AQA

ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Education

Archaeology 1011
Specification

Unit ARCH1

Report on the Examination
2009 examination – January series

Unit ARCH1

The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual

This first paper proved to be very successful. All three cultures attracted a significant candidature. The revised specification and new format enabled candidates to demonstrate the required knowledge and understanding associated with AO2. The examiners were able to use almost the full range of marks available. The result was that the paper differentiated more successfully than ACH3 had done in the past.

A number of observations were made by the examiners during the marking process and the key ones are summarised below.

General observations:

- In Section C, references to 'Europe' in questions should be taken as meaning Britain and Europe unless the question specifies **either** Britain **or** Europe.
- Sections A and B of this unit examine a number of given terms and prescribed sites. It would be wrong for teachers to assume that once a term or site has been examined it will not feature in a subsequent examination. Teachers should be aware that in Sections A and B questions on particular terms and sites may be repeated before all alternatives have been used in examinations.
- It should be noted that QWC may play a crucial role in deciding a mark within a level. Where candidates were less articulate, and comprehension was impeded, candidates penalised themselves and marks were lost.
- In all three Sections of the paper, candidates are rewarded for deployment of relevant archaeological knowledge and site-specific evidence.
- It was noticeable that some candidates who answered questions on the religion and ritual of Roman Britain were less secure in their **archaeological** knowledge and understanding. Although knowledge gained from studying Ancient History or Classical Civilisation can be useful, knowledge and understanding of archaeology is what is being tested in this paper.

Section A:

- A significant minority of students wrote more than was necessary to achieve maximum marks for each definition, and this sometimes had a detrimental impact on Sections B and C.
- In Section A not all definitions can be exemplified through the study of any one period or culture. Candidates therefore need to be prepared to provide good exemplars from any archaeological context. For example, excarnation cannot be exemplified through a study of Ancient Egypt, so teachers need to make candidates aware of other contexts where excarnation can be demonstrated. There is no requirement to limit exemplification to the three designated periods in Sections B and C, although to score well examples used should be archaeological.
- Some candidates cited modern or ethnographic parallels as examples, particularly in answers to 'ritual' and 'polytheism'. Although there is certainly a place for this approach in teaching certain topics, when candidates' answers employed this technique and lacked distinct **archaeological** examples they lost marks.

Section B:

- Many candidates answered this section particularly well. There were some excellent and highly detailed answers which were closely related to the physical elements of the site and their ritual explanation.
- However there were a minority of candidates who appeared not to be familiar with the specific sites and gave generic answers about the broad site type, e.g. Mithraea or even Roman temples in general, but not the Mithraeum at Carrawburgh, or Egyptian temples but not Medinet Habu.

Candidates should note that answers in Section B will be assessed against a set of criteria:

- How well has the candidate described the site?
- How far is the response based on physical evidence from the site?
- The extent to which the facts about the site are accurate.
- How well has the candidate been able to explain and communicate the religious and ritual aspects of the site?
- An understanding that archaeologists will often draw upon complementary evidence from other sites.

Section C:

- There were many good answers with detailed exemplification.
- A minority of candidates attempted to answer questions from more than one period/context. Although this is permitted by the specification it proved largely unsuccessful in practice. This approach requires students to have detailed multi-site and contextual understanding of more than one culture. Generally speaking, where candidates attempted this the results tended to be disappointing and reflected a superficial understanding of both cultures rather than a good understanding of one. Given that the students have a choice of four essay questions for each culture, it would seem advisable, given time constraints and the demands of the theme, to focus on a single alternative.
- It appeared that some candidates were attempting to answer the questions using only the prescribed alternative sites from Section B. It is important that candidates draw upon a much wider knowledge and understanding of religion and ritual than can be achieved solely from the prescribed sites.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the
Results statistics page of the AQA Website.