

Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship Classical Studies 2025

Performance standard 93404

General commentary

Section A of the scholarship examination covered a range of contexts across Greek and Roman literature, art, and history. There was a clear indication by the number of candidates who engaged with the paper that it was largely accessible. All questions and contexts were favoured equally by candidates. In Section B of the paper, the Greek and Roman contexts were also evenly divided. In some of the wording, candidates did not always recognise terms, such as ‘humanity,’ which should be understood at this level.

The benchmark for scholarship remains critical analysis of the question with a structured response, that shows an appreciation of the context from which the question is drawing on and is supported by targeted and relevant primary and secondary evidence. Candidates who employed this approach consistently across their responses avoided overly descriptive or explanatory answers, and were suitably rewarded. Successful candidates approached the question with nuance, moving beyond obvious points to create balanced arguments. They demonstrated an awareness of the issues and were willing to engage with and critique alternative perspectives. When source material was employed, it was judicious and critically strengthened the candidate’s argument. The range of examples supporting connections across the selected text, career, or artistic period often went beyond, for example, the first six books in *Aeneid*, or more than just events relating to Alexander’s policy of fusion, past the Prima Porta and Ara Pacis, Kleophrades Painter, and Exekias, or supported more than either pre-Actium or post-second settlement of Augustus’ career. In Section B of the examination, candidates who were more analytical and critical of the question and made determinations based upon a close reading of the evidence produced an engaging and successful response. Less successful responses tended toward broad summaries of the over-arching topics, demonstrating memorisation rather than selective, critical thought.

An outstanding scholar was often set apart not by the depth of their knowledge but the sagacity and judiciousness of what they discussed. These candidates went beyond answering the question at a surface level and showed a deeper level of critical engagement with the question. Their responses were often sharply focused on establishing an argument and utilising only relevant evidence for their argument. They created a developed response which integrated a robust and diverse array of knowledge to support their thesis. Such responses often synthesised and integrated a range of different examples into an original idea, showed evidence of higher order thinking, and established connections across a figure’s career. For example, clustered art works by thematic relevance, or, they built connections across different parts of chosen texts. In Section B of the examination, candidates awarded outstanding scholarship went beyond a close reading of each source and found ways to discuss the sources as a collection, to connect and integrate these with wider contextual knowledge. They showed a robust awareness of contextual knowledge of the evidence being discussed and wider society from which it was drawn.

Candidates and teachers should be aware that memorisation and / or coaching is not a pathway to success. Some appeared to have been provided with an array of terms or secondary quotes to include in their responses, irrespective of their suitability, and used these terms repetitively to poor effect: mutability, socially foundational, no simple panegyric. When a pattern of similar phrases or

sources becomes apparent, it undermines a candidates' ability to demonstrate original thought and showcase their knowledge and understanding. Another feature of poor responses was the incorporation of modern views, events, or concepts. When candidates did this, it often showed a lack of understanding of the event or work within the time and place it happened or was created – candidates should avoid taking this approach as it is usually incorrect or not relevant.

Report on performance standard

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

- wrote fluently, engagingly, and with stylistic flair, were articulate, and wrote for effect and impact
- demonstrated familiarity with all aspects of the works they analysed, including the less familiar parts, and used that knowledge to support their arguments with the most appropriate evidence
- had cogent and clear introductions and effective conclusions that actually synthesised their main points to prove their thesis
- gave responses that demonstrated a well-developed progression in the argument and / or were carefully structured to lead the reader through their analysis in a logical fashion
- unpacked each question carefully, recognising nuance and ambivalence
- gave a balanced answer, including discussion of evidence that told against their argument
- demonstrated wide and robust contextual knowledge across the entirety of the response and interrogated, connected, and contextualised quotes
- knew of related primary works and used them as comparanda to shed light on the set works
- demonstrated understanding of important and cogent secondary sources, and used them critically and appropriately in structuring their analyses
- effectively used secondary sourcing as an exclamation point where no further clarification was required
- wove secondary sources into their existing argument and / or set it up for a contrasting view to reinforce their thesis
- produced responses that drew connections between the sources in Section B
- showed a higher level of synthesis and analysis, for example connecting different sources together thematically to create a single, effective response.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- paid attention to the question and wrote essays that were focused strictly on the question
- constructed a sustained and structured argument in their essays, often as a result of planning ahead before writing the essay
- authentically engaged with the question consistently throughout their response, utilising examples and evidence that were of specific relevance, which enhanced the argument being developed
- produced responses that were analytical, cogent, coherent, and went beyond the obvious
- provided a clear argument that balanced different perspectives and interpretations, recognising that there could be more than one side to the question
- demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the relevant contextual background and were able to incorporate a wider array of material to showcase their knowledge and understanding
- knew the contexts they were answering well and were able to quote and / or cite them appropriately to support their analysis in a manner relevant to the question
- used primary sourcing in an intelligent manner to further support their thesis
- cited apposite secondary sources as a framework and / or support for their arguments
- produced answers that showed contextual knowledge but were also primarily source-focused in Section B.

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

- did not read the question carefully, or did not take the time to understand the question, or misunderstood a key part of the chosen question
- mismanaged their time and spent too long on initial responses to the detriment of the paper as a whole
- took the general idea of the question as the basis for their answer rather than methodically unpacking each element and applying their contextual knowledge to craft a response
- reinterpreted the question to suit what they wanted to write about, and / or gave prefabricated answers that did not fit the question
- gave one-sided answers, which failed to recognise the complexities inherent in the question, or did not recognise that the questions do not have simple answers, or gave superficial or shallow responses
- demonstrated a superficial understanding of the works or created a detailed but narrow response, for example, only referencing a few events from the historical contexts, one or two art works, or a small number of conventional episodes from the literary sources
- gave answers that were unstructured, incoherent, or irrelevant
- produced responses that were compartmentalised approaches of individual analyses with no attempt at synthesis and a continued development of ideas
- showed a lack of specific awareness of contextual knowledge surrounding their chosen evidence
- created answers that were more a narrative or a historical / artistic recount rather than using evidence to answer the question
- failed to provide a cogent and sustained argument or supplied an unbalanced and narrow argument that showed little understanding of nuance / historiography / context
- did not structure responses – introductions and conclusions were often perfunctory rather than used with intent
- did not use adequate or relevant primary source material to support their arguments, for example, candidates memorised large tracts of evidence and did not actually discuss them in relation to the question, or used evidence that was vague
- used primarily secondary evidence, which should be considered supplementary and not as a replacement of primary evidence. Ideas from modern scholarship were often forced into the response rather than being used as supporting evidence for a well-thought-out argument
- described or paraphrased the sources in Section B instead of analysing them
- presented a general essay on the religion in Section B without analysing and engaging in a close reading of the texts / images
- did not have an adequate general knowledge of Greek or Roman religion, and failed to place the sources in context in Section B
- tacked conclusions on to the introduction or conclusion and did not integrate them into the source-specific analysis in Section B.