



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

Classical Civilisation 2020

**CIV2E: Roman Architecture and Town
Planning**

Report on the Examination

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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CIV2E Roman Architecture and Town Planning

General Comments

There was some very good work on view again in 2012 although evidence remains that the advice given in recent reports has not always been heeded by students. While the 30 mark essays often showed clear signs of understanding, not only of the buildings mentioned, but of their social contexts, a number of students again performed poorly on the earlier questions based around theatres and housing. It may be worth quoting from last year's report specifically on these two areas: *'without at least a rough appreciation of the dates of these buildings and planning during different eras, not forgetting understanding of the social contexts in which changes took place, students will not achieve the highest levels of performance'*. Some students failed to follow this advice and again resorted to over-generalisation in their answers. In Section One, about three-quarters chose Option A: overall, with the exception of the quite general Question 04 (accommodation of classes) and Question 08 (water supply) the initial short questions were disappointingly done. Dates were rarely known, which may cost only one mark here but often bodes ill for later questions where chronological understanding is vital. Performance on the 10-mark questions was better in Option B, where students usually had an outline knowledge of housing in Ostia, than in Option A where there were too few answers specifically referring to the theatre set. Mean marks were disappointingly low for both 20-mark alternatives, eleven out of twenty for 06, redeemed to a degree by some good detail on the Theatre of Marcellus, and less than ten out of twenty for the development of housing in Pompeii and Herculaneum. It was a relief to turn to the 30-mark essays, which were much better done. Only a quarter of students attempted Question 12 on water supply, but these produced one or two exceptional answers at Level 5. There were very few poor answers here; something that was also true for the more popular Question 13 comparing the Pantheon to other temples, where half the students reached Level 4. Many of the Section 2 essays were a joy to mark, which led to considerable frustration with the level of performance earlier.

Section One

Option A

As mentioned above, only a minority of students answered both Question 01 and Question 02 on the Small Theatre confidently, while 42% recalled the existence of the permanent roof for Question 03. Many of these early answers were a long way out in date and capacity. After a temporary respite provided by Question 04, the Large Theatre rarely proved to be better known than its near neighbour: answers to Question 05 were usually generic in nature, with a handful referring to the effects of the romanisation of the building in the 1st century BC, and in particular the access provided directly to the higher levels of seating from the Triangular Forum. Most marks were gained from a very basic discussion of the comfort and view offered, while one or two students were able to explain in detail the system for distributing the audience to the different parts of the theatre, hence the low number of Level 4 answers noted above. The essay Question 06 on the Theatre of Marcellus was answered better. Many students produced a full account of this building and were able to provide social and political reasons for its pre-eminence as well as a fair level of detail regarding materials, external appearance and decoration. A significant minority again however failed to mention its freestanding nature, the advances in building techniques and the use of vaulting and arches. In their comparisons students tended to refer in a cursory way to the Large Theatre at Pompeii: rare indeed was any display of knowledge of the theatre at Ostia. Most failed to mention it; others simply added a comment to their description of the Theatre of Marcellus along the lines of 'the theatre at Ostia was small and like the theatres at Pompeii'. There were a very few excellent answers; often

these excused any deficiencies in the Pompeian Large Theatre by reference to its age and the lesser political importance of a provincial city, before examining the techniques used at Ostia and the setting of the new theatre within a commercial setting. Some pointed out the lack of an amphitheatre here and the resulting increase in importance of the theatre. Such essays were all too rare however and the overall impression was of a lack of the basic knowledge needed to compare and contrast these theatres, the only four named for study in the specification.

Option B

Knowledge of the Cassette-tipo in Ostia was varied. A number of students scored all five marks on the short questions, while most at least understood the lack of direct access to water (Question 08). Again, giving the wrong date (Question 07), as many did, may have only cost one mark here, but those who set the building well (often centuries) away from its correct era often understandably went on to show no concept of development in the higher mark questions which followed. Enough students successfully identified the three areas in Question 09 to suggest the house plan set had been accessed by most schools and colleges, and answers to Question 10 confirmed that many were quite secure in their basic knowledge of the small number of Ostian houses named in the Specification. There were few really poor answers here and a number of very pleasing accounts. Unfortunately, the essay question on Pompeii and Herculaneum (Question 11) was sometimes very poorly answered. Without the focus on one building encouraged by Question 06 in Option A, many students flailed around describing one or two *domus* at random, or resorted to the 'take us round a typical Pompeian house' essay mentioned in previous years' reports. On the other hand it was gratifying to see a number of scripts which used examples of specific houses to illustrate changes in the social circumstances of Pompeii and Herculaneum, although understandably the focus tended to be on the former. For the rest it was disappointing to see many essays in which no more than a single example (or two at most) was offered to back up any argument attempted.

Section Two

Option C

There were some delightfully detailed and well-argued accounts of the water supply to Rome and Pompeii. The best did not simply consist of lists of aqueducts, but set out each city's early attempts to provide water, the problems brought on by rapid growth and the solutions devised. Uses of water within the city were covered as were the internal structures for meeting these needs. The aqueducts were quite rightly often at the heart of these essays, but fitted into the context above. Gratifyingly there were very few really poor answers; most of those who failed to provide much analysis had clearly studied their subject and wrote with knowledge of the engineering skills employed to build the aqueducts and of how even in cities of extreme differences in wealth, water was a right enjoyed by all.

Option D

The essay on temples was also markedly better than work in Section One. The essays here revealed a divide between those who had simply studied the Pantheon in great detail and those (far fewer) who were able to use equally extensive knowledge of a few of the other temples in the Specification to argue a case set out in response to the essay's title. If too often a quick comparison was offered using, say, the Temple of Vesta by students who failed to note the similarities (shape, number of rebuildings) and differences (date, purpose, scale) with the Pantheon. Occasionally excellent points were made about the different ways in which the Temple of Mars Ultor and the Pantheon symbolised the aims of their creators; obvious but sensible comparisons were drawn between the political needs of a huge capital city and provincial cities such as Pompeii and, further afield, Cosa and Nimes. Often however 'analysis'

consisted of a perfunctory sentence at the end of a paragraph on some aspect of the Pantheon along the lines of 'Temple x was similar/different'. Overall however it was pleasing to note that exactly half of all students attempting this question reached Level 4. In summary it was good to see a much greater level of understanding of the non-architectural aspects of the specification this year, particularly in Section Two.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

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