

CIE AS Latin

Examiner's Report 2004

Twenty-two candidates from three schools took the examination. The CIE AS Latin examination has a locally written curriculum. The examination is set in New Zealand, but moderated in the UK. Both the curriculum and the examination were devised keeping in mind the standards required by the now defunct Bursaries and NZEST Latin examinations. The examiner assessed the papers with some trepidation. There was a real concern that the appropriate standard had been set and that the balance between the Language and Literature papers had been achieved. All such fears were dispelled by the performance of the candidates who were well-instructed and seemed enthusiastic about their course of study.

The top mark in both papers was a raw mark of 96. The mean in the Language paper was 77 and in the Literature paper 83. All student scripts were of an acceptable standard given the demands of the examination.

In the Language paper few attempted the unseen verse. Those who did, handled it well. The section from "hic victor.....a morte Dareta" proved to be the most difficult. A verse unseen at first sight appears daunting. Yet, given the vocabulary assistance, the option is not as bad as it looks. The main source of difficulty in the prose unseen came from not knowing some of the prescribed vocabulary. esp. "iurare" and "robur". Inadequate knowledge of basic vocabulary was also a problem in Sentences question. Old fashioned methods are called for to remedy this. Some scholarly answers were given in the Grammatical Analysis questions. However, all students should be reminded to give fullsome answers even at the risk of stating the obvious.

The answers given in the Literature paper confirmed the belief that Latin literature is as exciting and relevant as it ever was. The poetry of Virgil and the prose of Caesar have clearly touched these young scholars. Many of the candidates presented valid personal responses to their reading. A number showed a fascination for mythological/historical/military/social references in the texts. A major challenge for teachers is to identify and promote each student's special predilections. Reading great literature should be a joy. We must take care that we have not prescribed too much so that the reading becomes a chore.

The initial AS Latin examination has delivered a most pleasing outcome. Statistics are in keeping with traditional practice. This examination and its curriculum are new and to some degree experimental. The examiner would welcome any feedback.