

Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship Classical Studies 2024

Performance standard 93404

General commentary

The Classical Studies Scholarship examination remains a test of critical thinking and the ability to structure a coherent response. Those candidates who could interpret the question suitably and successfully integrate appropriate primary and secondary sources tended to gain the award. Often, it was a thoughtful response to the resources in Section B of the exam which aided in gaining the award. Careful reading of these resources and interpreting them in their context was frequently the pathway to a successful answer.

The wording in the questions often invited interpreting them flexibly. As long as candidates made it clear as to their approach, and did not misinterpret the question entirely, they were suitably rewarded. Disagreement with the question was also a valid approach but success depended on the strength of the argument candidates were able to muster. In general, the better answers were those that created a balanced response which took into consideration the various aspects of the question, such as in Question Twelve where both hope and tragedy were considered as a central theme. Care was needed in not making assumptions, for example in Question One, regarding Alexander's policy of fusion – you cannot argue for a policy by assuming that it exists; you must show that it exists.

Candidates must also ensure they demonstrate they know specific details of the context they have selected. In Question Nine a few candidates misunderstood the depiction of the Parthian standards on the Prima Porta Augustus. This famously does not refer to an actual military victory. Note that the questions do not pre-determine a response or the evidence that might be selected to support an argument. Using question nine as an example again, this could be answered well using a single emperor such as Augustus, although some of the better answers drew on multiple Emperors to provide a range of points. One notable answer to this question addressed three different types of benevolence in three paragraphs. The same was true of other questions where a range of examples from across the relevant works / authors / historical figures / periods helped to support a greater variety of points in an answer.

Successful candidates frequently made use of the quotations above the questions. These were utilised as scaffolding which enabled candidates to plan and structure their response. A key word or phrase from the quotation was also used as a starting point when taking a position in response to a question.

The advice to read the question is salient. In particular, Section B, many students seemed to stop reading after the reference to “interactions” and did not include in their answer a discussion of the benefits the gods may give to mortals and vice versa. Many answers contained a pre-packaged ‘dump’ of information on Greek or Roman religion. While general knowledge on the subject of religion which was usefully integrated into a response might help to strengthen an answer, Section B requires the close reading and interpretation of the resources provided. A broad overview of the theme in the assessment specifications is useful, but anything more than the development of the skill will not provide a pathway to success.

Report on performance standard

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with **Outstanding Performance** commonly:

- recognised the complexities inherent in the questions
- addressed all sides of the context in their responses
- had a broad understanding of the context, for example not just the commonly studied books of the Iliad or the Aeneid
- showed evidence of wider reading
- gave responses that showed critical thinking and an awareness of ancient culture
- drew on a wide range of relevant examples
- ensured their examples spoke to different aspects of the question
- displayed a knowledge of the ancient world that went beyond the strict confines of the question, while also maintaining a close focus on answering the question
- communicated their answer with a fluent style and considered the structure of their response.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- read and paid attention to the question
- planned out the structure of their response
- made it clear how they were approaching the question, either in agreement or disagreement
- offered a coherent and sustained argument to support their position
- thought critically about the question and integrated their broad knowledge of the context with specific examples that were used appropriately to answer the question
- supported their arguments with relevant primary sources of evidence
- selected evidence well and where quotes were utilised, ensured they were relevant to their arguments
- engaged with secondary sources
- gave a balanced response, noting any problems with the evidence
- addressed the question throughout, clearly showing how each example related to the question
- had a clear style which enabled the argument to be followed easily.

Candidates who were **not awarded Scholarship** commonly:

- did not read the question carefully and / or presented responses that did not address the topic
- did not consider the quote in addition to the question
- made assumptions relating to concepts in the question
- did not address the question consistently in their answer, sometimes only making reference to it in the introduction and conclusion
- did not provide relevant evidence (primary or secondary) to back up their arguments, or chose their evidence poorly
- used memorised quotes which did not fit the argument
- did not demonstrate a sufficient knowledge of the topic, which meant their responses were shallow or based on assumptions rather than evidence or anachronistic
- did not fully read the question, resources, or captions which give context in Section B
- used pre-packaged, general material on religion in Section B.