



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

# **Classical Civilisation 2020**

**CIV2E: Roman Architecture and Town  
Planning**

***Report on the Examination***

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## CIV2E Roman Architecture and Town Planning

### General Comments

Again this year there was ample evidence to suggest that most candidates had worked with interest and enjoyment during their study of architecture and town planning. The topic areas examined were all central points of the specification and produced much good work. However, several major frustrations remain for the examiners in this third year of the paper. The *domus* and *insulae* named for study in the specification were selected to allow candidates to demonstrate changes of use over time. Similarly there are three theatres and two amphitheatres listed from various eras. Town planning in Pompeii and Ostia is specifically noted as requiring study. Without at least a rough appreciation of the dates of these buildings and planning during different eras, as well as understanding of the social contexts in which changes took place, candidates will not achieve the highest levels of performance.

Option B on amphitheatres was predictably the more popular choice in Section One: 65% of candidates chose this over Option A on the forum. Performance on Option A was, however, distinctly better, particularly with regard to the 10-mark questions, where the average score was 2.5 marks higher for Question 03 (Trajan's forum) than that for Question 08 (the Pompeian amphitheatre). There was little difference in the mean scores of the two 20-mark questions, but the short answer questions were better answered in Option A. Of the 30-mark essays, Question 10 (on housing problems) was chosen by 58% of the candidates, Question 11 (town planning) by the remaining 42%. Performance on these was generally similar, with 27% and 28% respectively reaching Level 4 but a slightly higher number of candidates failing to reach Level 3 on the town planning option. Both produced few outstanding answers for the reasons outlined above.

### Section One

#### Option A

It was pleasing to see that most candidates were aware of the layout of Trajan's forum, resulting in many scoring full marks for 01. The forum's date (02) was also correctly stated by well over half. Question 03 confirmed the close study many had put in, with over 80% of candidates reaching Level 3 for the 10-mark question relating the forum to Trajan's achievements. Even more pleasingly, 36% reached Level 4 by setting full descriptions of the forum within a firm social context. Many of these answers were a delight to read. This rendered attempts at Question 04 on the forum at Pompeii all the more disappointing. Most candidates took a moment frozen in time (often just before 79 AD) and described the forum in guidebook fashion. This resulted in the regular awarding of Level 3 marks, despite the extensive knowledge of buildings displayed. Too many spoke of the forum as being situated 'right at the centre of the city', thus missing the opportunity to talk about the reasons why it was not; better answers talked of the city developing in stages and made good points about the advantages and disadvantages of the forum being in the south west corner. About 5% of candidates discussed changes in the forum, again setting these in their political and social contexts; these candidates obtained marks in Level 5. At the other extreme, nearly 20% of candidates failed to reach Level 3, falling into the trap of simply describing a few buildings rather than answering the question. For example, all too often the temples were named, one or two details were given of each, but there was no suggestion that the eras in which they were built or altered were politically or socially important. The specification makes clear that this is a social topic as well as an architectural one. The examination will always seek to establish knowledge and understanding in both areas.

## Option B

Nearly all candidates were able to describe, roughly at least, the basic shape of an amphitheatre (05); less than half, however, were able to date the example from Pompeii (06). Building materials were generally well known for Question 07, some candidates offering many more than the three examples required here. Performance on Question 08, the design of Pompeii's amphitheatre, was quite weak, particularly when compared to the answers to the alternative Question 03. A worrying number spoke of the '70 entrances through open archways into a series of corridors'. Not only did this show confusion with the Colosseum, but it rendered much of the 'health and safety' argument which followed completely wrong. Only 40% of candidates reached Level 3 on this question. A few, but less than 5%, combined detailed and correct knowledge with a balanced response to the question and reached Level 4.

The 20-mark question, this time on the Colosseum, was much better done, although the points made under Option A above about the need to keep the social and political context in mind held equally true here. Some excellent answers drew on comparative weaknesses seen at Pompeii to examine how perfect the Colosseum was. Many also brought in the influence of advanced techniques used in constructing the Theatre of Marcellus, one or two seeing that building as a dry run for the Colosseum. More, however, described the features one by one, adding a sentence to each paragraph along the lines of 'so it was a perfect amphitheatre', but with little discussion to indicate how this conclusion had been reached. Many seemed obsessed with the *velarium*, writing up to a page on the intricacies of its operation; unfortunately, many of these gave little or no detail of the building's outer appearance beyond listing the number of arches. There must be some balance of importance if an essay is to reach the higher levels. That said, there were very few really poor essays; this is to be expected from a building that continues to capture the candidates' imagination. Many offered as final proof of its perfection the fact that it still stands proudly in the centre of Rome.

## Section Two

### Option C

Centres have clearly heeded criticisms of past performance on questions relating to housing. It was pleasing to see a quarter of the responses to this question showing a detailed knowledge of the very considerable differences between Pompeii and Ostia with regard to housing needs and resultant provision. That said, a significant number still showed little idea of timescale, social change and even the cataclysmic end of Pompeii. One candidate, apparently without irony, commented that housing needs in Pompeii were much reduced by the total destruction of the town. Weaker answers simply discussed Pompeii, giving a room-by-room tour of a 'typical' *domus*, then repeated the pattern for Ostia. There were many fewer such essays this year than in the past, but still too many. Better answers used a named or generic example of *insulae*. It was good to see brief introductory paragraphs setting the scene for both cities, explaining essential differences in the physical settings, social makeup and longevity of the two. Sometimes these were rather simplistic views, but such an approach tended to offer a framework on which to build a comparison rather than treating each city as a separate entity. The 70% or so of candidates who reached Level 3 all followed this structure at least to some extent, while the other 30% often showed little idea of either the background to the cities or the individual houses named in the specification.

### Option D

Many of the general comments in Option C apply equally to the essays on town planning. There was a similar division in the essays seen between those who had one or two sketchy ideas about the development of each town (at its most basic that each was built around its

forum) and those who portrayed a series of developments caused by social, political and economic changes over time. A small but significant number clearly had little idea about planning in either town, but most efforts fell somewhere in the middle. Nearly 10% fewer candidates reached Level 3 on this option than on Option C, suggesting perhaps that it is harder to organise a response on town planning given the need to pull in and combine information from all areas of the specification to answer the question effectively. There were some excellent papers which did just that, moving effortlessly through development of the original town, growth over time, the introduction of a water supply, formalisation of street plans, focus on forum, changes in housing, addition of entertainment venues and so on, all clothed in a context as suggested above. Some took one or two of these aspects and focused on these in depth, obtaining reasonable marks in the process. One or two dwelt so much on housing that it was hard to understand why they did not choose to answer Option C. All in all, there were slightly more good answers (Level 4 and above) here than in Option C, but significantly more weak answers. There was a feeling that a few candidates whose knowledge of housing was shaky took this option as there was plenty of general material which could be included without needing to be too specific. If so, this was a mistake as any essay requires a fund of solid and relevant knowledge to be incorporated and evaluated in line with the title. There are only the two towns set for the study of town planning; it is essential that anyone answering such questions is familiar with all aspects of both.

In conclusion, it was good to see a much greater level of understanding of the non-architectural aspects of the specification this year. Examiners hope that this will continue.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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