordinary level course comes from a different book to that prescribed for the Higher level.

The small number of candidates presenting in this subject makes accurate analysis of trends in the results problematic. This report is based on the years 2011 – 2015.

This report should be read in conjunction with the examination papers, the published marking schemes and the syllabus. The examination papers and marking schemes are available on the State Examination Commission's website www.examinations.ie and the syllabus is available at www.education.ie.

1.2 Assessment Specification

The syllabus is assessed at both Higher level and Ordinary level through a terminal written examination which consists of one written paper with a time allocation of three hours. The paper at each level is marked out of 400 marks. Questions requiring a knowledge and understanding of the highly inflected language carry 77.5% of the marks with the remaining 22.5% allocated to questions on history, literature and art. A translation into Ancient Greek from the vernacular is examined only on the Higher level paper. Since 1998 Higher level candidates may opt "to answer in English a series of comprehension questions on a passage of unprescribed Greek prose" instead of the translation into Ancient Greek (Leaving Certificate Syllabus, Ancient Greek, p.3).

Translation of unprescribed work from Ancient Greek authors is a feature of papers at both levels. The number of authors from whom the pieces may be taken is specified in the syllabus, with fewer authors listed for Ordinary level. Higher level candidates should translate two pieces; one prose and one verse, out of the four pieces comprising two prose and two verse. Ordinary level candidates may translate any two of the four pieces presented comprising two prose and two verse.

Translation of a prescribed text, followed by subsidiary questions to be answered in the vernacular, is required at both levels. When the present syllabus was introduced, it was decided that the prescribed text for the Ordinary level course should be from a different book to that prescribed for the Higher level. The hope at the time was that this would facilitate anyone who wanted to take up Ancient Greek ab initio in their final school years. The net result has been to make it very difficult for a student to change from Higher level to Ordinary level.

Four questions on Ancient Greek history and four on literature/art are presented at each level. Candidates are expected to answer three, which include at least one from each section.

Because Ordinary level candidates are neither required to translate from the vernacular into Ancient Greek nor to answer comprehension questions, the allocation of marks is different at each level. At Higher level, out of 400 marks, translation into Ancient Greek OR comprehension questions carries 50 marks; translation of unprescribed pieces carries 180 marks; prescribed text and subsidiary questions carries 80 marks; with history, literature and art carrying a combined 90 marks. At Ordinary level out of 400 marks, unprescribed translation carries 210 marks; prescribed text with subsidiary questions carries 100 marks; and history, literature and art carry a combined 90 marks.

1.3 Participation Trends

Table 1 gives the overall participation rates of candidates in Leaving Certificate Ancient Greek for the last five years.

Year	Number of Candidates (Higher level)	Number of Candidates (Ordinary level)	Total Cohort Size
2011	12	0	12
2012	12	0	12
2013	12	0	12
2014	6	0	6
2015	10	1	11

Table 1. Overall participation rates of candidates in Ancient Greek for 2011 – 2015.

The number of candidates at Higher level is very small but fairly consistent, with a reduction noted for 2014. The very small number taking Ordinary level can be explained by the appeal of this subject to a minority of students, mostly very able academically, coupled with the difficulty of changing levels referred to in **1.2 paragraph 3** (Prescribed Texts) above.

2. Performance of candidates

2.1 Higher Level

Results for Leaving Certificate Ancient Greek for the past 5 years are presented in **Table 2**.

Year	Totals	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2011	12	33.3	58.3	8.3	100	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2012	12	41.7	25.0	25.0	91.7	8.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2013	10	30.0	50.0	20.0	100	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2014	6	16.7	66.7	16.7	100	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2015	10	20.0	50.0	10.0	80.0	10.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	10

Table 2. Grades achieved at Higher Level 2011 – 2015

The detailed distribution of sub-grades over the last five years is given in **Table 3**.

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2011	8.3	25	41.7	16.7	0	0	8.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2012	8.3	33.3	16.7	8.3	0	0	25	0	0	0	8.3	0	0	0
2013	30	0	10	30	10	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2014	0	16.7	0	33.3	33.3	0	0	16.7	0	0	0	0	0	0
2015	20	0	0	30	20	0	10	0	10	0	0	10	0	0

Table 3. Sub-grades achieved at Higher Level 2011 – 2015

Despite the small number of candidates presenting, the results show a consistency in the percentages gaining A – C grades over the last five years.

2.2 Ordinary Level

As the candidate who presented for this examination in 2015 was the only one to do so during the period covered by this report and only the second candidate since 2004, it is not possible to make any meaningful commentary on overall statistics at this level.

3. Analysis of Candidate Performance

3.1 General Commentary on Engagement and Performance

The small numbers mean general commentary rather than tabular analysis of engagement and performance is more appropriate. This will be divided between Higher and Ordinary levels.

3.2 Higher Level

The option in Question 1 of answering comprehension questions rather than translating into Ancient Greek has grown in popularity in recent years. Only two of the candidates over the five years chose the question requiring translation into Ancient Greek. Both of these candidates also answered the comprehension questions, and there was no significant difference between the marks they obtained for either option. The comprehension question tests their knowledge and understanding of the language plus their ability to analyse and evaluate the content. It therefore covers a range of skills from lower to higher order.

In each year of the cycle, the unprescribed translation passages in Question 2 have included the authors prescribed in Question 3 for that year. Candidates have responded positively to this. The prose passages have given more reward to candidates over the five years than the verse passages. However, even despite the small numbers involved, there is at least one excellent translation of each passage presented every year.

The prescribed texts, taken from “*The Intellectual Revolution*” and “*A World of Heroes*” published by Cambridge University Press, run in a three year cycle. Each year there is a choice between a prose author and a verse author. The more popular authors are Plato (2012), Euripides (2013), Homer (2015). Subsidiary questions test the candidates’ ability to synthesise and evaluate (e.g. Q.3A (ii)(c) in 2013; Q.3B (ii)(a) in 2014).

The period covered in the history component extends from the Peloponnesian War to the death of Alexander the Great. Questions demand knowledge of relevant events and frequently ask for evaluation and analysis (e.g. Q.4A (i) in 2014). The least popular areas for participation are the Spartan and Athenian Empires in the early Fourth Century BC (e.g. Q.4A (iii) in 2015). However, candidates do not always back up their detailed knowledge of events with the evaluation demanded in the question. To score well in these questions candidates must apply their knowledge to make a full response to what is demanded.

The literature questions requires the candidates to give a biography and assessment of an ancient author. The least popular and seldom answered questions refer to an author candidates would not have read in preparation for unprescribed translation (e.g. Q.4B (i) in 2012).

Knowledge and evaluation of Ancient Greek art were demonstrated in high measure in each of the five years as candidates identified and commented on temples, statues and vases from the Archaic to the Hellenistic times.

3.3 Ordinary Level

It is not possible to comment on engagement and performance trends over the five years as it would focus on one individual candidate.

4. Conclusions

- The number of candidates taking Ancient Greek remains small with almost all candidates taking the Higher level examination.
- Candidates engaged well with all aspects of the examination and the standard of answering in the last five years was very high.
- Candidates displayed a high standard of knowledge and application of the language.
- The translation of unseen material was of very high quality in general.
- The answers to questions on history, art and literature were good in general and the reading of visual images was excellent.
- Nearly all of the different options in Questions 2, 3, 4 at Higher level were availed of showing the breadth of the course that was covered by students.

5. Recommendations

- Candidates should read questions carefully.
- Candidates are advised to engage fully with the terms of any question attempted.
- Candidates must give their own opinions, analyses and evaluations when these form part of the question.
- Candidates are advised to prepare for all of the options on the papers and have knowledge across the full range of unseen authors.