



General Certificate of Education

## **Classical Civilisation**

CIV1F The Life and Times of Cicero

# **Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination – June series*

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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## **CIV1F *The Life and Times of Cicero***

### **General Comments**

CIV1F had a similar number of candidates to summer 2009 and continued to be the second most popular option in CIV1. Examiners were pleased to note some improvement in the overall standard of performance this summer.

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**

This option was overwhelmingly more popular than Option B, which suggests that study of *Against Verres 1* is now well integrated into candidates' preparation for the examination. In the 1-mark factual questions, about three-quarters of the candidates knew Cicero's class in Question 01, but only about half knew one of the qualifications for entry into the senate in Question 02 or the change that was made to the composition of juries after Verres' trial in Question 04. However, in Question 03, which was closely tied to the text rather than requiring more general knowledge, the performance was rather better, with more candidates gaining at least one of the marks.

In Question 05 most candidates made a sound attempt to produce an evaluative argument; what distinguished the good answers was the ability to refer to specifics rather than simply making vague generalisations about the importance of winning. The best answers showed perceptive analysis of the cleverness of Cicero's approach, which not only gave the senatorial jury little option but to give him the victory in this particular case, but also publicised where he was positioning himself in Roman politics at this relatively early stage in his career.

Responses to Question 06 revealed similar strengths and weaknesses. Most candidates had little difficulty in adopting an argumentative approach which set out to demonstrate Cicero's effectiveness in defeating Verres – and some, pleasingly, went beyond the immediate issue of winning to take into account the wider effectiveness of Cicero's methods in promoting his own career and influencing Roman politics – but there was considerable variation in candidates' ability to refer to accurate details from the text to support their argument and make it convincing.

### **Option B**

Although the overall standard of the answers to the longer questions was very similar to that shown in Option A, the information required in the short questions was less well known. About half the candidates knew the identity of Servilia in Question 07, fewer a reason for the other conspirators' disapproval of Decimus Brutus in Question 09. In Question 08 there were some very well-informed answers, but about half the candidates failed to score.

Question 10 brought a marked improvement, and the knowledge and analysis was of a slightly higher standard generally than that in the corresponding Question 05. There were also some well-judged responses to Question 11, the best of which supported the argument with relevant details from the prescribed letters as well as wider knowledge of the final stage in Cicero's career.

## **Section Two**

### **Option C**

This option was chosen by about twice as many candidates as Option D. There was a slightly higher proportion of very good answers to Question 12 than to Question 13, but otherwise the performance was very comparable. This is perhaps not surprising as both questions required similar skills of analysis and evaluation applied to knowledge of approximately 11-year periods from Cicero's mature political career. Weaker answers to Question 12 simply gave a narrative with occasional references to Cicero's aims. More successful ones began with an exposition of Cicero's political aims so that there was a set of criteria against which the consistency of his various actions could be judged. The most perceptive candidates were those who clearly distinguished his desire for political success from his political principles and effectively analysed the situations in which these came into conflict.

### **Option D**

As in Question 12 many candidates unnecessarily ran on beyond 56 BC, so in Question 13 many began too early with Cicero's return from exile in 57 BC. There was also a similar tendency to narrative rather than argument. The best answers did not just put together a sequence of events, but offered a coherent overview of the period as a whole as one dominated by the conflicting ambitions of Pompey and Caesar, and judged Cicero's actions in a clearly understood context.