



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

Classical Civilisation 2020

CIV4B: Alexander

Report on the Examination

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CIV4B Alexander

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.

General knowledge of the topic was good as answers to the short questions showed. A minority, however, had only sketchy or inaccurate knowledge of chronology for Questions 01 and 07 and geography for Questions 02 and 06. Questions 03 04 and 09 were generally well handled.

Some students with an uncertain grasp of the material were reduced to generalisations and guesswork in their answer to 10-mark questions, where familiarity with the prescribed sources was required. Nonetheless well informed students noticed the key word 'important' in Question 05, going on to discuss such things as Arrian's use of the legend of Gordius and the thunderstorm after the undoing to show how he had given significance to the moment. Better students equally in answer to Question 10 seized on the word 'dramatic' to produce arguments focused on the use of direct speech in Arrian's account and the introduction of Callines as the mouthpiece of the veterans. Plutarch's value as a source was less well covered in either Option A or Option B, some who clearly lacked knowledge of the text being reduced to arguing that Plutarch's presentation of events 'would' be more dramatic because he was a biographer.

Questions 06 and 11 received many well informed and convincingly argued 20-mark essays with the majority trying to be evaluative in approach. In response to Question 06 most students proved capable of discussing at least a few incidents common to both authors and comment on how these illustrated character. Weaker students, however, sometimes ignored the time period in question, including material from later in Alexander's career or attributing to Arrian anecdotes from his childhood, such as the reception of the Persian ambassadors. Weaker responses to Question 11 tended to overemphasise the negative in striving to demonstrate that the Opis mutiny was typical, whereas stronger and more evaluative answers also gave due weight to the positive, including material from the earlier part of the expedition to Persia. The best reached measured conclusions.

Both Option C, much the more popular, and Option D gave plenty of scope for synopticity. Less accomplished answers to Question 12 tended to narrate battles with varying degrees of understanding of the tactics employed and omit other factors such as luck, inspirational leadership, the quality of opponents and of the Macedonian army itself. Better essays included

some or all of these factors along with well-chosen and carefully explained examples of Alexander's tactical flexibility. The least successful answers to Question 13 knew only of Alexandria in Egypt and had limited understanding of other methods of control. On the other hand, those who answered well were able to discuss several colonies, their roles and populations. Consideration of other methods, for example personal image, adoption of Persian customs, the satrapal system and mass marriages, made for the most proficient essays.

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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