

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

H408

For first teaching in 2017

H408/31 Summer 2024 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 31 series overview

It was pleasing to see the number of very strong answers to the questions set this year. Examiners were impressed by the breadth of AO1 brought by candidates, who offered a strong understanding of all the topics in this year's paper. There were no particular 'blank spots' where candidates were unsure of what was expected of them. The best areas of knowledge were on public worship and 'set piece' religion. Candidates were generally less confident on household religion and on issues of impiety.

In terms of AO2, there remains a need for candidates to think more carefully about how they answer essay questions. For too many responses, the approach seems to be a listing of AO1, with a brief analytical comment at the end of a paragraph. As a result it is very difficult for examiners to credit such pieces as having 'a well-developed and clear line of reasoning' in Level 4. If candidates shape an answer to the question in an introductory paragraph they are much more likely to be able to follow that through the essay.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • had a confident knowledge of AO1, demonstrating an awareness of <i>polis</i>, household and personal religion • picked up the specifics of the requirements for the 10 mark question • recognised that the 20 mark question necessitated knowledge of <i>polis</i> AND household religion. • had a sustained comparative focus in the 30 mark essays • deployed modern scholarship in Questions 8 and 9, ensuring that they demonstrated a critical approach to their usage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tended to have a very limited range of AO1. • offered little sense of comparison in either of the 30 mark essays • lacked a sense of an overall view in answer to the question • demonstrated a limited grasp of AO2 for essay questions, which tended to be dominated by AO1 • did not use modern scholarship in Questions 8 and 9.

Section A overview

The questions in Section A tend to require a sound factual basis and a confident understanding of both the source extract and the 'idea' that leads into Questions 4, 5 and 6. This year saw candidates perform better on Question 6, as there was too little perceptive analysis of Source A. It should be noted that the 10 mark questions require candidates to demonstrate AO1 and AO2 in their points. Too many tend to favour AO1 alone and so do not merit the highest marks.

In the 20 mark essay, it would be helpful to encourage candidates to pivot in their thinking. They need to move on from the AO1 focus of the 1 mark questions and make sure they address the question with a clear sense of the AO2 that is needed.

Source A

Votive relief from a sanctuary of Asclepius

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Question 1

- 1 Why was Asclepius important to the Greeks? [1]

Almost all candidates scored a mark for this question.

Question 2

- 2 Name the location of one of Asclepius' sanctuaries. [1]

The vast majority of candidates scored a mark for this question.

Question 3

- 3 Analyse how useful **Source A** is as a source of information about what happened in the sanctuary of Asclepius. [10]

The source material for this question has a tight focus; it was necessary for candidates to be careful to reference it closely in order to do well. The best responses recognised that the source had some utility, but was limited in the extent to which it revealed what happened in the sanctuary. As such, these responses identified what the source did not reveal as much as what it did reveal.

It was noticeable that many less successful responses made only a cursory reference to the source, and so many points did not fully engage with the question. Examiners were looking for candidates to identify specific features in the source rather than just discuss healing and the gods in generalities. Less successful responses often just described what was in the source, or discussed the activities in the sanctuary.

Hesiod stated that all Greeks should wash their hands before pouring a libation to their gods and goddesses. If they did not do this, then their prayers would be ignored.

Question 4

- 4 State **one** example of something poured during a libation. [1]

Almost all candidates scored a mark for this question.

Question 5

- 5 State **two** other examples, apart from not washing, of what the Greeks would consider impious behaviour. [2]

The vast majority of candidates gained 2 marks for this question.

Question 6

- 6 'Impiety was always taken seriously by the Greeks.' Explain how far you agree with this statement.

[10]

There were many very well constructed responses to this question, probably a result of the wide range of possible points that could be made. The best responses looked to draw on a range of *polis*-sanctioned actions, community expectations as well as times that the Greeks did not pursue impiety very vigorously. These were most effective when candidates discussed the actions (AO1) and then explained why this demonstrated the seriousness of the Greek attitudes (AO2). An equally effective approach was to identify the Greek attitudes first for AO2, and then exemplify that with well-selected AO1.

In less successful responses, there were either a very limited range of points, or candidates tended to assert that the Greeks took impiety seriously without offering much in the way of AO1.

Assessment for learning



The ability to marry AO1 and AO2 in the 10 mark questions is crucial. Candidates should be encouraged to practise linking the two so that they maximise their mark. See Exemplar 1.

Exemplar 1

		Furthermore, impiety can be seen to be taken seriously through the multitude of ways there is to treat it e.g. washing to if physically filthy filthy or a purification ritual if you have murdered someone. This shows its serious nature in the great Greek minds as they tried in every way to eradicate it, either through meaningless tasks or rituals.
		The The serious nature of impiety can be see seen through Socrates trial where he was sentenced to death by hemlock for four charges

		the most notable being corrupting
		the young and atheism. By sentencing
		him to death for suggesting something
		other than the Olympian gods shows
		the way in which pollution impiety
		was not tolerated by the gods as
		execution is a highly drastic consequence

Exemplar 1 is a strong example of well-linked AO1 and AO2. The candidate offers AO1 in the form of what might cause pollution (being physically dirty, murder), and then expresses 'this shows its serious nature.' This is followed up by the AO1 example of Socrates' trial, and then the AO2 explanation of 'execution is a highly drastic consequence'. Note too, that there is not a need for lengthy explanation in a 10 mark question.

Question 7*

- 7* 'Fear of being punished was the only reason the Greeks worshipped their gods and goddesses at household and *polis* levels.'

Assess how far you agree with this statement. Justify your response.

[20]

The majority of candidates demonstrated that they had a secure knowledge of the motives for worship. The best responses were able to move easily between the Greek literary heritage of Homer and Hesiod and the activities of *polis*/household religion for AO1. They fulfilled the AO2 element of the question by a confident identification of a range of motives (e.g. fear, community activity, devotion, reciprocity). Examiners were pleased to see a recognition that identifying the motives of the Greeks was necessarily rather speculative, but that the different areas could be weighed against each other. This led to some well substantiated conclusions in order to address the question.

Less effective responses were, as has often been the case in the past, more of a description of Greek religion. The predominance of AO1 stifled a full examination of AO2. Many candidates did not read the question carefully enough and missed the focus on *polis* and household religion. As a result there were a large number of responses that got stuck in a cul-de-sac of describing personal religious motivation.

Section B overview

There was an even split of candidates selecting each essay question, though answers tended to be slightly better on Question 9. The level of knowledge was comparable, but the ability to analyse was considerably stronger in Question 9. Candidates in both questions needed to make clear comparisons, and when this was at the heart of the essay it resulted in some strong performance.

Introductory paragraph

Too few candidates are able to construct and sustain a clear line of reasoning in essays. With greater care taken in the introductory paragraph, and a clear set of reasons offered, a view can be set up that will sustain itself through each of the following sections of the essay (see Exemplar 2).

There are still some candidates who neglect modern scholars, and this has a considerable effect on their overall mark in AO2. The majority do deploy scholars, but only a minority engage with scholars. This is the crucial challenge for candidates in the essays in this exam.

OCR support



OCR has produced a blog detailing where you can find suitable material that meets the requirement for 'secondary scholars and academics', what we expect candidates to do with it in the exam and how examiners go about marking the scholarship requirement.

[Read the blog here.](#)

Question 8*

- 8* 'The popularity of the Eleusinian Mysteries shows that the Greeks wanted more from religion than other types of worship could provide.'

Evaluate how far you agree with this statement.

[30]

This essay saw two main approaches from candidates. Some took it to be an invitation to talk about the popularity of the Eleusinian Mysteries, and discussed their different features accordingly. They generally lacked an assessment of whether the Mysteries offered something more than other forms of worship, and so did not achieve the higher levels. Quite often there was simply the assertion that they did/did not offer more.

More successful responses took a measured approach to the question. By looking at what was unique about the Mysteries, many were able to establish clear points of comparison. Some argued that, for example, the secrecy, processions and initiation made the Mysteries stand out and filled a gap in Greek religious experience. Others were able to construct arguments to suggest that the Mysteries were only examples of Greek religious practices that could be seen elsewhere. In both cases, the deployment of AO1 was especially strong, discussing both the Mysteries and other forms of worship.

Use of modern scholarship was often very good, with an analysis of scholarly ideas about the nature of Greek religion being accessible to many candidates.

Question 9*

- 9* 'The layout, role and importance of the Acropolis in Athens were vastly different from other sanctuaries in Greece.'

Comparing the Acropolis in Athens with **either** the sanctuary at Delphi **or** the sanctuary at Olympia, evaluate how far you agree with this statement.

[30]

Examiners saw very strong responses which compared the Acropolis to both Olympia or Delphi. It was encouraging to see how well candidates handled the AO1 for both of their chosen sanctuaries. The best responses followed the shape of the question, assessing similarities/differences in terms of layout, role and importance of the two sites. It was very pleasing to see that many candidates could extend their AO1 beyond just the Parthenon, and indeed further than simply a discussion of the Acropolis' main buildings. There were some very well exemplified essays on the Acropolis as a whole, and of its *polis* functions. These were then compared carefully to the range of buildings at Olympia/Delphi, with an awareness of the Panhellenic factor at both sites. The best essays tended to make comparisons on a point by point basis rather than offer a single long paragraph for each sanctuary.

Where candidates were less successful it was evident that there were considerable gaps in the AO1. Many responses lacked a sufficient amount of AO1 in order to make meaningful comparisons between the sites. Others neglected to consider whether the sites were different and contented themselves with a summary of major points of interest. It must be reiterated that this topic requires candidates to understand the role of sanctuaries in religion and not to simply view them as if they were tourists.

Scholars were used effectively on the Acropolis and Delphi, but generally less clearly on Olympia.

Exemplar 2

9		The layout, role and importance of the Acropolis in Athens can be regarded as vastly different from other sanctuaries in Greece, particularly the Sanctuary at Olympia. Despite some similarities, such as Athletics games, and worship of the gods, there are many differences, particularly in the importance of the Acropolis, as it is largely a local Athenian
		Sanctuary, rather than the more Panhellenic significance of Olympia.

Exemplar 2's introduction gives a sound start to an essay. It begins with expressing a clear view ('vastly different'). There is then a recognition of the counter-view ('despite some similarities'), before reiterating the main view, but this time giving the key driver of the evidence. The candidate here identifies the importance of the 'local Athenian sanctuary' versus 'Panhellenic significance of Olympia'. This enables an examiner to see both the overall direction that the essay will take, and the key argument that underpins the candidate's view.

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