



General Certificate of Education

# **Classical Civilisation**

CIV1A Greek Architecture and Sculpture

## **Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination – June series*

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## **CIV1A Greek Architecture and Sculpture**

### **General Comments**

There was a pleasing increase in the number of candidates for CIV1A (Greek Architecture and Sculpture) this summer. Regrettably, the increase in the number of candidates was accompanied by a slight worsening of the overall standard of performance.

The most common weaknesses were

- difficulties in sustaining an evaluative argument that was focused on the exact wording of the question
- a failure to explain the judgements with reference to sufficient well-chosen details over the whole scope of the essay
- relying too heavily on generalisations instead of critical examination of the prescribed primary sources.

However, the questions also elicited a good number of structured and informed arguments which demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding and a sophisticated ability to analyse and evaluate. Clearly many candidates had not only approached this area of study with enthusiasm and commitment, but had also developed both appropriate academic skills and perceptive insights into an aspect of the classical world.

### **Section One**

#### **Option A**

In Question 01 most candidates knew the subject matter of the east pediment at Olympia, but in Question 03 there was more confusion about the identities of Nike (not *Athena* Nike) and its sculptor. Correspondingly, in Questions 02 and 04 the date of the pediment was better known than that of Nike.

In Question 05 discussion tended to focus on technique, generally quite successfully when it was based on careful observation (rather than the misapplication of terms such as 'catenaries'). However, the best answers gave a more balanced response by also taking into account the differences in context and purpose.

In Question 06 there was a tendency for candidates to write uncritically all that they knew about the Temple of Zeus without organising it into an argument that responded to the exact question and without selecting the knowledge that was most appropriate to support the judgements. For example, much space was often taken up with descriptions of athletes processing past the temple and of the chryselephantine statue, which was assumed both to be sculptural *decoration* (questionable) and to have been present from the beginning (demonstrably wrong). Details of the architecture were often sparse, apart from its size, and the exact position of the sculptured metopes frequently unknown.

#### **Option B**

In previous examinations questions about sculpture have been more popular than those about architecture, and Option B on this paper was no exception. In Questions 07 and 09 both statues were easily identified, but knowledge of their dates in Questions 08 and 10 was not quite as secure (although generally slightly more accurate than in Question 04).

In Question 11 candidates who looked closely at the two photographs usually produced some sensible discussion, particularly with regard to pose and the self-absorption of the figures into which the viewer seems to intrude. However, some merely reproduced learnt technical terms or generalisations without sufficient reference to observable details to be convincing, and there was a smaller proportion of high marks than in the corresponding Question 05.

The overall spread of marks in Question 12 was very similar to that in Question 06. The main weakness here was the failure to put forward a coherent set of criteria by which the extent of Praxiteles' innovativeness might be judged. Frequently comparisons were made with the *kouroi* and *korai* of the Archaic period, which did not lead to incisive argument. However, where Praxiteles' work was set against more immediately preceding Classical sculptures, for example Eirene and Ploutos, the discussion was more fruitful. Whatever views were expressed on Aphrodite's demeanour (ranging from prudish to sluttish) and the feelings the statue evoked in the viewer, they needed to be reinforced by reference to what can be observed in the surviving copies. Generalisations too about Praxiteles' humanising of the gods were only effective when supported by details both from his work and from earlier examples. However, the most thoughtful candidates engaged critically with what they had seen and on the basis of their observations had the confidence to discuss alternative interpretations, for example whether Praxiteles' portrayal of Apollo trivialises his power or signifies his capricious disregard for mortal life.

## **Section Two**

### **Option C**

Rather more than half the candidates chose Option C, and generally the standard was slightly higher than in Option D, although there were some common weaknesses. Above all, candidates tended not to realise that 'revolutionary' was the key word in the question and that to assess how far this epithet can be applied to the 5<sup>th</sup> century Acropolis buildings it was necessary to establish a baseline against which the novelties and traditional features of each structure could be judged. Many answers took a simple, descriptive guidebook approach, with little attempt to omit what was not relevant to this question. Much of the detail was imprecise, and there was frequently little concern to build an overarching theme and point of view into the answer.

### **Option D**

There was a similar lack of overview in many answers to Question 14, and details were sometimes more confused, particularly on the grave marker of Dexileos and on the Philippeion, which was often omitted entirely. Some candidates replaced the examples suggested in the bullet points with works of their own choosing; this was acceptable where they were relevant, but frequently, as with Paionios' Nike and the *stèle* of Hegeso, they were not. However, the best answers showed some perceptive appreciation of individual monuments based on detailed visual evidence, and made an attempt to link up the discussion with some understanding of the competitive nature of Greek society and the main activities in which prestige could be gained, and life lost.