

GCSE

Ancient History

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J151**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **J051**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

© OCR 2015

CONTENTS

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Ancient History (J151)

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course)

Ancient History (J051)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

| Content | Page |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| A031 The Greeks at War | 4 |
| A032 The Rise of Rome | 9 |
| A033 Women in Ancient Politics | 12 |
| A034 Controlled Assessment | 15 |

A031 The Greeks at War

General Comments:

Once again there was a range of excellent scripts that reflected some excellent teaching across both options. There were more candidates for Alexander the Great but not by so large a margin as has been the case in some years. Examiners were pleased to see so many candidates addressing the questions set with confidence and showing a welcome grasp of relevant detail. The most significant problem from last year remains: in 3a & 3b (and 8a & 8b) too many candidates fail to address AO3 explicitly in their answers, which makes the awarding of these marks difficult.

One issue that should be brought to candidates' attention is the need to set out clearly which questions they are attempting in the left hand column. There were a very few candidates who offered no guidance (to the scanners of scripts or to the examiners), but rather more who were inconsistent, sometimes putting down incorrect numbers or letters. This was usually straightforward to sort out at the marking stage, but could result in elements being out of order. Examiners try hard to resolve such issues. As in previous years there were some candidates who insisted on making additions via material added elsewhere in the answer booklet: clear highlighting of this is very important, including a page number if necessary.

This was the second year where we returned to using answer booklets rather than structured papers, and in general this worked well. Most candidates used the freedom of the answer booklet to set out their responses clearly and effectively, and for the most part organised their time sensibly to ensure all sections of the paper were answered. There are still some candidates who choose to answer the paper in a different order. This should not pose a problem, though there were a very few candidates who missed out on relatively straightforward marks for Questions 1 and 6 because they left these to the end.

In responding to the opening recall questions (Questions 1 and 6), there was a number of candidates who wrote at too great a length, producing what was, in effect, a mini-essay. All that is required for this type of question is the identification of two separate elements, one of which is developed. There is no need to write a mini-essay, and certainly no need to offer additional appraisal of sources: marks can only be awarded under AO1. This year Question 1 proved more straightforward than Question 6, though a small number of candidates focused their answer to Question 1 on Marathon. In Question 6 it was sometimes difficult to see that two different reasons were being given.

The questions on the first passage on both options were generally done very well, though there are still far too many candidates who respond to the (c) question in a very general way. It is very important to use the details of the passage in all these questions, and the (c) question asks about the particular passage set. There is still scope for improvement here, and some candidates would benefit from further practice using the detail of the passage in their evaluation. Many better responses to (c) focused on claims by an author to know what an individual was thinking or the use of direct speech (especially if a private conversation was involved).

The second passage question (3(a)/3(b) and 8(a)/8(b)), as in previous years, presented a much greater challenge for many candidates. The (a) question is focused primarily on the set passage, and there were some excellent responses that picked out detail relevant to the question and showed good understanding of the content, which satisfied AO1 and AO2. However there is still a problem with AO3 here, as too often candidates made a very general reference to source in their evaluation, or omitted the evaluative element altogether. The same thing can also occur in the (b) question, and some candidates rely in their answer to this too heavily on the passage set, rather than, as explicitly instructed in the question, drawing on other material they have studied.

While examiners understand that some candidates may feel that they have said what they need to say in response to 3(a)/8(a), it is not possible to carry marks forward from one answer to another. It is worth emphasising to candidates that the broader nature of the (b) question is reflected in the greater range of marks for AO3. There were some excellent answers across the two options, but these questions do help differentiate between candidates.

In the essay question, it is very important to address AO3 explicitly, and the bullet points should remind candidates of this. However too many candidates present their answer as if the bullet points were an essay plan; this often weakens, rather than strengthens, an essay, because the discussion of the sources becomes very general and divorced from the relevant detail, often lumped together at the end of the essay. In some cases, this evaluation takes the place of a formal conclusion, which might help draw together the threads of the argument.

This year examiners report an increase in the use of prepared paragraphs of generalised evaluative commentary, often repeated word-for-word in different questions. This approach tends to produce work suggestive of Level 3 at best, as the rather generalised approach rarely engages with the question the candidate is answering. Examiners feel this contributes little to the answers of the majority, but where a candidate is allowed to use a computer to deliver their work, the use of copy and paste seems to us more problematic. In a very few cases, these generalised paragraphs can be of some length. The impact on the final mark is as a rule low, as a more focused paragraph directed towards the question and the source elements actually used to answer it would be significantly better.

Another problem which has been commented on before is that some candidates do not focus their response on the demands of the question. This is very noticeable where there is an opportunity for extended description or narrative. In Question 5, many candidates leapt at the opportunity to narrate what happened at Thermopylae, and some answers became a more or less detailed description of what happened. In a small number of cases candidates did not return to the question, but presented their account of the battle as if that were an answer. To get the highest marks, it is essential for responses to be focused on the demands of the question throughout. There were, of course, many excellent answers to the essay questions, and examiners would like to encourage best practice in a wider range of candidates.

The best essays were clearly structured and engaged effectively with the question chosen. It was a pleasure to see the direct responses of some candidates to Question 5; their answers presented a well-directed argument about the importance of the Spartan army to the eventual outcome, some favouring Sparta, while others looked to the Athenians, or to the Greeks in general. Weaker answers often delivered a general narrative, occasionally in chronological order, but without precisely addressing the central issue raised in the question. Candidates were generally able to deal with the full period for Option 1, where appropriate, but in Option 2 the end of Alexander's life tends to be less well-known. Candidates who were able to present relevant arguments covering the full time scale were highly commended by examiners.

General presentation remains an issue for a small number of candidates. It is helpful to examiners if candidates can present their work clearly, double-spacing where this aids the legibility of their work. Relatively few candidates failed to secure a decent mark for SPaG, but there certainly were some that were challenging to read on-screen. Very small writing can be a particular problem.

Overall, examiners were impressed with the quality of work produced by candidates under stressful conditions and it is clear that both options have proved successful in the classroom.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Option 1: The Greeks defend themselves, 499-479 BC

Question 5 appealed to significantly more candidates than Question 4.

Question No. 1

This proved a reasonably straightforward question for most candidates, though there were a few who focused on the Battle of Marathon without making any attempt to explain why this could be relevant. Most settled on the difficulties for the Greeks working together and also on the discrepancy in size between the Greeks and Persians.

Question No. 2

The (a) question proved accessible to most candidates, though there were a number who focused only on the issue of 'earth and water', in some cases anticipating the (b) question. Some of the responses to (b) focused only on those who were sent the demand for 'earth and water' and omitted to discuss the different treatment for Athens and Sparta. The (c) question produced some very general responses that were difficult to reward beyond Level 3, but there were some sensible responses that considered how likely it was that Herodotus would be able to find out what happened after the war was over.

Question No. 3

There were some excellent responses to (a) that focused on the details of the text that emphasised the importance of the decision facing Kallimachos, though weaker responses became a more general narrative. Candidates were generally happier with AO1 and AO2, but those who used the context of this speech were able to make effective points about the reliability of Herodotus' account; a significant number of candidates did not address AO3 directly at all. The passage could also be used to good effect in (b), though a number of candidates took the opportunity to provide an abbreviated narrative of the battle itself. However there were some good assessments of the importance of this Athenian victory for the later response to Xerxes' campaign. There were some underdeveloped responses to AO3 here, which brought the overall mark down a little. It is really important that students cover all three Assessment Objectives where they apply.

Question No. 4

The question here clearly directs students to discuss Xerxes' campaign in 480-79 BC, and it was therefore not clear why a number of candidates spent time discussing Marathon, usually without any attempt to make a link to the later campaign. Better responses were able to consider a range of failures, though some candidates chose to view Thermopylae as a Persian failure without explaining why this was. There were some interesting discussions about Herodotus' presentation of Xerxes himself, though candidates also considered a range of reasons, such as the different modes of fighting adopted by the two sides (and their respective armour and training) and the determination of the Greeks to secure their freedom.

Question No. 5

This question provoked some interesting discussions of the importance of the Spartan army and the Athenian navy, often to very good effect. Some also looked at the quality of leadership provided by the Spartans and their ability to carry other Greeks along with them. Some candidates focused mainly on what we can learn from Thermopylae about the strength of the Spartan army, but better candidates were also able to consider the role of the Spartans at Plataea and also the way the Spartans were able to draw Greek forces together to fight a common foe. Some weaker responses focused only on the training of the Spartan army and the *agoge*, and there were some answers almost entirely devoted to a narrative of what happened at Thermopylae.

Option 2: Alexander the Great, 356-323 BC

Candidates were evenly divided between the optional essays.

Question No. 6

This question proved more challenging for candidates than expected. The majority of responses considered the importance of fusion for Alexander, and some discussed the marriages as a reward for Macedonians tired from their long travels.

Question No. 7

In (a) most candidates were able to pick out the way Alexander dealt with the Persian ambassadors; Plutarch emphasises here his maturity in asking 'no childish or trivial questions'. Not all candidates also picked out Alexander's response to his father's success, perhaps because an explanation of this was sought in (b). Most answers focused primarily in (b) on Alexander's jealous reaction to his father's achievements, though a number also commented on the trust Philip here places in his young son while he is absent from his kingdom. Responses to (c) were in some cases very general, but better ones raised issues of evidence for how Alexander behaved towards the ambassadors at a young age, and also considered the use of direct speech problematic.

Question No. 8

There were some excellent responses to the (a) question here, and candidates were able to trace the detail of Alexander's actions in the passage to good effect. There were some interesting assessments of his role in following Admetus and the royal guards (rather than leading). Many also commented on Alexander 'watching to see if there were any outstanding display of courage', which certainly suggests that Alexander's leadership was not just a matter of charging blindly towards the enemy. AO3 was not always effectively addressed, and some answers to this (and also the (b) question) can be very short, considering the number of marks available. The very public nature of Alexander's leadership provides some check on the reliability of the source, though Arrian's partiality for his hero is also problematic (as is the loss of so much contemporary evidence). The (b) question was generally answered well, as candidates could draw both on the siege at Tyre and other examples from the major battles (such as Granicus and Gaugamela) to show how Alexander's leadership proved effective in motivating his men to keep fighting under difficult conditions. Many also covered the breakdown of this relationship in India, and some made very effective use of the army's desire to see their king just before his death. A few weaker responses concentrated on leadership without addressing the impact on the army.

Question No. 9

This was a popular essay question, and candidates generally were able to show how Arrian's devotion to Alexander is made clear in the sections of the text studied. Many commented in detail on the death of Cleitus, as candidates argued that this showed Arrian's excessive partiality for Alexander when he was clearly in the wrong. A few candidates were able to explore the sources used by Arrian and Plutarch in some depth, though this avenue was not explored as often as sometimes in the past. However there were still some good discussions of the problematic nature of the evidence for Alexander and the limits on our understanding imposed by our lack of access to the contemporary record, except insofar as we can reconstruct it from the surviving literary sources. There were some good comparisons between Plutarch and Arrian, though weaker responses presented a range of generalisations, sometimes repeated.

Question No. 10

Examiners accepted a range of interpretations of 'military commanders' here, though the best answers usually dealt with specific individuals from amongst Alexander's companions in some depth. There were some excellent discussions of the role played by commanders in the various battles that were selected for discussion, and candidates were also able to highlight disagreements, such as Alexander's use of Persian dress and his desire to keep moving forward into India. Parmenio and Cleitus were often selected for discussion in some depth, though

candidates also considered Hephaestion, Ptolemy and Antipater (amongst others). Alexander's failure to follow Parmenio's advice was often commented on, though Parmenio's active support in battle was usually also noted. Not all candidates attached sufficient weight to 'throughout': examiners were pleased to reward those who could make a judgment across the expedition as a whole, and there were some excellent assessments that presented a well-balanced account of Alexander's relationship with other significant figures.

A032 The Rise of Rome

General Comments:

Generally the performance across the paper was very good with more candidates scoring in the higher mark levels than in previous years. There does appear to be a greater concentration of centres that are choosing the Hannibal option.

It is pleasing to see that candidates are being much more thoroughly prepared on the A03 aspect of the assessment (Interpretation, Evaluation and Response): this is particularly demonstrated by the fact that discussion of sources and evidence is much more related to details that have been referred to in the given passages or in candidates' writing. There is still some, though thankfully more infrequent, generalised generic description tagged on at the end of answers. There is a large number of candidates that believe Polybius to have witnessed Zama – this does need to be clarified. Polybius would have been an infant at the conclusion of the second Punic War but was certainly a contemporary re discussion with eye-witnesses/ veterans etc.

There is still a problem for candidates in discerning the difference between questions 3a) and 3b) AND 8a) and 8b). Generally the first question is done rather well but then a number of responses fail to build on this foundation: the rubric does identify what is needed here - to refer to the passage and then give further evidence from the same author (and other authors if possible) in order to construct a wider ranging answer.

Spelling is still an issue with a number of candidates: this is frustrating when many of the proper nouns are included in the passages or question wording (eg. Maharbal, Trasimene). There is also a growing tendency for a minority of candidates to use the phrase 'gotten' as opposed to the more accurate English word 'got' and 'of' instead of the verb 'have'. These errors will be reflected in the mark that is awarded for SPAG.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. – OPTION 1

1) Generally being done well - some not developing the answer into **the role**, which is the focus of the question. A minority of candidates are taking refuge in writing everything they know about Remus.

2a) and 2b) Some very good answers but there are candidates who are not using the details in the passage (some quotation) to address the question – ie. not realising that this is a comprehension exercise. These are clearly identified in the mark scheme.

2c) A number of candidates are still not quoting from the passage or are failing to access the higher mark levels because answers are not developed beyond just quoting from the passage. A thorough answer requires some reference to the passage itself AND some relevant background/ discussion of the author.

3a) Most candidates are doing very well in drawing details out of the passage and then explaining the significance of these – ie. A01 and A02. However, for A03, much evaluation is still too generic without reference to the passage. The better answers gave an evaluation as references to various details in the passage were made with a summary of the author's position at the end.

3b) Most responses were good at using details from the given passage about Romulus OR using Livy to discuss the reign of Numa: fewer were able to give extension discussion about Romulus and discuss the **political** aspects of Numa's religious policies. Those that did scored highly. Rather like in 3a) there was still some generic evaluation that was not related to the passage or other sources.

4) This was the least popular of the essay questions on this part of the paper. Candidates knew a great deal about the story of Aeneas from both Virgil and Livy and thus were able to score highly on A01. However in many cases this knowledge was not fully developed into a discussion of **importance** and convincing evaluation of the sources – especially Virgil. The stronger answers were able to draw out the differences between Livy and Virgil (ie. the discussion between 'history' and 'epic poetry') and give an effective understanding of the Augustan context (ie. the end of the civil wars/ the need for legitimacy of the new regime.) Some candidates incorrectly assumed that Livy was commissioned by Augustus to write his History: it is also doubtful that Virgil was commissioned to write the Aeneid.

5) Generally this essay was done well: although there was some confusion between Tullus and Priscus, most responses were very knowledgeable about the later kings and were able to identify clearly the focus of the question (ie. all kings had good and bad points) so scored highly on A01 and A02. The stronger answers made a persuasive case for Livy manipulating the history of these kings in order to embellish the characteristics of the earlier kings and to emphasise the Roman values required in a foundation story linking to the Augustan context.

Question No. – OPTION 2

6) Many excellent answers here but some candidates did not precisely read the question – these were answering why Carthage invaded not why Rome attacked.

7a) It was surprising the number of responses that did not identify the **two** pieces of advice that Hannibal was given here: many just focused on Maharbal and ignored the advice given to Hannibal by his staff to relax. Also, a number of candidates erroneously described Maharbal as Hannibal's brother.

7b) A large number of responses did not discuss the consequences of this advice for **both** parties focusing instead on the impact for Rome. Also many candidates did not use actual details (ie. quotes) from the passage, which would have strengthened their answer.

7c) Many answers made the point about the trustworthiness/veracity of direct speech and the expression of opinion/emotion with passage reference but as in 2c) did develop the answer beyond this.

8a) There were some very good answers here with many candidates recognising that the question asks for weapons and tactics so some high scores for A01 and A02: however some did not read the question carefully enough. In addition there was still some generic evaluation here or in a few cases no evaluation at all.

8b) Many candidates were able to display their knowledge about Zama and the reasons for Hannibal's defeat: the stronger answers used the given passage and then referred to other Livy and/or Polybius extracts with quotations that focused on Zama or events before Zama in a relevant fashion. The most convincing evaluations were able to discuss Livy in the context of his time but also his reliance upon other sources (particularly Polybius). Some of the more generic source evaluation discussed Plutarch as a source without making this relevant to the answer (ie. the success of the Fabian strategy as a longer-term cause of Hannibal's defeat).

9) This was the most popular of the essays question on this option and generally was done well. Candidates were able to display their knowledge of Hannibal's strengths with an evaluation of the terrain/ weather/ Roman weaknesses etc. The stronger responses were able to relate Hannibal's actions into a wider discussion of his skills as a general and evaluate effectively. There were a small minority who confused Trasimene with Trebia: some thoughtfully placed Trasimene as a comparison/ contrast with other Carthaginian victories (particularly Cannae) and developed an interesting analysis as a result.

10) There were fewer really convincing responses to this question: the strongest either looked at the consequences of Zama and the treaty which followed or took a broader sweep by comparing the position of relative parity in 218 BC with the significant differences post 202 BC and how/ why this happened.

A033 Women in Ancient Politics

General comments

The candidature this year was similar to that last year, with a healthy number of candidates opting for both options. Cleopatra still remains, however, the more popular choice. In the main, candidates who knew the material well were able to respond intelligently and fully to the questions asked, and seemed to be familiar with the demands of each of the question types. It was clear that many were using and evaluating the courses both on the paper and from their own study and learning prior to the examination. There was, however, a sizeable cohort of candidates who seemed to think that use of the passages on the examination paper without any reference to other sources that they had studied will enable them to succeed. Candidates may, of course, make reference to these, but they will hardly constitute a thorough response to the later questions within the paper.

In relation to questions 2c and 7c, candidates need to be reminded that the question specifically asks them to use details from the passage. There are still those who believe that a generic evaluation of the author is all that is required, without any reference to the passage. All candidates should be encouraged to look carefully at the passages set, and think about whether or not they are reliable or give an accurate picture of what is being described. Candidates should also ensure in responding to questions 3/8 that they remember to be responsive to the authors (or archaeological finds) whom they are discussing, and take an evaluative approach to those sources. Finally, in relation to the essays, the very best responses use their evaluation of the sources that they are considering to aid their conclusion: the evaluation forms the basis of what they are saying to some degree.

Option 1: Cleopatra

- 1** Most candidates were able to write sensible answers to the question, with many referring to her status as a woman or the difficulties relating to her family situation – either co-ruling or the challenges left behind by her father. Candidates should be reminded that for full marks there does need to be some detail given so that the answer is thorough.
- 2a** This question was generally answered well. However, there was a tendency amongst some candidates to choose one or two points and then comment on them by way of elaboration. This is not what is required – candidates simply need to recall what is given in the passage. They do not then need to evaluate or draw further conclusions from this, as the objective being assessed is AO1.
- 2b** Many of the responses to this question speculated on what might have been in the letter. Very few candidates pointed out that Octavian's position in the Roman world was a strong one at this point. Some seemed to think that Octavian and Antony were friends, and that this might have been a reason for Cleopatra to write to Octavian. Some candidates also believed that Cleopatra and Octavian were lovers.
- 2c** Candidates who focused clearly on the evaluation of the details in the passage did well in this question. All too often, however, there was still a generic evaluation of Plutarch without reference to the passage – despite the specific direction in the question to look at the details. Answers which combine a generic point about Plutarch's writing – his interest in biography and his later date – with an analysis of the situation described will tend to score highly. A significant minority of candidates seemed to think that Plutarch was contemporaneous with Cleopatra

- 3a** Candidates often scored highly on this question, although there was a significant minority that either failed to notice the role of the gods or treat them as though they were genuine military forces from whom Octavian gained support. The best answers looked in detail at what could be gathered from the passage about the battle as a sea battle, with Cleopatra in flight, and then evaluated the passage in the light of Augustan propaganda. Some candidates failed to adhere to the instructions to refer to the passage provided.
- 3b** Many candidates chose to focus simply on the two passages on the paper, arguing that Cleopatra was shown as a coward by Propertius, but then suggesting that she was not depicted as such by Plutarch as her death had an heroic, courageous quality. Whilst such an approach is valid, for a thorough answer examiners were looking for reference to a wider set of texts. The best answers made mention of Horace's treatments of the Egyptian queen, and some also discussed Virgil. This led to a healthy evaluation of a range of sources. A minority of candidates, however, failed to address specifically the notion of Cleopatra as a coward, and instead focussed on other aspects of her character.
- 4** Many answers gave an account of the relationships between Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra, recalling a variety of episodes from each relationship. In some cases there was a distinct sense of a mere narrative, without evaluation or any effective addressing of the issue in the question. Candidates should be reminded of the need to focus on the issue at hand – namely Cleopatra's 'use' of those relationships, and then use the sources to support their arguments.
- 5** Candidates tended to approach this question in one of two ways; a focus on Cleopatra's attributes, or by focussing heavily on the nature of the sources. The best responses to this question not only included details about each of the authors, but also a clear focus on what is said about Cleopatra in each. Often there was a sense of a list of the attributes and qualities of the queen, without a clear analysis of whether or not these were 'fiction'. There was, however, some excellent consideration given to coins, and even the Dendera depiction of Cleopatra and Caesarion. Some candidates also gave due weight to the role of Augustan propaganda, and how this might have affected the accuracy of the sources.

Option 2: Agrippina

- 6** Candidates were able to produce some good ideas on the actions of freedmen. All too many, however, were rather vague – for example commenting that the freedmen influenced the making of policy, but without then giving any detail of which policies.
- 7a** Many candidates produced sensible responses to this question, but failed to get to the end of the passage. Most, however, were able to get the main details. As in the Cleopatra option, there were a number of candidates who gave additional details or attempted to evaluate the passage. It is worth reminding candidates that this is not necessary with this question: all that is required is selection from the passage of the relevant details. A surprising number of candidates seemed to think that Germanicus was a Roman Emperor.
- 7b** Only a minority of candidates noted the connection between Agrippina and Augustus or indeed the relationship between Agrippina and Germanicus. The majority, however, were able to comment on the popularity of Germanicus, and what this must have done to support Agrippina in gaining influence in Rome.
- 7c** This question often led to a generic comment about Tacitus as an historian and his writing of Annals. Sometimes, candidates would also comment on his use of Senatorial records, or the date at which he was writing – some pointing out the relative dates of Agrippina the Younger's death and Tacitus' birth. Candidates should be reminded, however, that the focus of this question is the evaluation of the passage on the question paper. Whilst the generic points are valid, for an answer to be classed as thorough, candidates must use the

details in the passage – as indicated in the question. Some candidates also included in response to this question and others an almost choral repetition of ‘how could Tacitus know?’, but without some reference to the passage, such a question is in danger of becoming almost meaningless.

- 8a** This question led to some excellent analysis of Tacitus’ account of Claudius’ demise. Most candidates were able to pick out the key details of Agrippina’s actions, although all too many did not seem to note her role, or at least suggested role, in what was happening. The best answers included an appropriate evaluation of the text, questioning whether or not Tacitus could really have known what happened, and considering what the sources for his account might be.
- 8b** The question was answered most effectively by those who were aware of the context of Claudius’ death, and the threat posed by Britannicus to Agrippina’s plans for her son’s accession to the imperial throne. A number of candidates chose to write either loosely about Agrippina’s desire for her son to become emperor, or in more general terms about the sources. Some candidates also took this as an opportunity to extend their answers to the earlier question, and failed to notice the different emphasis in this question.
- 9** The best responses to this question included excellent recall from both Tacitus and Suetonius, and indeed some Seneca, of what happened in the imperial court of Claudius, and how Agrippina was involved in decision-making. Agrippina’s role in the death of Claudius was also discussed in some places.
- 10** There were many excellent responses to this question that showed a strong understanding both of the history and the nature of the sources. A number of candidates made effective use of coins, analysing the position of Agrippina as depicted thereon. Some also considered the roles of Seneca and Burrus, and their relationship with the mother-son partnership of Agrippina and Nero.

A034 Controlled Assessment

Overall the standard in work this year was similar to that in previous years, although there was a notable trend in some areas for slight over-marking of work. In addition to this, there were centres whose candidates had not grasped the need to use ancient source material, and were still evaluating modern historians' work in a manner that would have been more appropriate to the analysis of ancient sources. Centres are reminded of the direction stated on the examination paper and in the specification to use and evaluate ancient sources.

Centres should instruct their pupils to evaluate evidence from the ancient world - too many candidates in this topic still make comments about the reliability of websites or books.

Candidates should also be reminded of the need to include a word count and bibliography with their candidates' work. The former in particular is important because of the requirement to take this into account when awarding marks for AO1.

On a final general point, it is also worth reminding centres of the importance of using some teaching time to outline the background to the topic that is being considered. Too many candidates did not seem to understand the civilisation with which they were dealing, or have an appropriate frame of reference from which to view the material and questions which they were studying.

There were many excellent answers, but the points given below indicate some of the salient points arising from the answers that moderators read.

1. **How far does the evidence help us to understand the economic influence of Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean during this period?**

Some centres clearly teach some background to the Egypt topic, while others, disappointingly, appear to leave all the background research to the pupils to complete by 'Googling'. There was some attempt to establish Egyptian products, but not enough concentration on the Eastern Mediterranean and the mechanism of trade.

2. **How far do the ancient sources help us to understand the development of temples in Egypt during this period?**

The most common approach to this question was to describe a series of buildings that covered a range of dates. While this would gain credit under AO1, the relative lack of evaluation of those sources would impact on AO3. There was a tendency in some centres to stray way beyond the specified time period from beginning of Predynastic to end of Ptolemaic Egypt. In order to cover such a huge time span, either the 2000 word limit was (almost inevitably) violated or only parts of the essay contained relevant discussion.

3. **How far do the ancient sources help us to understand the political influence of the Minoans in the Aegean during this period?**

Not enough centres opted for this option for meaningful comments to be made.

4. **How clear an understanding of the events surrounding the collapse of Minoan civilisation can we gain from the archaeological evidence?**

Once again this topic was chosen by a small number of centres, but those that chose it completed the work to a high standard. Sources were invariably well-chosen and well-used by the candidates. Some work showed an excellent understanding of geophysics and archaeology, which was effectively applied to the question at hand.

5. **How much can we learn from the ancient sources about the use of military equipment by the Myceneans or Trojans in warfare?**

Some interesting work was done on this topic by a number of centres. The challenge for many candidates seemed to be maintaining a clear focus on the issue in the question, and ensuring that the issue of use was fully addressed. Many either ended up considering other aspects of Mycenaean archaeology, or talking about Homer as a source in general terms. There was also a lack of evaluation apparent in such scripts, because of the considerable amounts of description of artefacts, rather than considering their use in the light of literary evidence. Weaker scripts often quoted secondary sources and then used illustrations to back up points, rather than returning to the primary source material.

6. **How far does the evidence help us to understand the development of Mycenaean palaces during this period?**

Not many of these were seen, but it was evident that centres that opted for this topic were given a clear introduction to the subject matter, which ensured that the candidates focused on the sources, as required by the title. Very detailed investigations considering palace development across a broad range of perspectives (military, trade, religion, interrelationships, hierarchy). Excellent guidance was provided by a centre that posed a series of questions for the candidates to consider in gathering their evidence.

7. **How far do the ancient sources help us to understand the impact of religion on the daily lives of people in Persia in this period?**

Not enough centres opted for this option for meaningful comments to be made.

8. **How far does the archaeological and literary evidence help us to understand the strengths and weaknesses of any one Persian king?**

Generally nice range of sources from the ancient world used, but sometimes used as illustrations rather than being evaluated. Various kings were selected, but the most popular was Cyrus the Great. Centres should be reminded to look at the dates on the questions very carefully - some kings were selected who were outside of the dates given in the question.

Some centres appear to have supplied candidates with a primary source pack with little contextualisation. Candidates limited their investigations to the sources supplied which had the unfortunate consequence that the main events of Cyrus' reign were not understood with a surprising number ignoring the majority of his conquests and concluding he was not a good military ruler. Evaluation was sometimes simplistic: Herodotus was dismissed as a source for Cyrus because he 'was not alive then'.

9. **How far do the ancient sources help us to understand the development of philosophy in the Hellenistic world?**

Not enough centres opted for this option for meaningful comments to be made.

10. **How far do the ancient sources help us to understand military developments during the Hellenistic period?**

The work seen on this topic included a thorough exploration of sources (Polybius, Stobaeus, Philo, Plutarch) and understanding of their limitations. Some excellent analysis of the phalanx and its limitations and the development of siege warfare and naval warfare were produced.

11. **How reliable a picture of the economic structure of any one Celtic society can we gain from the ancient sources?**

Some masterly work from enthusiastic candidates on British tribes considering agriculture, coinage, mining and burials to build a picture of the economy. Weaker candidates tended to exhaust the relevant material and digress on Celtic religious practices, Maiden Castle and the position of women with no explicit link to the question. It was pleasing to see candidates choose a diverse range of tribes not just in Britain but even e.g. the Arevaci in Spain.

12. **How much can we learn from the evidence about the influence of the Romans on any one Celtic society during this period?**

Only a few centres seen - good range of sources used (literary and archaeological) with some nice focus on coins to demonstrate both Romanisation and the survival of Celtic traditions. Some centres issued a source pack to students that did not encourage independent research with the result that the context was rarely understood, and the process of conquest or questions surrounding it were rarely discussed. There was also a marked tendency for some centres to limit their evaluation to secondary sources.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England
Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

© OCR 2015

