



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

**Classical Civilisation 2020**

**CIV4A: Socrates and Athens**

***Report on the Examination***

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## CIV4A Socrates and Athens

### General Comments

The vast majority of candidates entered for this option showed some degree of knowledge, ranging from adequate to substantial, whilst just a few struggled to demonstrate more than a patchy amount. There was too often a lack of precision in the short answers, although many candidates scored high, or even full, marks. Skills for answering questions carrying 10 marks have improved, the best responses showing a balance between, on the one hand, analysis and evaluation and, on the other, illustrations of knowledge. There was a tendency in less successful 20-mark answers towards either narration of details without robust evaluation or evaluation of a general nature, without illustration. The best 40-mark essays were sophisticated, fully synoptic and packed with relevant detail. Lower down the scale were many competent attempts. A minority of candidates found it difficult to finish well in the limited time available, some doing this question first, sometimes to the detriment of their other answers. Spelling and punctuation were often poor, even by otherwise talented candidates. Overall, nonetheless, virtually all candidates showed some appreciation of what they had studied.

Candidates were divided fairly equally between Options A and B, but in Section Two Option D was by far the more popular choice.

### Section One

#### Option A

There are two types of context question: those asking candidates to set a passage within the context of the literary work from which it is taken, and those demanding knowledge of the general background context. Questions 01 and 02 were of the first type and covered by the specification requirement to demonstrate knowledge of 'the circumstances and procedure of Socrates' trial and execution'. There were many correct answers to Question 01, but in Question 02 fewer candidates were aware of the minimum age for jury service being 30 years than of the use of sortition to decide who served on a particular jury. Most candidates answered Question 03 correctly, even if spellings were sometimes slightly askew.

It is not always easy for candidates to decide on the scale of 10-mark answers, but questions do give certain parameters. In Question 04 candidates were expected to confine themselves to the 'opening sections' and were further guided by the stipulation to discuss the 'earliest accusers'. Whilst the better answers stuck to exactly what was required, the less successful lost track of where they should be, sometimes straying into the territory of Question 05 by, for example, dealing with the picture of Socrates as a 'stinging fly'. A more developed essay structure is needed for 20-mark answers. Question 05 elicited answers which generally had adequate, good or, in many cases, clear structuring. The main fault, as with Question 04, was a tendency to imprecision, especially by using material from the opening sections of the *Apology*.

#### Option B

Virtually all candidates who chose Option B answered 06 correctly. Question 07 was the first type of context, that is it demanded knowledge of the background context. It was very well answered, with many candidates scoring full marks. Unlike Question 04, most answers to Question 08 confined themselves to the *agon* between Right and Wrong as the rubric demanded. Unfortunately, this was often in over-general terms. Good answers – and there

were many – gave specific examples to illustrate candidates' ideas, for example the comic effect of the contrasting attitudes to bathing.

In response to Question 09 most candidates showed some sort of ability to organise ideas. Socrates' importance as a composite figure to mock sophists was usually recognised, albeit sometimes at a basic level. The best responses were those which not only dealt with Socrates himself but also with the characters with whom he interacted, for example Strepsiades and the Cloud Chorus.

## **Section Two**

### **Option C**

There were some outstandingly good essays in response to both Option C and Option D, where the synoptic element was fully explored. In Question 10 weaker answers found it difficult to pinpoint what the 'big issues' were, whilst the more successful did so competently, mentioning, for example, piety, the laws of the state and private conscience. It was only the very best, however, who proved capable of developing these into a coherent philosophical critique.

### **Option D**

In Question 11 most candidates could cite examples of Socrates' attitude to the gods and his observance of religious rituals. Many could locate these examples in particular works, for example, Socrates' call to Crito to sacrifice a cock to Asclepius in *Phaedo*, but fewer could provide an evaluative framework for discussion, for example, of how far Socrates' quest for a definition of piety shows his acceptance of conventional religion and how far it shows him to be critical of it, running against the popular prejudice of his 'fellow Athenians'.

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

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