

SCHOOL QUALIFICATIONS IN CLASSICAL SUBJECTS IN THE UK

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

by Steven Hunt

I write in response to frequent questions from university colleagues who through no fault of their own are bewildered by the choice and complexity of examinations offered in the UK today. I have written elsewhere about the upheavals of the UK – more specifically, English –qualifications system which were set in train by Michael Gove the Secretary of State for Education in 2010-2014 (Hunt 2018). We have now, in 2019, reached a position, I think, of stability. This simple article describes the current qualifications in classical subjects that are in use today. I will write at another point about the numbers of entries of students for the subjects and the possible impacts these may have on our subjects in schools and universities.

Some headline points (with reference to Classical subjects – see the glossary at the end of this article for abbreviations, if required).

- All GCSE and A level examinations have become linear. There is no modularisation. There is no coursework or controlled assessment.
- The AS examination is a stand-alone qualification whose marks do not contribute to the A level.
- Short course GCSEs have been withdrawn.
- WJEC Level 1 Latin Certificates remain; Level 2 Latin Certificates are to be withdrawn, replaced by the Eduqas Latin GCSE.
- English state-maintained schools are discouraged from using any qualifications which are not accredited by OfQual (therefore not the IGCSE or SQA qualifications).
- The Cambridge International Pre-U examination will be withdrawn from 2022.
- Before the 2019 election there were noises from the Department for Education that English state-maintained schools would suffer a reduction in funding for the IB (TES 2019a). The outcome of the discussion is at present unclear.

The position of Classical subjects in schools has been for a long time precarious. Teachers rely on good, reliable examinations and we are lucky that by and large the examinations boards have supported the subjects as well as they have done, often under undue pressure from government to produce results more quickly than they would prefer. That we have a coherent set of examinations is a mark of the professionalism and dedication of the teams working on behalf of teachers and students. In writing this article I have also received support from many teachers and colleagues. In particular I would like to acknowledge the help and

advice received from Alex Orgee, Simon Trafford, Charles Allen, Arlene Holmes-Henderson and Sam Baddely. I would also like to thank Susan Deacy for encouraging me to write this article for *CUCD Bulletin*.

The article briefly describes each of the qualifications which are currently available.

I start with the English qualifications: Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 Certificates, GCSE, AS and A Level in Latin, Classical Greek, Ancient History and Classical Civilisation. These are followed by the Scottish Latin qualifications and the International Baccalaureate in Latin and Classical Greek, and the list ends with the Cambridge International Examinations for the Pre-U and the IGCSE. Finally, there is a glossary of abbreviations, and a list of examination specifications and syllabi.

I welcome any observations, corrections and questions. Errors are my own.

Entry Level Latin and Classical Greek

The Entry Level examinations are offered by OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations).

Entry Level Latin (R447).

Assessment consists of two sections:

Section 1 (50%): Language Test 1: Vocabulary, grammar and origins of words (internally assessed, externally moderated).

Language Test 2: Comprehension and translation skills (internally assessed, externally moderated).

Section 2 (50%): *Roman Culture* essay(s) (internally assessed, externally moderated). The subject matter of the essay(s) is chosen by the examinations centre and consists of either two 200-word essays or one 400-word essay.

Grades awarded (from 2017): Entry 3 (highest) - Entry 1 (lowest).

Entry Level Classical Greek (R446).

The Entry Level Classical Greek examination was discontinued by OCR in 2018. The format was the same as that of the Entry Level Latin examination.

Level 1 and Level 2 Certificates in Latin

The Level 1 and Level 2 Latin Certificates are offered by WJEC (Welsh Joint Education Committee). For each Certificate there are three variants.

Level 1 Certificate in Latin Language (9511 and 9544).

Assessment consists of two sections.

Section 1 (67%): Core Language Test: Comprehension and translation from an unseen passage of confected Latin (externally assessed).

Section 2 (33%): Additional Language Test: Translation from an unseen passage of confected Latin (externally assessed).

Grades awarded: A* (highest) - G (lowest).

Level 1 Certificate in Latin Language and Roman Civilisation (9511 and 9512 or 9513).

Assessment consists of two sections.

Section 1 (67%): Core Language Test: Comprehension and translation from an unseen passage of confected Latin (externally assessed).

Section 2 (33%): Roman Civilisation topics (externally assessed) or Roman Civilisation topics coursework (internally assessed, externally moderated).

Grades awarded: A* (highest) - G (lowest).

Level 1 Certificate in Latin Literature.

Discontinued by WJEC. Last entries were in 2017.

Level 2 Certificate in Latin Language (9521 and 9524) (to be discontinued in 2020, with final resits in 2021).

Assessment consists of two sections.

Section 1 (67%): Core Language Test: Comprehension and translation from an unseen passage of confected Latin (externally assessed).

Section 2 (33%): Additional Language Test (externally assessed).

Grades awarded: A* (highest) - G (lowest).

Level 2 Certificate in Latin Language and Roman Civilisation (9521 and 9522 or 9523) (to be discontinued in 2020, with final resits in 2021).

Assessment consists of two sections.

Section 1 (67%): Core Language Test: Comprehension and translation from an unseen passage of confected Latin (externally assessed).

Section 2 (33%): Roman Civilisation topics (externally assessed) or Roman Civilisation topics coursework (internally assessed, externally moderated).

Grades awarded: A* (highest) – G (lowest).

Level 2 Certificate in Latin Literature has been discontinued by WJEC. The last entries were in 2017.

GCSE Latin and Classical Greek

GCSE examinations are offered by OCR and Eduqas (the brand of WJEC which is OfQual-accredited for use in England) and are accredited by OfQual for use in state-maintained schools in England.ⁱ All GCSE qualifications in Latin have common criteria, including number and time-length of examination papers, minimum line quantities of literature studied in the original, an element of prose composition or 'the permitted alternative' (recognise, analyse and explain accident and syntax). Coursework or controlled assessmentⁱⁱ is not allowed. The examination must be linear, not modular. In practice the examinations boards have been able to provide some variation within this straitjacket: for example, the Eduqas Latin qualification has an open book examination for the Themes and Sources literature paper, whereas all assessment for the OCR Latin qualification is by closed book examination.

AQA used to offer GCSE examinations in Latin and Classical Greek until 2006. OCR used to offer short course GCSEs in Latin and Classical Greek until 2017. The present format of the GCSE does not permit a short course GCSE to be offered.

OCR GCSE Latin (J282).

Assessment consists of three sections (all externally assessed).

Section 1 (50%): Language Test: Comprehension and translation from an unseen passage of confected Latin.
Language Test: Translation of sentences into Latin (or the permitted alternative).

Sections 2 and 3 (25% each): Two of...
Test of *Prose Literature* (in the original), or
Test of *Verse Literature* (in the original), or
Test of *Roman Literature and Culture* (in translation).

Grades awarded (from 2018): 9 (highest) - 1 (lowest).

Eduqas GCSE Latin (C990).

Assessment consists of three sections (all externally assessed).

Section 1 (50%): Language Test: Comprehension and translation from an unseen passage of confected Latin.
Language Test: Translation of sentences into Latin or the permitted alternative.

Section 2 (30%): *Latin Literature Themes*ⁱⁱⁱ (in the original) and *Sources*^{iv} (in translation).

Section 3 (20%): *Latin Literature Narratives* (in the original) or *Roman Civilisation* (in translation).

Grades awarded (from 2018): 9 (highest) - 1 (lowest).

OCR GCSE Classical Greek (J292).

Assessment consists of three sections (all externally assessed).

- Section 1 (50%): Language Test: Comprehension and translation from an unseen passage of confected Classical Greek.
Language Test: Translation of sentences into Classical Greek (or the permitted alternative).
- Sections 2 and 3 (25% each): Two of...
Test of *Prose Literature* (in the original), or
Test of *Verse Literature* (in the original), or
Test of *Classical Greek Literature and Culture* (in translation).
- Grades awarded (from 2018): 9 (highest) - 1 (lowest).
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AS and A Level Latin and Classical Greek

AS and A Level examinations in Latin and Classical Greek are offered by OCR and are accredited by OfQual for use in state-maintained schools in England. Coursework or controlled assessment is not allowed. The examination must be linear, not modular. From first examination in 2017, the AS examinations have been 'stand alone' qualifications whose grades do not contribute to A Levels.

AS Level Latin (H043).

Assessment consists of two sections (all externally assessed).

- Component 1 (50%): Unseen translation of one passage of adapted narrative Latin Prose, and
Translation of five sentences of English into Latin, or
Comprehension of an unseen passage of Latin.
- Component 2 (50%): Test of one text of *Prose Literature* (in the original), and
Test of one text of *Verse Literature* (in the original).

Grades awarded: A* (highest) – G (lowest).

A Level Latin (H443).

Assessment consists of four sections (all externally assessed).

- Component 1 (33%): Unseen translation of one passage of narrative Latin Prose (Livy) and one passage of Latin Verse (Ovid).
- Component 2 (17%): Translation of an unseen passage of English into Latin, or
Comprehension of an unseen passage of Latin (including questions on syntax and accidence).
- Component 3 (25%): Test of two texts of *Prose Literature* (in the original).
- Component 4 (25%): Test of two texts of *Verse Literature* (in the original).

Grades awarded: A* (highest) – G (lowest).

AS Level Classical Greek (H044).

Assessment consists of two sections (all externally assessed).

- Component 1 (50%): Unseen translation of one passage of adapted narrative Classical Greek Prose, and
Translation of five sentences of English into Classical Greek, or Comprehension of an unseen passage of Classical Greek.
- Component 2 (50%): Test of one text of *Prose Literature* (in the original), and
Test of one text of *Verse Literature* (in the original).
- Grades awarded: A* (highest) – G (lowest).

A Level Classical Greek (H444).

Assessment consists of four sections (all externally assessed).

- Component 1 (33%): Unseen translation of one passage of narrative prose (Livy) and one passage of verse (Ovid).
- Component 2 (17%): Translation of an unseen passage of English into Latin, or Comprehension of an unseen passage of Latin (including questions on syntax and accident).
- Component 3 (25%): Test of two texts of *Prose Literature* (in the original)
- Component 4 (25%): Test of two texts of *Verse Literature* (in the original).
- Grades awarded: A* (highest) – G (lowest).

GCSE Ancient History and Classical Civilisation

GCSE examinations are offered by OCR and are accredited by OfQual for use in state-maintained schools in England. Coursework or controlled assessment is not allowed. The examinations must be linear, not modular.

GCSE Ancient History (J198).

Assessment consists of two sections (both externally assessed).

- Component Group 1 (50%): Period Study: *The Persian Empire 559-465BC*, and
Depth Study:
One of...
From Tyranny to Democracy 546-483BC, or
Athens in the Age of Pericles 462-429BC, or
Alexander the Great 356-323BC.
- Component Group 2 (50%): Period Study: *The Foundation of Rome: from Kingship to Republic 753 – 440BC*, and
Depth Study:
One of...
Hannibal and the Second Punic War 218-201BC, or
Cleopatra: Rome and Egypt 69-30BC, or
Britannia: from Conquest to Province AD43 – c.AD84.
- Grades awarded (from 2019): 9 (highest) - 1 (lowest).

GCSE Classical Civilisation (J199).

Assessment consists of two sections (both externally assessed).

Component Group 1 (50%): Thematic study: *Myth and Religion*, and *Women in the Ancient World*.

Component Group 2 (50%): Literature and Culture:
One of...
The Homeric World, or
Roman City Life, or
War and Warfare.

Grades awarded (from 2019): 9 (highest) - 1 (lowest).

AS and A Level Ancient History and Classical Civilisation

AS and A Level examinations in Ancient History and Classical Civilisation are offered by OCR and are accredited by OfQual for use in state-maintained schools in England. Coursework or controlled assessment is not allowed. The examination must be linear, not modular. From first examination in 2018, the AS examinations have been 'stand-alone' qualifications whose grades do not contribute to A Levels

AS Ancient History (H007).

Assessment consists of two sections (both externally assessed).

Component 1 (50%): Greek Period Study: *Relations between Greek states and Greek and non-Greek states 492-404BC*.

Component 2 (50%): Roman Period Study: *The Julio-Claudian Emperors 31BC – AD68*.

Grades awarded: A* (highest) – G (lowest).

A Level Ancient History (H407).

Assessment consists of two sections (both externally assessed).

Component Group 1 (50%): Greek Period Study: *Relations between Greek states and Greek and non-Greek states 492-404BC*, and Greek Depth Study:
One of...
The Politics and Society of Sparta 478-404, or
The Politics and Culture of Athens c.460-399BC, or
The Rise of Macedon 359-323BC.

Component Group 2 (50%): Roman Period Study: *The Julio-Claudian Emperors 31BC – AD68*, and Roman Depth Study:
One of...
The Breakdown of the Late Republic 88-31BC, or
The Flavians AD68-96, or

Ruling Roman Britain AD43-c.128.

Grades awarded: A* (highest) – G (lowest).

AS Classical Civilisation (H008).

Assessment consists of two sections (all externally assessed)

Component Group 1 (50%): The World of the Hero:

*Homer's Iliad, or
Homer's Odyssey.*

Component Group 2 (50%): Culture and the Arts:

*Greek Theatre, or
Imperial Image.*

Grades awarded: A* (highest) – G (lowest).

A Level Classical Civilisation (H408).

Assessment consists of three sections (all externally assessed)

Component Group 1 (40%): The World of the Hero:

*Homer's Iliad or Odyssey, and
Virgil's Aeneid.*

Component Group 2 (30%): Culture and the Arts:

*Greek Theatre, or
Imperial Image, or
Invention of the Barbarian, or
Greek Art.*

Component Group 3 (30%): Beliefs and Ideas:

*Greek Religion, or
Love and Relationships, or
Politics of the Late Republic, or
Democracy and the Athenians.*

Grades awarded: A* (highest) – G (lowest).

Other examinations

Scottish Qualifications Authority

The Scottish Qualifications Authority set their own examinations for use in Scotland. Candidates are provided with a full vocabulary list for the unseen translation examination paper and a copy of the Latin passage with vocabulary list for the set text examination paper.

SQA Latin National 5 (C843 75).

Assessment consists of two sections (both externally assessed):

Question paper 1 (50%): Literary appreciation of set texts.
Question paper 2 (50%): Translation from Latin to English of an unseen passage.
Grades awarded: A (highest) – D (lowest).

SQA Latin Higher (C843 76).

Assessment consists of two sections (both externally assessed):
Question paper 1 (80 marks): Literary appreciation of set texts.
Question paper 2 (40 marks): Translation from Latin to English of an unseen passage.
Grades awarded: A (highest) – D (lowest).

SQA Latin Advanced Higher (C843 77).

Assessment consists of three sections (all externally assessed):
Question paper 1 (60 marks): Literary appreciation of set texts:
*Letters and letter-writing, or
Ovid and Latin Love Poetry.*
Question paper 2 (60 marks): Translation from Latin to English of two unseen passages – one authentic Latin prose and one authentic Latin verse.
Project-dissertation (60 marks): A dissertation of the candidate's choice on an aspect of Latin language or literature or a Roman civilisation topic.
Grades awarded: A (highest) – D (lowest).

International Baccalaureate

'The Diploma Programme organizes teaching and learning through six subject groups, underpinned by the Diploma Programme core. Students choose a course from within each subject group. Latin and Classical Greek fit into the Language Acquisition group. For most courses, students take written examinations at the end of the Diploma Programme. In many programme areas, students complete externally assessed coursework. Latin and Classical Greek are separate subjects in Diploma Programme classical languages. They share the same syllabus outline and assessment model, and can be studied at standard level (SL) or higher level (HL). For a given language, SL and HL syllabus requirements share elements, including authors and options, as prescribed in the guide. The difference between SL and HL is reflected both in the breadth of study and in the level of knowledge and skills expected at assessment' (International Baccalaureate 2019). For the unseen translation candidates are allowed to take a dictionary into the examination.

Standard and Higher Level DP for Latin or Classical Greek

Assessment consists of three sections (all externally assessed):
Paper 1 (35%): Language. Unseen translation of prose and verse.

Paper 2 (45%): Literature.

Research dossier (25%): Candidate's choice of an aspect of Latin or Classical Greek language, literature or civilisation topic.

For further details of the IB programme, see Trafford (2017a and 2017b).

Cambridge International Level 3 Pre-U Certificate in Latin or Classical Greek

'Cambridge Pre-U Latin has been developed to bridge the gap between school and university, and to equip learners with the skills needed to progress to university courses in Latin. The syllabus encourages learners to read more widely, by studying Roman writers in both the original Latin and in translation and by reading modern works of critical scholarship' (Cambridge Assessment International Education 2019a). The qualification will be withdrawn in 2022 with last resits available in 2023. The examinations board has cited lack of sustainability as a factor in its decision to withdraw the qualification (TES 2019b).

Cambridge International Level 3 Pre-U Certificate in Latin or Classical Greek (9788).

Assessment consists of four components (all externally assessed).

Paper 1 (30%): Verse literature.

Paper 2 (20%): Prose literature.

Paper 3 (30%): Unseen translation from Latin or Classical Greek to English

Paper 4 (20%): Translation from English into Latin or Classical Greek, or unseen comprehension.

Grades awarded: Distinction 1 (Highest), 2, 3; Merit 1, 2, 3; Pass 1, 2, 3 (Lowest).

Cambridge International IGCSE in Latin

'The Cambridge IGCSE Latin syllabus aims to develop learners' ability to understand Latin, leading to a recognition of Latin's influence on modern European languages. By comparing the structure of Latin with other languages, learners also develop an analytical approach to language learning. They study Latin prose and verse literature in its social and historical context, and are encouraged to develop a personal response to what they read. This will develop an awareness of a different time and culture, and an appreciation of Rome's legacy to the modern world' (Cambridge Assessment International Education 2019b).

Cambridge International IGCSE in Latin (0480).

Assessment consists of two papers (both externally assessed).

Paper 1 (50%): Literature appreciation.

Paper 2 (50%): Translation and comprehension of an unseen passage of Latin.

Grades awarded: A* (highest) – G (Lowest).

Abbreviations

A Level	Advanced Level
AS Level	Advanced Subsidiary Level
DP	Diploma Programme: the programme of six subject groups of the International Baccalaureate
Eduqas	The brand name for the WJEC qualifications in England
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HL	Higher Level: the higher of the two levels at which a candidate might study in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme
IB	International Baccalaureate
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
OCR	Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations
Pre-U	Pre-University certificate
SL	Standard Level: the lower of the two levels at which a candidate might study in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Committee

List of specifications and syllabi

Cambridge International IGCSE Latin

<https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/Images/253810-2018-2019-syllabus.pdf>

Cambridge International Pre-U Latin and Classical Greek

<https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/Images/329605-2019-2021-syllabus.pdf>

Eduqas GCSE Latin <https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/latin/eduqas-gcse-latin-spec-from-2016.pdf>

International Baccalaureate Latin <https://ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/curriculum/language-acquisition/classical-languages/>

OCR A Level Ancient History <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/313570-specification-accredited-a-level-ancient-history-h407.pdf>

OCR A Level Classical Civilisation <https://ocr.org.uk/Images/315133-specification-accredited-a-level-classical-civilisation-h408.pdf>

OCR A Level Classical Greek <https://ocr.org.uk/Images/220709-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-classical-greek-h444.pdf>

OCR A Level Latin <https://ocr.org.uk/Images/220734-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-latin-h443.pdf>

OCR AS Ancient History <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/313558-specification-accredited-as-level-ancient-history-h007.pdf>

OCR AS Classical Civilisation <https://ocr.org.uk/Images/315110-specification-accredited-as-level-classical-civilisation-h008.pdf>

OCR AS Classical Greek <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/137431-specification.pdf>
OCR AS Latin <https://ocr.org.uk/Images/220719-specification-accredited-as-level-gce-latin-h043.pdf>
OCR Entry Level Classical Greek <https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/entry-level/classical-greek-r446-from-2013/>
OCR Entry Level Latin <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/313158-specification-entry-level-latin-r447.pdf>
OCR GCSE Ancient History <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/313533-specification-accredited-gcse-ancient-history-j198.pdf>
OCR GCSE Classical Civilisation <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/315240-specification-accredited-gcse-classical-civilisation-j199.pdf>
OCR GCSE Classical Greek <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/220700-specification-accredited-gcse-classical-greek-j292.pdf>
OCR GCSE Latin <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/220702-specification-accredited-gcse-latin-j282.pdf>
SQA National 5 https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/LatinCourseSpecN5.pdf
SQA Higher https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/HigherCourseSpecLatin.pdf
SQA Advanced Higher https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/AHCourseSpecLatin.pdf
WJEC Level 1 Certificates in Latin
https://wjec.co.uk/uploads/publications/Level%201%20Latin%20Language%20and%20Roman%20Civilisation%20specification.pdf?language_id=1
WJEC Level 2 Certificates in Latin
[https://wjec.co.uk/uploads/publications/WJEC%20Level%202%20Certificate%20in%20Latin%20Lang%20and%20Roman%20Civilisation%20and%20Lang%20-%20Spec%20\(2009\).pdf?language_id=1](https://wjec.co.uk/uploads/publications/WJEC%20Level%202%20Certificate%20in%20Latin%20Lang%20and%20Roman%20Civilisation%20and%20Lang%20-%20Spec%20(2009).pdf?language_id=1)

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TES (2019b) Pre-U exams to be axed. Cambridge International will withdraw Pre-U exams from 2022 after finding they are too similar to reformed A levels. Available online: <https://www.tes.com/news/pre-u-exams-be-axed> Accessed 20 December 2019.

Trafford, S. (2017a) The benefits of the International Baccalaureate Diploma for Latin and Classics in the Sixth Form. *Journal of Classics Teaching*, 35, 65-67. Available online: https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/6AAC55C0F1C2FCD57738C1AC07C93B68/S2058631017000095a.pdf/benefits_of_the_international_baccalaureate_diploma_for_latin_and_classics_in_the_sixth_form.pdf Accessed 20 December 2019.

Trafford, S. (2017b) Latin and Classical Languages on the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. *Journal of Classics Teaching*, 36, 17-19. Available online: https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/D0016B32C7AD1746D1FADBBE8EE6C77A/S2058631017000174a.pdf/latin_and_classical_languages_on_the_international_baccalaureate_middle_years_programme.pdf Accessed 20 December 2019.

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ⁱ OfQual accredits GCSEs and A levels for use in English state-maintained schools (these include all Local Authority maintained schools, Free Schools and Academies (selective or non-selective institutions)). The numbers of schools in Wales and Northern Ireland which offer Classical subjects is very small. Consequently, these schools take the English qualifications in Classical subjects too. Scotland has its own system, which is referred to separately in this article. Independent, private schools are able to choose the English GCSEs or International GCSEs (IGCSEs) if they prefer.

ⁱⁱ Coursework and controlled assessment are subtly different. The key difference between controlled assessment and coursework is that students have to produce the work under controlled conditions similar to exam conditions rather than producing it in their own time. Before 2017 Latin had optional controlled assessment.

ⁱⁱⁱ Prose and / or verse literature on a common theme.

^{iv} Material culture or literature in translation connected with the theme.