

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

ANCIENT HISTORY

**OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE
in Ancient History**

H007

For first teaching in 2017

H007/01 Summer 2025 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 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.

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Paper 1 series overview

Examiners noted a generally high level of engagement with the paper, and many responses reflected a good standard of understanding and preparation. This year's questions covered a broad range of the specification, allowing candidates to demonstrate breadth of knowledge. However, Question 1 proved challenging, with some candidates struggling to apply their knowledge effectively to the specific demands of the question. In contrast, the responses to Questions 3 and 4 were accomplished, particularly in the use of ancient source material and the quality of evaluation, which was focused and analytical.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• demonstrated a strong and accurate understanding of the historical period • maintained clear and consistent chronological awareness throughout their responses • selected evidence that was directly relevant to the specific terms of the question • focused their responses tightly on the demands of the question • supported arguments with well-integrated and appropriate knowledge • evaluated the reliability and significance of specific points with clarity and precision.	• focused on broad summaries of the period rather than addressing the specific issue posed by the question • adopted a narrative approach, recounting events without sufficient analysis or argument • demonstrated limited factual knowledge, particularly in Question 1, which required a stronger grasp of context and detail • made errors in source attribution, leading to confusion or misinterpretation • provided evaluations that lacked specificity; these often did not engage critically with the material.

Section A overview

Question 1 challenged candidates; many seemed unfamiliar with the events of the Samian revolt. Where candidates knew the basic factual detail, there was often no assessment of the effects the revolt had on relations between Greek states. Information was confidently taken from the extracts in Question 2. There was some good understanding of the strategy deployed by the Spartans in occupying the pass at Decelea. Better responses discussed the utility of the passage and its reliability to reach convincing conclusions.

Question 1

- 1 Explain the effect the events around the revolt of Samos had on the relations between Greek states in the period 440–431 BC. [10]

The best answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the events surrounding the Samian revolt and its significance within the wider context of Greek interstate relations especially involving Athens, Corinth and Sparta. In contrast, a significant number of responses showed limited familiarity with the details of the revolt, which affected their ability to engage fully with the question and weakened the overall quality of their argument. There were many more examples of this question being totally omitted.

Exemplar 1

1.		The revolt of Samos took place around 440-439. It began with a dispute between Miletus and Samos, with Athens supporting Miletus. As a result, Samos requested Sparta's help. Sparta were prepared to help Samos, therefore opposing the Athenians, just a short period into the 30 year Peace. Ultimately, Sparta did not help, since Corinth opposed the intervention, arguing that Athens has the right to punish its own allies. Therefore, relations between Athens and Sparta were still outwardly peaceful, but revealed some internal tensions and mistrust.
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Exemplar 1 shows a good example of a low Level 4 response to Question 1 response. The events surrounding the Samian Revolt are clearly understood, and the factual content is both accurate and well-organised. However, the answer would have been strengthened by including more specific examples of how the revolt influenced relations between Greek states, particularly in the context of the fragile peace between Athens and Sparta. While the broader narrative is sound, the argument lacks detailed support linking the events directly to shifts in interstate dynamics.

Question 2

2 Read the following passages.

As for what you will gain and what you will force Athens to lose if you fortify Decelea, I shall merely summarise the most important points, omitting many others. Most of the property in the area will come into your hands, some by capture, some without your having to move a finger. Athens will immediately be deprived of her revenues from the silver mines at Laurium and from what she gets at present from the land and from the law-courts. Most important of all, she will lose her tribute from the allies, since they will pay it in much less regularly and will cease to be overawed by Athens herself once they see that you are now really making war seriously.

5

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, 6.91

The position was that, ever since Decelea had first been fortified by the whole of the invading army during the summer and had then been used as a hostile post against the country, with garrisons from the various cities relieving each other at fixed intervals, Athens had suffered a great deal. Indeed, the occupation of Decelea, resulting, as it did, in so much devastation of property and loss of manpower, was one of the chief reasons for the decline of Athenian power.

5

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, 7.27

On the basis of these passages and other sources you have studied, how important a factor was the Spartan occupation of Decelea in the eventual defeat of Athens? [20]

The best responses effectively contextualised the two extracts from Thucydides on the occupation of Decelea, clearly explaining their significance within the broader narrative of the Peloponnesian War as it related to Athens' eventual defeat. These responses demonstrated a strong grasp of the strategic impact of the Spartan occupation, particularly its role in undermining Athenian morale and draining resources. High level responses drew multiple references from both extracts and integrated them with wider knowledge of the war's progression supported by accurate references to source material.

While many responses rightly emphasised the importance of Decelea, strong answers also acknowledged that Athens' downfall cannot be attributed to this factor alone. They considered the disastrous consequences of the Sicilian Expedition and the decisive role played by Lysander's naval strategy in the final stages of the war. A few responses were limited by insufficient detail or a lack of close engagement with the extracts, but overall, many demonstrated a thoughtful and well-supported understanding of the scope of what the extracts were saying.

Section B overview

Most essay responses demonstrated a reasonable ability to construct arguments based on ancient evidence, with many reaching clear and logical conclusions. The most successful answers integrated source material directly into their analysis, using it to support specific points rather than as general commentary. However, several answers continued to include generic source evaluation, often placed at the end of essays, which added little value and was given minimal credit.

Question 3 proved more popular than Question 4, with many candidates engaging confidently with the role of the Hellenic League in the Persian defeat. While some responses showed a good understanding of Persian influence on Greek foreign policy between 477 and 446 BC, others struggled to define the scope of 'foreign policy' or to move beyond narrative.

Question 3*

- 3* 'It was the formation of the Hellenic League under the leadership of Sparta which was the key factor in the defeat of the Persians in 480–479 BC.'

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

You must use and analyse the ancient sources you have studied as well as supporting your answer with your own knowledge.

[30]

This question was generally well answered, with many candidates demonstrating a solid grasp of the key developments in 480–479 BC and the role of the Hellenic League. Responses often showed thoughtful engagement with the idea of Spartan leadership as a unifying force, while also weighing the contributions of Athens and the weaknesses of the Persian campaign. Several responses displayed strong structure and clear debate, supported by relevant references to Herodotus and other ancient sources.

There was clear understanding of the reasons behind the League's formation, though in some cases this was undermined by the inclusion of material on Athens' later imperial expansion, which fell outside the scope of the question. Source evaluation was generally effective, and it was encouraging to see more candidates moving beyond surface-level analysis to engage critically with the material.

Exemplar 2

		In conclusion, the formation of the Hellenic league under Spartan leadership was the main factor in the defeat of the Persians. The league created Greek unity in which many states came together for towards the same cause and contributed their naval and land forces. The Serpent Column shows this unity by listing the 31 states involved, with the Spartan leaders at the top, and proves the power of the states working together. The contribution of individual states like the Athenian navy and Spartan hoplites was significant as they provided strong forces against the Persians. But they could not have been victorious as alone as they needed each the combination of each others' forces to ultimately defeat the Persians. The weaknesses of the Persians also proved to be important but ultimately the fact that the Greeks provided such a strong force was the reason for their defeat. Overall, the Greek unity created by the Hellenic league was the most vital factor in the Greek victory over the Persians during the Gre Greco-Persian wars.
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This paragraph in Exemplar 2, is a good example of a strong conclusion. It clearly reinforces the main argument, that the formation of the Hellenic League was the most significant factor in the Greek victory over the Persians. It effectively summarises the key points made throughout the response, such as the unity of the Greek city-states, the leadership of Sparta, and the combined military strengths of Athens and Sparta. The mention of the Serpent Column provides concrete historical evidence that supports the idea of unity, making the argument more convincing. Furthermore, the conclusion acknowledges other contributing factors, like the weaknesses of the Persian forces, but ultimately reaffirms that it was the strength and cooperation of the united Greek states that proved decisive.

Question 4*

- 4* To what extent do you agree that Persia was the greatest influence on the foreign policy of the Greek states in the period 477 to 446 BC?

You must use and analyse the ancient sources you have studied as well as supporting your answer with your own knowledge.

[30]

This question was less frequently attempted, and responses varied more widely in quality. While some candidates demonstrated a thoughtful understanding of Persian involvement in Greek affairs between 477 and 446 BC, many struggled to maintain a clear focus on Persia as the central theme. A common issue was the tendency to shift the discussion toward Athens' development of the Delian League and its imperial ambitions, which, although related, often led responses away from the specific demands of the question.

Stronger responses were able to assess Persian influence in relation to key events and diplomatic manoeuvres, while also considering the internal dynamics of Greek interstate politics. However, in less successful responses, analysis was often replaced by narrative, and source material, particularly Thucydides, was either underused or applied too generally. A more precise engagement with the question and a clearer distinction between Persian influence and broader Athenian policy would have improved many responses.

Assessment for learning



A sample paragraph to show how all three assessment objectives could be incorporated in a fluid and convincing way.

One of the most significant factors in the Greek victory during the Persian Wars was the naval strength of Athens, particularly at the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC (AO1). Themistocles' strategy to lure the Persian fleet into the narrow straits played a crucial role in neutralising the numerical advantage of the Persian navy. This decision not only demonstrated tactical foresight but also shifted the momentum of the war in favour of the Greeks (AO2). Herodotus presents Themistocles as a cunning and persuasive leader, even attributing the Greek success at Salamis largely to his influence. While Herodotus' admiration for Themistocles is evident, his account may exaggerate the Athenian role to appeal to his Greek audience, particularly given his tendency to dramatise events (AO3). Nevertheless, the source remains valuable for understanding contemporary perceptions of leadership and strategy during the conflict.

Herodotus information taken from Herodotus 8.75–8.96.

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