



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

Classical Civilisation 2020

CIV4A: Socrates and Athens

Report on the Examination

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CIV4A Socrates and Athens

General Comments on the Examination

Virtually all students showed some engagement with the topics studied, many writing with clearly articulated interest and enthusiasm. Inevitably some topics are more popular than others, an overwhelming majority opting for Roman Epic. Nonetheless all of the less popular topics have a reasonably wide take-up, proving that Claudius and Tiberius, Alexander and Socrates are worth studying at this level.

Most students showed some degree of competence at analysing prescribed sources and varying levels of competence in making judgements based on this. Weaker students tended to be more descriptive in their responses to questions carrying 10 marks, whilst the more accomplished evaluated freely. Thematic essays carrying 20 marks varied from being over-descriptive or unstructured to tightly argued and well balanced. There was also a wide range of quality in synoptic essays worth 40 marks, with the best using contextual frameworks to good effect. It is important to realise that synoptic knowledge and understanding are not optional additions to be stated without much reference to the rest of the content of the essay but integral to the whole.

The accurate responses to Questions 01, 02, 03, 06, 07 and 08 by the majority of students indicate that basic knowledge of the prescribed texts is good, providing a strong base for studying the finer points of Socrates' life and ideas.

Questions 04 and 09 gave students the opportunity to explain their responses to sections of the prescribed texts which they had studied and analysed in detail. Whilst some students fell back on straight descriptions of what was going on outside the courtroom or inside the prison, many realised that they had to show skills of analysis and evaluation. The best students did this effectively by, for example, in response to Question 04, discussing the use of storytelling in relation to Zeus, and in answer to Question 09 balancing Socrates' bravery with his wisdom often to the detriment of his companions.

This broad division between students who tended to describe and narrate and those who, on the whole, analysed and evaluated was noticeable too in the thematic 20-mark essays. Question 05 elicited, at a basic level, answers which showed some awareness of the progression of ideas in *Euthyphro*. At the higher levels students took varying standpoints, some of the most perceptive not only seeing that Socrates and Euthyphro might each be seen as separately responsible to some extent but also suggesting that they were responsible together, for example Euthyphro only offering definitions, however inadequate, because Socrates pushes the argument forwards.

The synoptic questions elicited a wide range of responses, most students making some attempt to consider a broad view. Less perceptive students tended in Question 11 to equate 'better' simply with 'more accurate' without considering other definitions, such as 'better' meaning 'wider' or 'more accessible'. Those who accomplished this successfully often showed good knowledge of *Clouds* which they used to underpin arguments about such concerns as the significance of the father/son relationships explored by Aristophanes, albeit in comic mode. In answer to Question 12 most students showed some understanding of the 'significance of Socrates' behaviour and ideas' but fewer rose to the challenge of discussing this at length in terms of 'Athenian society and values'. A sizable minority, nonetheless, saw this as an

opportunity to look at the crisis of democracy, intellectual ferment, including the influence of sophists, and patriarchal values, some concluding that Socrates' ideas should be seen as dealing with universals, others that the specific Athenian context is equally or more important.

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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