



**General Certificate of Education  
January 2012**

**Classical Civilisation 2020**

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

***Report on the Examination***

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## CIV1F The Life and Times of Cicero

The most important aspect of written communication in this specification is the clarity and coherence of the evaluative argument. As a consequence, expressions such as 'to trial' and 'to guilt / guilt trip', though hardly standard written English, did not affect the mark awarded provided they were intelligible. However, there were other occasions when looseness of English expression reflected imprecision of knowledge or understanding: 'to prosecute', for example, is not the same as 'to give evidence against', nor indeed the same as 'to convict'.

### Section 1

#### Option A

Approximately three-quarters of the students attempted Option A, on the trial of Verres, in preference to Option B, on the period from the Civil War to Cicero's death. Answers to Question 01 were disappointing, since the issue Cicero repeatedly raises is the control of the courts by members of the senatorial class. By 70 BC relatively few senators came from patrician stock (some patricians were too impoverished to qualify); probably the only occasion in the specification where being patrician is relevant is the transformation of Claudius into Clodius so that he could stand for the tribunate, an office from which patricians were excluded. The *optimates*, another frequent incorrect answer, were a faction rather than a class.

By contrast, virtually all students answered Question 02 correctly (although misspelling sometimes made it difficult to distinguish between Sicily and Cilicia), and about three-quarters scored the mark in Question 04. In Question 03 most made at least one accurate point but, contrary to what was stated in some responses, Cicero had been quaestor rather than governor in Sicily, and it is unlikely that the only reason Hortensius was not chosen was that he was already acting for Verres.

In Question 05, most students reported on Cicero's limited time to visit Sicily for the purposes of gathering evidence, usually with the numbers right, and on the prosecution's schemes to delay the trial. Fewer mentioned Verres' attempts to disrupt Cicero's campaign for the aedileship. Most made some attempt to evaluate, but there was a tendency to give some information without linking it either positively or negatively to the argument, and so the number of students reaching Level 4 was limited.

The proportion of students gaining Level 4 in Question 06 was lower than that in the corresponding Question 09, partly because of a lack of familiarity with the text of *Against Verres 1* and partly through apparent misunderstanding of the word 'comprehensive'. Students tended to know broadly the content of *Against Verres 1* (there was some confusion with the other speeches published later but never delivered), but they tended to answer a factual, non-judgemental question such as 'In what ways did Cicero attack Verres?' rather than an evaluative one. In particular, they often did not take into account the structure and emphases of the speech. For example, many students referred to Cicero's unorthodox procedure, but they often simply listed it as one of several techniques without explaining how it contributed to the comprehensive nature of the attack and, for instance, how Cicero's delay in announcing this procedural change until the end of the speech was designed to achieve the greatest possible shock.

**Option B**

Most students demonstrated at least some of the knowledge required for Question 07, although some wrote at far too great length for a 5-mark question, and others too briefly.

The best answers to Question 08 demonstrated excellent knowledge of the relevant prescribed letters to inform judgements on Cicero's behaviour. However, fewer appreciated the full range of factors and, while showing some understanding of his relationship with Caesar, they had difficulty in comprehending his hesitation in joining Pompey.

In Question 09, a significant minority of students paid insufficient attention to the date given in the first words of the question ('From June 49 BC') and wasted much time on Cicero's attempts at mediation, which should have formed part of the answer to Question 08. Coverage of the relevant period tended to be uneven, with some giving more attention to the time before Caesar's assassination, others to the final years of Cicero's life including, in better answers, Cicero's letters to Trebonius and Plancus as well as his writing of the *Philippics* and attempts to manipulate Octavian. Where students moved beyond narrative to evaluation, there were some very perceptive analyses, but some judgements were harsh indeed. These did not take into account the full circumstances on each occasion and tended to see speech writing as an indication of inactivity, and the failure of a policy as its consequence.

**Section 2****Option C**

Question 10, on the years 67 to 60 BC, was only slightly more popular than Question 11, on the decade 60 to 50 BC, and the standard of work was broadly comparable. Students tended to come to the examination with prepared paragraphs on Cicero's aims and principles and the difficulties he had in achieving both, but these needed to be clearly linked to the overall argument in response to this particular question. Latin terms in these paragraphs, such as *novus homo* and *concordia ordinum*, were often only imperfectly understood. Students wrote most confidently on the *lex Manilia* and the causes of Cicero's exile. Where discussion of his consulship included any reference to the *in Rullum* and *de rege Alexandrino*, it was generally pertinent and sensible. The Rabirius trial was also well understood by a few students, and misunderstood by many. Like the *in Rullum* and *de rege Alexandrino*, it is veiled in obscurity and so credit was given for all reasonable interpretations that were related to an assessment of Cicero's successes and failures. However, the points that were made to explain the (improbable) view that the prosecution of Rabirius was intended to undermine Pompey often betrayed a misunderstanding of the basis of Pompey's extraordinary powers in the East, which depended on laws brought before the people by tribunes, not on *senatus consulta ultima*. Relatively few students made use of the first of the prescribed letters to Pompey, and the final years of the period were often dealt with in very summary fashion with little attempt to link the emergence of the triumvirate with any aspect of Cicero's aims and performance.

**Option D**

In Question 11, as in Question 10, narrative sometimes prevailed over evaluation. A frequent omission was the period between Cicero's recall from exile and the conference at Luca, the reasons for which were therefore not fully understood. Some essays petered out after Cicero's palinode, while better ones went on to give significant details about the defence speeches Cicero was forced to make and to deal, sometimes very extensively, with his governorship of Cilicia. Most students' judgements on which events might be regarded as failures were reasonable, and most attempted some degree of balance, but few specifically addressed the word 'shameful' in the question or, if they did address it, adequately took into account the constraints that surrounded the choices Cicero made.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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