

2024 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject:	Classical Studies
Level:	2
Achievement standard(s):	91200, 91201, 91203

General commentary

The 2024 Level 2 examinations included 3 achievement standards. For each standard, candidates were given four questions and were required to select one of these.

Careful selection and interpretation of question parameters is an important aspect of achievement, as is the candidate's ability to integrate ancient source material when responding to their chosen question.

Pre-prepared responses continue to limit some candidates' ability to achieve. Candidates must apply their knowledge to the question(s) presented.

Appropriate terminology, quotations, and relevant contextual detail was used successfully when integrated into a response that addressed the question.

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 91200: Examine ideas and values of the classical world

Assessment

The examination included four questions from which candidates were required to select and respond to one. The questions covered the themes specified in the 2024 Assessment Specifications: leadership and / or heroism, social and cultural traditions, influence on other cultures, and social relationships and / or the role of the individual.

Questions covered a combination of ideas and values.

Commentary

Candidates responded to questions utilising a wide-range of texts, and are encouraged to carefully apply the ideas and values they have studied to the question presented in the examination.

Some candidates mixed up Greek and Roman culture. For example, referring to Roman culture when discussing *xenia* or burial rites, or describing a *pater familias* while discussing the *oikos*.

Candidates should be careful when deciding who they choose to discuss for hero questions such as Question One. Some chose important characters who were not heroes, such as Penelope, and others used a modern interpretation of hero and discussed figures such as Antigone (standing up against a repressive leader). As the standard is about ideas and values of the classical world, the heroes chosen should meet the classical definition of a hero in an epic or tragedy.

Candidates continue to attempt to write a "good *xenia* / bad *xenia*" response rather than reading the questions presented and applying their understanding of *xenia* to the question. This was particularly

evident in Question Three and Question Four. Where candidates were most successful in using xenia for Question Three and Question Four, they made connections through literature or religion.

The most successful responses to Question Four examined themes that directly influenced literature or art in subsequent cultures. The question was most appropriately applied to a change from Homeric hero to Roman hero, the Aeneid, and Antigone texts - where links were established to later productions of the play and the way the ideas were used.

Candidates tended to demonstrate a good understanding of the values required by a hero. The Iliad was used particularly well for Question One, with candidates using both Hector and Achilles as heroic figures to explain their understanding of values.

Antigone was a particularly useful text in Question Two and Question Three, to discuss both relationships and conflicts. Medea and Lysistrata were also effectively used to discuss conflict.

Using Sappho for this standard is problematic, as the reliance on multiple fragments often weakened the candidate's explanations and, in turn, limited opportunities to demonstrate their understanding.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- demonstrated general knowledge and understanding of the ideas / values but may have been limited or narrow
- addressed aspects of the question, though may not have been balanced
- tended to provide brief responses which lacked analysis
- provided too much plot summary or gave descriptive-heavy responses
- referred to aspects of the text with some relevance or meaning
- viewed the texts from a modern, Western perspective rather than the classical context.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- demonstrated an informed knowledge and understanding of relevant ideas and values
- made a good choice of question relevant to their chosen literary text
- attempted to address all aspects of the question
- demonstrated a willingness to try to think beyond the specific text, often trying to make comparisons with other texts to illustrate a point or demonstrate understanding
- understood the values behind the characters' actions
- provided accurate and detailed examples that showed a depth of understanding
- included a range of examples to support the response to the question.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- demonstrated an informed and thorough understanding of the ideas and values
- responded to the question in a perceptive way, showing an insightful understanding of the relevant ideas and values
- provided relevant quotes and elaborated upon them to demonstrate how they helped support the answer
- often made comparisons with other texts or relevant historical contexts to support their analysis
- applied their knowledge to the question and, regularly and clearly, linked their response back to the question
- showed detailed knowledge from the text, including cultural expectations from society, and related it to religious influences prevalent at the time
- demonstrated a recognition of the time that the text was written and performed, and were aware of the audience

- used examples from outside the text, historical or otherwise, to support a convincing argument. For example, *Antigone* was a text that could show greater connections to Athenian democracy and its relevance to the average audience member
- showed understanding of the nuances of behaviour from the heroes themselves, and why this is important.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- did not demonstrate an understanding of the ideas and values connected to the question or the text
- provided a plot summary with no analysis or attempt to answer the question
- produced pre-prepared responses that did not fit the question
- wrote an insufficient amount and / or did not complete their response
- had multiple errors that showed a limited understanding of the text or classical ideas and values.

Achievement standard 91201: Examine the significance of features of work(s) of art in the classical world

Assessment

The examination questions were drawn from the features of art as identified in Explanatory Note 5 of the Achievement Standard: form and function, style, techniques, artistic and / or historical context, and influence on other cultures.

Questions covered a combination of features of art works.

The questions required candidates to respond utilising one or more artworks.

Commentary

Two key elements are fundamental to a candidate's achievement,

1. A relevant engagement with the question selected from the options
2. The quality and relevance of the detail selected to respond to the question.

Without a balance between responding to the question and providing detailed knowledge, it is difficult for candidates to draw sound conclusions about the work of art or architecture.

It appears that a number of candidates encountered terminology in the questions that they were not confident in handling, despite being integral in discussing Classical works of art or architecture. Notably, "figures", "influence", "action" and "context" were frequently misinterpreted or skimmed over.

If a question asks for analysis of how figures are used to convey a message, it is expected that close detail of the human figures is unpacked. Some candidates included only a few lines on the human body, and rather described the composition, colour, myth, background, or purpose. This did not produce a sound or balanced response, nor allow opportunities for sound conclusions to be drawn. Equally, some responses chose a question that was ill-fitted to the work that they wrote about.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- demonstrated solid knowledge of chosen works of art or architecture
- attempted to respond to the question, but their response may not have been balanced
- focussed heavily on myth or some other aspect rather than the question
- wrote with insufficient detail, sometimes less than the recommended word count.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- addressed all parts of the question throughout the response
- provided consistently detailed analysis of chosen works of art or architecture
- identified and explored art-historical terminology in a way that allowed deeper explanation and conclusions to be drawn
- integrated the question statement successfully to showcase knowledge of the artwork or architecture
- showed some insight, but this was limited or detracted from the conclusions drawn.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- engaged with the examination questions and selected a question that allowed them to showcase their knowledge and insight
- incorporated an art-historical lens or, historical debate around the work(s) which was relevant to the essay question
- drew perceptive conclusions, based on evidence, that were relevant to the essay question
- included knowledge about art work(s) in relation to one another in a way that was relevant
- focused on one piece in-depth, and made comparisons with earlier and later works in order to draw perceptive conclusions about visual appeal
- provided consistently detailed analysis of one or two works and drew perceptive conclusions as to the historical / political / mythological significance of the work.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- provided a limited / general explanation of the features of the chosen work, but not enough specific explanation for this level
- demonstrated limited understanding of the work in an overly short response
- produced a response which contained more irrelevancies / inaccuracies than suitable content
- focused on the historical / mythological / political context of the work and did not examine the features of the work
- chose a question that did not fit well with their knowledge and tried to mould the question to suit them.

Achievement standard 91203: Examine socio-political life in the classical world

Assessment

The examination questions were drawn from the themes identified in the 2024 Assessment Specifications: citizenship and society, culture and identity, empire and power, and social and political conflict.

Questions covered a combination of themes and concepts.

Commentary

Popular topics included the Fall of the Roman Republic / Octavian, the Persian Wars and Athenian Empire, and Athenian reforms. A minority of students covered Roman religion, education, gender and class in Athens, Sparta, and Rome.

A range of answers provided a large amount of comprehensive detail, writing extended responses. The quality, rather than the quantity of the response was considered most important. This included

responses that were focused on answering the question and that used primary source evidence and concepts to support their answer.

Candidates, though eager to show what they know, are discouraged from writing paragraphs of tangential knowledge on context or consequences that do not apply to the question. A number of responses contained considerable material that was simply not relevant to answering the question.

Candidates who wrote a lot often fell into highly descriptive or narrative accounts rather than providing a clear and focused explanation that answered the question. Candidates are discouraged from engaging in storytelling and should use their knowledge and evidence to explain how the aspects of socio-political life in the classical world relate to the question.

Candidates are encouraged to explain, rather than describe. The narration of story needs to be utilised as a tool to respond to the question. Likewise, quotations and the use of terminology need to be carefully integrated into responses, adding substance.

Primary source material and subject-specific terminology is an expectation of the standard. Candidates who integrated primary source evidence from historical and literary sources and archaeological and artistic sources substantiated their answers convincingly.

A large number of candidates unsuccessfully utilised pre-prepared responses. This resulted in large sections of a response not being connected to the question. Candidates who framed their response using the keywords and language of the question were significantly more successful.

Candidates who wrote about source limitations seldom gained higher marks unless they integrated the critique into their argument. Candidates who talked about why a source might or might not be reliable rarely gained higher grades unless there was an obvious need to do so. Candidates should avoid tacking on a paragraph at the end that explains limitations in a disconnected manner.

Candidates who included the words from the question in their response were more focused and able to draw clear conclusions as a result. For instance, when responding to Question One, some candidates failed to clearly state what the conflict they were writing about was.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- provided straightforward answers that addressed the question, although these might have been general, contained some errors or lacked specific detail
- used explanations that were simplistic and to the point
- demonstrated understanding that included some relevant detail
- answered the question without developing their answers
- included some reference to primary source evidence, Greek / Latin terms in a correct context, paraphrasing, or some short quotations.
- used primary source material that was relevant to the context in general rather than to the specific point being made
- provided extensive background to a context rather than focusing on responding to the given question
- included excessive narrative that did not directly respond to the requirements of the question.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- included detail, such as names, dates, and solid facts, in their response, though these might not have been linked to a wider cultural context
- answered the question in a meaningful manner, though may have included some inconsistencies
- provided some specific and relevant primary source material
- discussed primary sources but did not consistently unpack and explain them

- showed a good deal of knowledge but did not link this to a wider context to enable perception
- focused heavily on narrative, at the expense of depth, missing the opportunity to analyse the specifics of the question and show perception.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- wrote structured responses that used the words of the question and remained focused
- displayed discernment in their selection of points
- concentrated on explanation over narrative and linked discussion of the wider cultural context to the question
- showed excellent knowledge, understanding, and interpretation of the question and context
- included consistently relevant primary-source evidence and detail that was explained and linked to the question
- incorporated primary source evidence consistently, and elaborated on its significance where appropriate
- addressed all aspects of the question in detail, providing developed conclusions that showed insight.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- provided limited or no primary source evidence
 - did not respond to the question
 - only wrote highly descriptive narratives
 - wrote in generalisations or with under-developed explanations
 - misread the question
 - provided brief or irrelevant responses to the question
 - used pre-prepared answers rather than responding to the specific requirements of the question
 - failed to provide specific examples
 - used Greek / Latin / technical terms incorrectly or not at all.
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