

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

LATIN

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in Latin

H443

For first teaching in 2016

H443/03 Summer 2025 series

Contents

Introduction	3
Paper 3 series overview	4
Section A overview	5
Question 1 (a)	5
Question 1 (b)	5
Question 1 (c)	6
Question 1 (d)*	6
Question 2 (a)	7
Question 2 (b)	7
Question 2 (c)	7
Question 2 (d)	8
Question 2 (e)*	8
Section B overview	9
Question 3 (a)*	9
Question 3 (b)	10
Question 3 (c)	10
Question 3 (d)	10
Question 3 (e)	11
Question 4 (a)	11
Question 4 (b)	11
Question 4 (c)	11
Question 4 (d)	11
Question 4 (e)*	12
Question 5 (a)	13
Question 5 (b), (c) and (d)	13
Section C overview	14
Question 6*	14
Question 7*	16
Question 8*	16

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 responses 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 [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper 3 series overview

This year's exam series assessed new texts from Cicero (*pro Caelio*), Tacitus (*Annals* XII-XIV), and Pliny (*Letters*). As in previous series, most scripts had some combination of Tacitus and Cicero, or indeed a focus on one of these authors for all questions. Pliny was a minority choice but was well prepared by centres.

15-mark responses in general displayed detailed knowledge of the texts. While many scripts were extremely impressive, it was noticeable that a sizeable number were very narrative-heavy in their approaches. These responses tended to repeat the narrative of the text with some analysis of particular word choices but often neglecting the rich literary features that the texts contained. In some rare cases, the entire response was limited by having no reference at all to the Latin texts.

20-mark essays were in general detailed with a pleasing array of arguments. Only very rarely did a candidate not base the essay on the Group 2 text as is required for this paper (essays which did not do this ended up being marked at a lower level). Candidates performed well in incorporating the required English reading into their essays (essays which did not do this also ended up being marked at a lower level). As often happens, a few candidates spent too much time on the 15-mark questions and ended up having to finish the 20-mark essay abruptly. The importance of good timing should be noted again by all centres.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• had an excellent knowledge of the set texts (including the ability to translate the Latin accurately) • produced insightful responses to 15-mark questions by providing relevant evidence from the Latin texts • contained detailed discussion of relevant literary devices, both identifying these features and explaining their effects well • responded to 20-mark essay questions with sustained arguments leading to convincing conclusions based on a detailed knowledge of the texts.	• had an excessive focus on repeating the narrative on passages in 15-mark responses • did not appreciate or evaluate the wealth of literary and rhetorical devices • focused too much on single isolated words, or words with English translations of Latin words which were easily recognisable (e.g. <i>equus Troianus</i>) • produced translations with multiple omissions or incorrect vocabulary • did not leave adequate time to complete the 20-mark essay • did not show adequate understanding of the meaning of what the Latin authors intended.

Section A overview

The Cicero question was a very popular choice and was answered well. Answers to the Tacitus question also showed good understanding and analysis.

Question 1 (a)

1 Read the following passages and answer the questions.

(a) Translate *sed ... traditurum* (lines 1–4).

[5]

This translation was generally well done by most candidates. Omission of smaller words such as *huic* or *eis* proved costly for many. The word *pudenti* produced a broad array of translations with many not succeeding in conveying the idea of modesty or a sense of propriety. Many candidates seemed to confuse the word with *prudenti* to produce a range of words such as 'wise' or 'intelligent'. The word *eodem* also proved challenging with several candidates taking it to agree with *Licinio* ('the same Licinius').

Translation questions

Candidates should be encouraged to make sure that all words in a passage are translated.

Question 1 (b)

(b) In lines 4–8 (*hic ... visus esset*), how does Cicero raise doubts about the prosecution's version of events? [5]

Candidates were well able to identify five points to gain full marks in this question. In some cases, the explicit contrast in the first two points of the mark scheme was not fully explained by candidates (i.e. Cicero is asking why did they specifically meet at the Senian baths – why did they not meet at Caelius' house?).

Misconception – comprehension questions



Many candidates – possibly interpreting the word 'how' here – produced lengthy responses to this question by quoting portions of the Latin and even identifying literary features. This must also have been costly in terms of timing in the exam. Small comprehension questions do not require either Latin quotation or extended literary analysis (unlike the 15-mark responses where both Latin and developed analysis are expected).

Question 1 (c)

(c) *sin autem ... criminum* (lines 8–10): what is Cicero suggesting here?

[2]

This question was very well answered. Successful responses explained the answer rather than simply providing a direct translation.

Question 1 (d)*

(d)* How does Cicero ridicule the young men in this passage?

You should refer **both** to the content **and** to the language of the passage.

[15]

There was an excellent range of responses to this question. Candidates focused well on the trigger word 'ridicule' to bring out the humour and sarcasm of the passage which belittles Clodia and the men she sent. The phrase *lautos iuvenes mulieris beatae ac nobilis familiares* caused a few problems – firstly, some candidates confused the adjectival agreements to talk about 'noble friends', etc., while a significant few confused *lautos* ('elegant, spruced up') with *laudatos* ('praised').

Assessment for learning – developing literary analysis



Candidates should be encouraged to gain credit in their responses by fully developing their points about literary style. In Question 1(d), most candidates were able to spot the obvious anaphora of *alia* which Cicero deployed, and assume that credit is gained merely by stating this fact. Better responses were able to suggest, for example, that the relentless repetition of *alia* helps to set up a series of binary opposites which reinforces in the minds of the jurors that Clodia's ridiculous associates are totally at odds with the seriousness and skill required for speaking in a Roman court.

Question 2 (a)

2 Read the following passages and answer the questions.

(a) *Fausto Sulla ... scrutaretur* (lines 1–2): why was Scribonianus exiled?

[1]

Most candidates gained the mark available here.

Question 2 (b)

(b) In lines 2–3 (*adnectebatur ... impatiens*), what do we learn about Scribonianus' mother, Vibia? [2]

This was another very well answered question. As anticipated by the mark scheme, those candidates who translated *impatiens* as 'impatient' did not really capture the sense of how Vibia was unable to bear or put up with her former treatment.

Question 2 (c)

(c) Translate *pater ... vulgavere* (lines 3–7).

[5]

On the whole, this translation was well done. Parts of Tacitus' prose here were quite demanding but responses included a wide range of very different but equally acceptable renderings of parts of the passage. This was notable in the phrase *idque ad clementiam trahebat Caesar* – anything suggesting that the Caesar was trying to draw out the interpretation of his actions as displaying mercy was accepted, whereas over-literal renditions (e.g. 'Caesar was dragging this ...') did not capture the meaning of the clause.

Question 2 (d)

(d) *laudati ... adicerent* (lines 8–10): why did Claudius praise some senators but punish others? [4]

Most candidates answered this well and gained at least 3 out of 4 marks. Some candidates did not translate the word *impudentiam* sufficiently accurately. Examiners were looking for some reference to the effrontery and audacity or shamelessness (rather than shame) of some senators obstinately remaining in the senate despite their impoverished circumstances.

Question 2 (e)*

(e)* How does Tacitus sustain our interest in this passage?

You should refer **both** to the content **and** to the language of the passage.

[15]

Candidates performed well in this question. The passage contained a wide range of things that captivate the reader's interest (whether it is the geographical setting, the drama of the flooding, or the intrigue surrounding Agrippina's political role and her animosity towards Narcissus). However, many obvious features of Tacitus' typical repertoire (chiasmus, ellipsis, historic present tense) were not always commented on. Candidates should be encouraged to explore these aspects of Tacitus' style and gain appropriate credit as a result. In some cases, there was also a tendency to simply go through the narration of the passage to show how interesting it was. Greater levels of (stylistic) analysis would help prevent this shortcoming.

Answering 15-mark questions

- For 15-mark questions, candidates should be encouraged to quote and translate whole Latin phrases. Fragmentary approaches which only pick out isolated words are unlikely to be credited.
- Literary features can then be further analysed and their relevance carefully explained.
- Both content and use of language should be linked to the original question – e.g. how is a passage emotional, vivid, or interesting?
- A range of points should be taken from the whole passage: sometimes, candidates offer perhaps two or three points of analysis on the same Latin quote which restricts the attention they give to other parts of the passage.

Section B overview

The questions were by and large very well answered, with some of the lower-tariff questions for Cicero challenging many candidates.

Question 3 (a)*

3 Read the following passage and answer the questions.

(a)* *hic ego ... dixi* (lines 1–12): what makes this passage a powerful attack on Clodia?

You should refer **both** to the content **and** to the language of the passage.

[15]

There was plenty of literary analysis to be made in this passage which candidates detected and explained well. Most responses were focused on how well Cicero attacks and exposes Clodia in the passage.

Exemplar 1

		Firstly, Cicero makes this a powerful attack on Clodia with his sarcastic and deeply ironic claims in the first few lines not to be talking about a particular woman: 'mulierem nullam nominabo' (I shall not name any woman). Yet, the exaggerated 'm' consonance in this line could suggest his irony, and hint that he is referring exactly to Clodia. By using this irony, Cicero makes his attack on Clodia particularly biting since the audience no longer even need to hear her name - the jurors hear something to do with hedonism or a courtesan, and immediately link it to Clodia, showing the depth of Cicero's power to destroy her reputation.
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This is a good example of a well-developed point in a 15-mark response. The candidate has selected an appropriate piece of Latin which demonstrates Cicero's method of attacking. The quotation is relevant and accurately translated. A piece of literary style is identified and discussed, before the whole point is clearly linked back to the question.

Question 3 (b)

(b) *sed ex te ipsa ... habere* (lines 13–14): what do the accusers say about Clodia?

[2]

This question was answered well.

Question 3 (c)

(c) Translate *si quae mulier ... obiciant Caelio* (lines 14–18).

[5]

This translation was well done. Some problems were posed by over-literal translations of *aliquid habuisse rationem*. A few candidates translated *num* as something along the lines of 'surely this would seem shameful', when really the interrogative expects the answer 'no' here.

Question 3 (d)

(d) In lines 18–19 (*sin eam ... pertimescamus*), how does Cicero undermine the prosecution case?

[3]

This question presented several challenges for candidates. A simple translation of the sentence here often did not properly answer the question. For example, taking this hypothetical answer interspersed with some commentary: 'if you are that woman [what woman?], and you do not despise it [what does despise mean here? And despise what?], why should we fear [fear what?]' A fuller response would explain that if Clodia is that kind of woman, namely an immoral one, and she herself does not have a problem with that lifestyle, then in consequence neither should the defence be afraid of being associated with a lifestyle that Clodia does not reject/despise.

Comprehension questions

Low-tariff questions are intended to assess whether a candidate understands a portion of the text – not simply whether they can produce a translation. Candidates should be encouraged to use their own words to explain their answer to the question. Often Cicero's arguments can be quite torturous – candidates should be supported in fully understanding the comprehension of the points even in English, understanding what the author is saying, rather than simply translating what the author has written.

Question 3 (e)

- (e) *aut enim pudor ... dabit* (lines 20–22): explain how Cicero here presents an unchallengeable defence of Caelius.

[3]

This question again tested candidates' understanding of what Cicero is saying and was handled better than Question 3 (d). Some candidates seemed not to understand the meaning of *pudor* (Clodia's sense of shame or more broadly her purity of character), taking it instead to mean that she has done something shameful.

Question 4 (a)

- 4 Read the following passage and answer the questions.

- (a) In line 1, what is Tacitus referring to by 'these events' (*haec*)?

[1]

This was mostly well answered, with very few candidates thinking that these things referred to the treatment of Agrippina after her death rather than the murder itself.

Question 4 (b)

- (b) How do lines 1–4 (*aspexeritne ... humus*) show Nero's lack of respect towards his mother?

[5]

Most candidates were able to gain full marks here. A few candidates did not really understand the point about the earth being closed over or heaped up, thinking that Agrippina did not receive a tomb in the sense of a fixed stone monument or something similar.

Question 4 (c)

- (c) *mox ... accepit* (lines 4–5): how does this show a more respectful response to Agrippina's death?

[2]

This was mostly well answered by candidates.

Question 4 (d)

- (d) Translate *accenso ... imperet* (lines 6–10).

[5]

The omission of words such as *eius* (her – Agrippina's – freedman), and *cognomento* were the most common errors seen. The words *accenso rogo* were also problematic – several candidates opted to

leave this portion out, or else had an erroneous translation thinking that the funeral pyre was instead something to do with the verb 'to ask' (*rogare*).

Question 4 (e)*

(e)* *sed a Caesare ... paravisset* (lines 11–24): what makes this such a vivid description of the reactions to Agrippina's death?

You should refer **both** to the content **and** to the language of the passage.

[15]

There was plenty to discuss in this passage and most candidates exploited well the range of points to be made. However, there were some very narrative-heavy responses which simply repeated the story. The mark scheme gives indicative examples of stylistic analysis, some of which are very typical of Tacitus (e.g. the use of the historic present infinitive in *adire templa*) which could have been better used. There was confusion about understanding what exactly Tacitus meant by saying that the appearance of landscapes does not change like human expressions can, while some candidates took *obversabatur* as *observabat*, thinking Nero was just observing the landscape rather than the landscape imposing itself menacingly on Nero.

Exemplar 2

		laetitia testari' (the neighbouring towns of Campania ... testified their happiness). Here, Tacitus emphasises this shocking response to Agrippina's murder as Nero's associates display happiness ('laetitia') and even piety at the temples ('templa'); furthermore, the chiasmus of 'adire templa ... laetitia testari' (went to the temples ... testified their happiness) evokes a chilling sense of balance and harmony as Nero is flattered of her having murdered his mother.
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The candidate has judiciously selected a good piece of evidence which shows a vivid reaction to Agrippina's death. The translation is accurate and the literary analysis, which is well developed, supports the point being made.

Question 5 (a)

5 Read the following passages and answer the questions.

(a) Translate *confecerunt ... custodio* (lines 1–5).

[5]

The quality of translations was high with very few words omitted.

Question 5 (b), (c) and (d)

(b) *mandant ... domus est* (lines 5–7): in what ways is Pliny's treatment of his slaves unusual?

[3]

(c) Lines 7–9 (*sed quamquam ... induxit*): what contrast does Pliny make here?

[2]

(d) In lines 9–12 (*nec ignoro ... non sunt*), what does Pliny say to show his disapproval of other people in such circumstances?

[3]

Question 5 (b), (c) and (d) were all answered well.

Question 5 (e)*

(e)* In this passage, how does Pliny emphasise his contempt for Regulus?

You should refer **both** to the content **and** to the language of the passage.

[15]

The small number of centres who selected Pliny generally prepared very well. Essays on this question explained Pliny's contempt for Regulus well, and a good range of literary devices were discussed in detail.

Section C overview

This year's essays were very well done, with fewer candidates seeming to run out of time. Analysis (especially in terms of creating valid arguments) was strong, and high levels of detail were given to back up those arguments.

Answering 20-mark essays

The most successful essays had these features:

- a very wide range of points from the Group 2 texts, both in Latin and in English (not the Group 1 texts of which only limited use can be made)
- very detailed reference to the Latin and English prescribed texts with excellent levels of analysis which accurately answer the question
- some use of relevant historical or cultural background, although such references are not essential – references to scholars are not needed for A Level Latin
- they were completed within the time allowed. Several candidates ran out of time and so it may be worth asking: are candidates spending too much time on, for example, the 15-mark questions? Are candidates adding vague introductory or concluding paragraphs which take extra time but are unnecessary and rarely gain marks? Can timed essays be practised in lessons to help candidates to use time more effectively in the exam?

Question 6*

6* How effective do you find Cicero's defence of Caelius in *Pro Caelio*?

[20]

Most candidates were able to discern a few overarching categories to show that the *Pro Caelio* was an effective speech. These included: the use of humour to mock Clodia and win over the jury on the holiday (including Cicero's use of prosopopoeia), defamation of Clodia (branding her as *meretrix*), questioning the motives of the prosecution, e.g. Bestia and Aratinus, use of logical arguments (e.g. the dilemmas that Cicero poses), and the presentation of Caelius as an outstanding Roman citizen and orator. Candidates were well able to show how effective these approaches are, while also noting the drawbacks in that Cicero merely distracts attention away from the actual charges rather than dealing with them head on.

Exemplar 3

		Moreover, Cicero use of invective and personal attacks on Clodia draws the jury's attention to Clodia and away from Caelius. Immediately his attack begins "he is being attacked with the help of a prostitute". Cicero uses this immediate invective to convey Clodia's centrality to the case. Moreover his description of her as "medea sick at heart" aligns her with a woman goaded by passion and envy, making the case seem less of an accusation but more of a spiteful attack. Cicero's advantage is clearly adamant on Clodia's centrality to the case even stating that without her there would be no case and no charge. This use of derogatory stereotype
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In this exemplar, we can see a sub-section of the essay which deals with how Cicero's defence uses invective against Clodia as a means of defence. Under that heading, a few examples from the set text are produced to show, e.g. how she is branded a *meretrix*, or compared to a literary figure such as Medea. There is some detail given from the text and some analysis of how this distracts the jurors from Caelius' actions. A higher-level response might have drawn out the comparison to Medea by explaining why it is relevant to Clodia, or given a more detailed description of Clodia's alleged immoral behaviour.

Question 7*

7* 'In *Annals* XIII and XIV, Tacitus shows that power in Rome led only to vice and corruption.'

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

[20]

In general, most candidates agreed with the statement and were able to produce abundant evidence of corruption and vice in Rome. Some qualifications were made, e.g. that it was not necessarily power *per se* which led to corruption as much as inherent flaws in human nature which power exacerbated. Some counterarguments were made, e.g. about the good governance of Seneca and Burrus (although even here some corruption was noted), as well as the actions of Thrasea Paetus. Good use was made of the prescribed English reading to show that Nero had a good start to his reign (e.g. by wanting to restore the role of the senate) before his reign grew more and more corrupt with time.

Question 8*

8* 'Pliny's letters show him to be a role model for his times.'

How far do you agree with this assessment?

[20]

Responses to the stimulus quote showed perceptive points and detailed evidence. Most candidates agreed that Pliny was an admirable character in many ways: his work-life balance, his concern for his friends, his love of nature and beauty, his devotion to literary pursuits, his love for his wife and his enlightened views on slavery to some extent, etc. Arguments against him being a role model included his disdain for popular pursuits and snobbery, as well as the fact that Pliny's views seemed fine for a wealthy Roman but in fact were out of touch with large parts of the population.

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