

GCSE

Ancient History

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J151**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **J051**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

© OCR 2014

CONTENTS

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Ancient History (J151)

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course)

Ancient History (J051)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	Page
A031 The Greeks at War	1
A032 The Rise of Rome	5
A033 Women in Ancient Politics	8
A034 Controlled Assessment	11

A031 The Greeks at War

General Comments:

Once again candidates have demonstrated a pleasing engagement with the material studied and there was plenty of evidence of excellent teaching and classroom work. Candidates can be congratulated on the efforts made in many cases to cover a wide range of material in the exam.

One interesting change this year was that there was a more even balance between the two options; Alexander proved the more popular but only by a little. In Option 1, the essay question on Miltiades proved more popular than the alternative on Persian strengths and weaknesses, but not by much. However in Option 2, Question 4 (on the importance of Alexander's army) was significantly more popular than the essay on deification. Some of those who attempted the essay on deification did not seem very clear about what the term meant.

A continuing problem relates to the failure to address AO3 explicitly, particularly in Questions 3a/3b and 8a/8b. The wording for the 'a' questions was changed this year to remind candidates of the need to evaluate the sources. This is less of a problem with essays, as the bullet points do direct candidates to the sources. However where candidates treat the bullet points as an essay plan, this can lead to a rather disjointed approach, with evaluation of the sources being dealt with separately at the end of the essay, often without any reference to the question set. In some cases, candidates present a balanced approach to the chosen source which ends up contributing very little to the answer: for example, a paragraph which first considers Herodotus as the 'Father of History' and then as the 'Father of Lies' often leaves examiners very unclear about what the candidate is trying to argue. This approach suggests at best a Level 3 mark, though the final mark awarded depends on the answer as a whole. This remains an issue of concern.

One general issue that affects the Alexander option is that some candidates make assumptions about the coverage of the main sources based on the selection made for the examination. It is certainly worth centres exploring other aspects of the main sources (and, indeed, other sources) so that candidates are aware of the broad range of issues covered by the surviving sources. This is particularly acute with the specified passage of Diodorus.

The change of answer book format did not appear to cause many issues, though there are some candidates who make examiners' work more difficult by placing parts of answers out of sequence in the booklet, or who misnumber their answers. Sensible candidates who decided to add material into an already completed answer often highlighted where the extra material was likely to be found (a clear mark in the original answer, often an asterisk, and a page number). Very small writing can also be difficult to mark, but this was a significant problem with only a small number of candidates (as was poor handwriting). Examiners are pleased that centres direct candidates where appropriate to alternative means of producing a final script; it is worth noting the importance of ensuring that the proper cover sheet is used when a scribe has assisted a candidate.

A number of candidates chose to answer questions in a different order from that appearing on the paper. While this is perfectly acceptable, it can cause some problems: a few candidates spent too long on the essay or on question 3/8, and so could not complete all of the paper. As questions 1/6 and 2/7 are designed to be more straightforward, this is not necessarily helpful. Where candidates dealt with part questions out of order, this could mean unnecessary repetition. It is worth reinforcing to candidates the focus of the different part questions: 3a/8a will focus on the passage set, but 3b/8b will ask candidates to use the passage in a broader context. There are still candidates who range widely in 3a/8a, making little use of the passage; and some who in 3b/8b focus only on the passage without drawing on their own knowledge of the wider context.

Another issue that arose again this year is that Questions 1/6 are proving more challenging than expected. There were very few overly long answers, but there were a number where the two reasons selected were really reformulations of the same reason. A small number of candidates taking the Alexander option were misled by the reference in Question 1 to Darius, but most corrected themselves quickly.

Examiners were pleased to note that the strongest answers showed a clear and convincing grasp of the sources studied; candidates were able to demonstrate a good understanding of the period and were well prepared for the demands of the examination. There were only a small number of candidates who struggled with the format of the paper. The majority of candidates were able to address the issues raised in both options in a confident manner.

Comments on individual questions:

Question No. 1

This short question presented a greater challenge than anticipated. Most students were able to say something about Darius' reaction to the Ionian revolt and the Athenian involvement in the destruction of temples at Sardis. A few wrote at excessive length. Other reasons given often related to the expansion of the Persian empire or the need for extra resources from the Greeks. A few confused Darius with Xerxes. There were also a very few candidates who attempted to answer this question as if it related to Option 2; but these generally realised their mistake and found the correct option. However it is worth remembering that this was a significant issue in the first year of the GCSE, so it is important that candidates know which questions they are supposed to answer.

Question No. 2a

The best responses were able to mine the passage for details of the three significant groups mentioned, Mardonius, the Aleuadai and the family of Peisistratus. Some candidates focused on events outside the passage which could not be credited.

Question No. 2b

Some candidates were not very clear about the two groups mentioned, but most were able to offer some sensible ideas about what these groups would hope to gain from Xerxes' invasion. Some responses conflated the two groups together, and relatively few made effective use of the Athenian connection.

Question No. 2c

Many candidates commented on Herodotus' bias, often in rather vague and general terms; some were appropriately suspicious of Herodotus' knowledge of private conversations between Xerxes and Mardonius, and there were some sensible comments on the likelihood of Herodotus knowing what the Aleuadai and the family of Peisistratus were up to. There were still some very general discussions, often involving both 'the father of history' and 'the father of lies'. Examiners were happy to reward engagement with the detail of the passage.

Question No. 3a

This proved a challenging passage, and examiners were happy to reward candidates who engaged with the detail of the passage. The best candidates were clear about who Demaratus was, and hence the authority of what he had to say; and many also commented on the problematic nature of such a private conversation being revealed to Herodotus. Many were able to pick out the importance of 'courage', and commented on the significance of the reference to

the Spartans, especially their determination to fight whatever the odds and their refusal to accept 'slavery for Greece'. Too many candidates did not explicitly address AO3, even though the changed wording of the question was intended to remind them to do this ('You must use and evaluate details from Passage 1B').

Question No. 3b

There were some excellent answers that raised some of the important elements contributing to a Greek victory, such as Greek determination and hatred of slavery, better organisation and weaponry, and good choices of location for confrontations. Most candidates kept their answers to a sensible length so that they had ample time for the essay question. Some candidates chose to discuss Marathon, which was not directly relevant to the question set; in a few cases, the length of time spent on this battle proved problematic. There were also some candidates who did not address AO3 explicitly; there were a few candidates who focused exclusively on the passage, just as there were a few who did not use it at all.

Question No. 4

This proved the more popular essay question on this topic. Most candidates were able to give an outline of events at Marathon, the best responses providing considerable detail. In some cases this detail drew candidates away from the question as worded, but many were able to bring their essay back to the importance of Miltiades. Not all were able to discuss the events before the battle, including the conversation with Callimachus; those that did were often able to make good use of this when evaluating Herodotus' account. The strongest answers were able to deal with the difficulties in Herodotus' account, such as the failure to mention the Persian cavalry.

Question No. 5

This proved the more challenging question. Candidates were generally able to make good use of Thermopylae to bring out some aspects of the Persian forces, but this was more challenging for Artemisium. A number of candidates confused details of Salamis with Artemisium, and a very few focused on Artemisia (and her heroism at Salamis), rather than the battle itself. There were some interesting evaluations of Herodotus' account of Thermopylae, but less was said about Artemisium. There were some differences of opinion about the Persian fleet and its effectiveness; relatively few commented on the storms. A number of candidates chose to spend time on Marathon rather than on the battles specified in the question.

Question No. 6

A variety of suggestions were made in response to this question, though in some cases it was not clear that two reasons were being offered. Popular responses included Alexander's continuation of his father's policy towards Persia, a desire to emulate or surpass his father's achievements and a desire to free the Greek cities from Persian control. It is worth remembering that answering a question as though it related to a different option was a significant issue in the first year of the GCSE, so it is important that candidates know which questions they are supposed to answer.

Question No. 7a

Most candidates were able to mine the passage for useful and relevant detail, though there were a few who focused on events not mentioned in the passage.

Question No. 7b

Most candidates were able to identify the different groups of Philip's 'men', though not all included Pausanias in the list. The best answers interpreted the examples selected to bring out the quality of the relationship.

Question No.7c

There were some very different responses to this question, though not all candidates were very clear about the author of the passage. Some answers focused on the plausibility of the account, but most candidates were able to discuss the use of detail, such as the 'Celtic dagger' and the list of names.

Question No.8a

Most candidates found there was some useful detail in the passage and were able to discuss the material selected appropriately. A number commented on the use of Macedonian by Alexander and on the quotation from Euripides, though relatively few made much of these two points. Candidates felt on safer ground dealing with the actual incident and Alexander's response once the deed was done. As in the corresponding Option 1 question, there are still too many candidates who do not address AO3 in spite of the revised wording of the question ('You must use and evaluate details from Passage 2B'). There were some candidates who clearly knew the incident well, but did not use the detail of the passage in their answer as they focused more on the broader context.

Question No. 8b

The majority of candidates used the passage effectively here and were able to draw on a range of episodes for comparison, such as Alexander's impetuous leadership in battle, his treatment of Cassander, the killing of Parmenio and his emotional reaction to the death of Hephaestion; the cutting of the Gordian knot also was used to support the argument, and some also compared Alexander's leadership in battle. Most candidates did draw on material outside the passage, but, as noted elsewhere, they did not always address AO3 explicitly. There were a few candidates who focused exclusively on the passage, just as there were a few who did not use it at all.

Question No. 9

This proved by far the more popular essay question. The best responses identified the qualities of Alexander's army, inherited from his father, and the importance in various battles. Many candidates made the obvious point that Alexander could not have achieved anything without an army, but in many cases there were interesting discussions of Alexander's qualities as a tactician and leader of men. Only stronger answers were able to cover the full sweep of the expedition, though good marks were awarded to answers that displayed a clear understanding of the main battles and Alexander's contribution. Some candidates lost focus on the essay question and relied on a narrative account. A number of candidates made sweeping comments about the army's contribution and Alexander's qualities as a leader, without offering any evidence or examples to support what they said.

Question No. 10

This proved significantly less popular than Question 9, and relatively few candidates were able to deal effectively with a range of issues. However there were some interesting discussions of the importance of oracles and the adoption of Persian dress and customs. Many candidates were also able to use the background of the Macedonian royal family and the influence of his mother; a few also commented on his father's attitude towards the gods. But relatively few were able to draw on the later stages of his life, and his attempts to gain recognition as a god from Greek city states or even his desire to make Hephaestion a god.

A032 The Rise of Rome

General Comments:

It is gratifying to see the cohort for this option grow again and to be presented with so many thoughtful and knowledgeable scripts. The paper allowed candidates to show the full range of their abilities and there was some really outstanding work from a number of students. In general terms, the two main areas where a number of students underperformed were source evaluation and timing. There needs to be clarity and precision when evaluating sources, integrating them into the explanation and arguments of the question generally. With regard to timing, a number of students tend to spend too much time on the early questions which reduces the amount of time and effort available for the higher tariff questions at the end of the paper.

- 1 Most candidates were able to identify Tarquinius Priscus and showed some knowledge here although some candidates interpreted killing rivals/pretenders and 'trickery' as achievements.
- 2a Many candidates tended to conflate 2a) with 2b): as a result there tended to be a considerable amount of overlap. The strongest answers were those that were able to think more generally about 'Romans' and their origins – humble beginnings/ideas of classlessness, new opportunities, growth of population and not get sidetracked into telling the story/achievements of Romulus.
- 2b Some good explanations here: candidates were on much surer ground and most were able to give clear reasons as to why Romulus was important. The question was focused on the vision that Romulus had for the foundation/expansion of Rome, the various means by which he tried to achieve this and the results of these decisions. Most candidates did this very well.
- 2c As with last year, there is still an issue with candidates not reading the instruction 'using details in the passage'. A number are not doing this and are relying on 'generic' evaluation. The best answers identified specific points of the passage to question – ie to what extent did Livy know what Romulus was thinking/the fact that the Senate existed in Livy's time – and then were able to build a more sustained explanation around this.
- 3a Candidates generally did much of this question well: responses were able to identify readily the reasons for the Tarquin's unpopularity and explain these quite convincingly (ie.AO1 and AO2). The evaluation of the piece (A03) was generally less well done. Many candidates omitted any reference to assessing the value of the source or focused purely on a simple personal response and generic evaluations.
- 3b Again there were some very good answers here: most candidates were using the passage and other knowledge. The best answers made specific reference to the cited Livy passage and then were able to refer to other Livy extracts and even in a minority of cases making a comparison/contrast with Virgil. The question expected some discussion/comparison between the earlier and later Kings (most chose Numa/Romulus for the latter) and why Romans should feel differently about different Kings. Some variable source evaluation with a common practice of evaluating the sources with little or no reference to the passage.

- 4 This was the most popular question. The majority of candidates demonstrated very good knowledge of Numa's reign and were able to score highly for A01 although some were telling the story of his religious changes without necessarily directing their knowledge toward the question asked. The best answers addressed the assumption in the question that Numa's reign did mark a change after Romulus and candidates that argued for or against this proposition – with some referring to Tullus as well – scored highly on A01. Generally where this critique of the question was undertaken it was done very well indeed. Most evaluation focused on Livy. The best responses mentioned Virgil and even archaeological remains.
- 5 This was the less popular question. Those that chose this could clearly explain various episodes of early Roman history: the story of Aeneas, aspects of Romulus' reign, and even the Tarquins. Generally the evaluation of these stories was done well. Much of the wider explanation and evaluation of the sources was less well done however. There were standard statements about Livy's aims and the times he was writing in without really showing a good understanding of 'morals' per se and sometimes the evaluation lacked a specific focus on the material. Some responses believed Livy to have 'been in the pay of Augustus'.
- 6 Most candidates gave very reasonable answers to this question – there was a very wide range of effective responses.
- 7a Nearly all candidates were able to answer this by using the passage. Like last year, it is disappointing that marks are not consistently high for this question. In numerous cases, candidates seemed unable simply to repeat details from the passage but would try to expand upon the event by bringing in external information (weather, elephants etc) at the expense of getting a reasonable coverage of the passage.
- 7b Most candidates were able to identify at least one reason and link this to an explanation as to why Hannibal showed good leadership. There was a tendency (which would explain lower marks here) to give a short answer and then move on without developing this more fully.
- 7c Many answers were generalised views of Livy and often included a generic discussion with little relevance to the passage, for example, did he have witnesses (for this journey)?, did he research or visit places (so he knew how dangerous it was)?, how did he know what Hannibal was thinking?
- 8a Most candidates did this question well, particularly A01 and A02 where details from the passage were carefully selected and thoughtfully explained. Quintus Fabius Maximus is obviously well taught and well learned. For A03 some were able to evaluate Plutarch but many did not. This may well be a timing issue but also reflects some degree of confusion over the exact details of Plutarch's life which is replicated in later questions where many students confused Plutarch with Polybius.
- 8b Some candidates did this very well by using the Plutarch extract and then combining with both Livy and Polybius to give a wide-ranging set of factors to explain Hannibal's position. Some focused purely on Fabian tactics but most were at least able to discuss this and the failure to march on Rome. A number of students ignored the wording of the question which focused on the war in Italy and without much relevance moved on to Zama.

With regard to evaluation, the best responses evaluated the three main sources, Livy, Polybius and Plutarch. There was some confusion at times between Polybius and Plutarch and some omitted any evaluation of Plutarch completely.

9 This was the less popular question.

Generally knowledge of Cannae was good but answers were not always linked to the question. The best answers were able to itemise Livy's descriptions and explanations of different phases of the battle and then thoroughly evaluate this analysis often in comparison with the support of Polybius. There were some candidates who suggest that Livy was a senator and therefore had access to the 'senatorial record'. There is no evidence of this.

10 This was the most popular question and generally done very well. Although there was the inevitable focus on Zama for some, most were able to draw upon a range of factors from across the period. A few answers got trapped in telling the story of Hannibal's early battles and never reached the end of the period. There was a great deal of excellent knowledge here on Zama and Scipio. Many made use of the Fabius passage to draw together good ideas on attrition and the wider war. With regard to evaluation (as for question 9) there was some confusion over Livy, Polybius and Plutarch.

A033 Women in Ancient Politics

General comments

Again this year there was a pleasing rise in the number of candidates taking this unit. Many were very well prepared but there was a substantial minority who seemed to have a very poor grasp of the basic facts, and were not able to engage effectively with the questions. In general, candidates should be reminded of the importance of reading and using the passages printed on the question paper, and responding to these passages to construct their answers. Candidates should also take care when approaching the essay question of their choice that they respond to the question set, rather than simply writing what they know about Cleopatra or Agrippina. In these essays it is important that there is clear use of the sources, and that arguments are supported by relevant factual knowledge. For example, a number of candidates spoke of Cleopatra's powers as a seductive woman, but then failed to substantiate the general point with relevant examples of both how she uses these powers and how they enabled her to gain power. The best answers effectively addressed the question, and showed considerable knowledge of the two women on the paper and the sources through which we know about them. It was also notable that the more successful candidates used the guidance given in the bullet points. Adherence to these often helped maintain a better focus on the question and provided a better overall structure to the essay.

Cleopatra still proved the more popular of the two options, with a roughly two thirds to one third split between the two options. Candidates were well organised, timing their answers effectively so that they were able to write appropriate amounts in response to each question.

Option 1: Cleopatra

- 1 This question was well answered by most candidates, who were able to recall some of Cleopatra's successes. For the highest marks candidates should ensure that they give detail about the achievements. For example, some candidates stated that Cleopatra extended Egypt's territory or that she had affairs with Roman politicians, but did not give further details such as the names of the lands or the politicians which would have supported their answers.
- 2a Answers to this question were usually well done. Some candidates, however, failed to notice that they needed to write about Antony as well as Octavian. Candidates should also be reminded that the requirement for this question is simply to outline, not to comment or develop what is said in the passage. Some candidates were keen to analyse the content, but such analysis should be reserved for the later questions.
- 2b Whilst many candidates answered this question effectively, there were a number of common failings. One was to look at *how* rather than *why* Virgil compares the two leaders. Candidates should also ensure, in answering question such as this (which targets AO2 - understanding) that they give a sense of the context. That this was at the battle of Actium and the two leaders were about to fight one another was missed by some.
- 2c Many candidates evaluated this passage effectively, but a surprising number did not comment on the more 'poetic' elements. There was still a considerable number of candidates who ignored the opening words of the question, which enjoin them to use 'details from Passage 1A'. Effective answers focussed on details and discussed how reliable they might be. Some candidates chose simply to write about either Virgil's reliability and his relationship with Augustus or the Shield of Aeneas. Whilst these points have their place, they are not a thorough response to the question as set. Candidates should be reminded of the need to use the details from the passage in response to a question such as this.

- 3a** This question was generally well answered, with candidates choosing appropriate details from the passage and discussing them effectively. A number failed to get to the end of the passage and address what happened when Antony met Octavian. There were a pleasing number of candidates who evaluated the passage to gain full marks.
- 3b** This question led to a mixture of responses. Some were very effective, seeing Cleopatra's relationship with Mark Antony in a wider context, and looking at other reasons for the civil war. There were also some excellent answers which used effective evaluation of the sources to support a line of argument which suggested that the sources used Cleopatra and her relationship with Mark Antony as an excuse or cover for the real causes of the civil war. There were, however, too many candidates who confused the war started by Fulvia mentioned to the passage with the civil war. There was also a notable lack of sources in the responses from some candidates.
- 4** Of the two essays on Cleopatra, this question proved slightly more popular. Candidates responded well to the challenge which it posed, and considered a range of reasons why Cleopatra might be considered particularly important. There were some impressive answers which included discussions of contemporary attitudes to women both in Egypt and Rome, as well as the potential bias of the Roman sources and their treatment of her. Some candidates chose simply to recite what they knew about Cleopatra, and did not pause as to why she might be considered important. There were considerable references to her charm and ability to manipulate men, as well as her linguistic prowess. Whilst these were all significant, only some candidates managed to take these further to suggest why they made her important. A relatively common weakness in these answers was candidates' lack of evidence to support their points. They often talked about her characteristics in general terms, but did not then tie these down to specific examples to demonstrate the importance of her characteristics.
- 5** This question led to a variety of responses. Many candidates were able to give some details of the relationship between Mark Antony and Cleopatra, and then discuss her role at the battle of Actium, although all too often the latter was done in a rather brief manner. Only a minority of candidates chose to challenge the assumption in the question or evaluate the sources so that they might support such a line of argument. A common weakness of answers to this question was lack of detail. Many candidates wrote what they knew about Actium, but then failed to analyse how this battle was linked to Cleopatra's downfall.

Option 2: Agrippina

- 6** This question was successfully attempted by many candidates, who were able to recall how Agrippina increased her power during Claudius' reign. As in the Cleopatra option, it is important that candidates give enough detail if they are to be awarded full marks.
- 7a** Most candidates produced effective answers to this question. Some failed to read to the end of the passage, whilst others summarised it so succinctly that they failed to give much detail.
- 7b** Most candidates had some sense of why Agrippina might have wanted to see Claudius dead, but failed to respond to the specific point of 'at this point in time' in the question, and so gave generic points about her wanting more power or wanting Nero on the throne, without developing these further to include consideration of Britannicus.

- 7c** This question was mostly well answered, but, as in the other option, candidates should be reminded of the importance of using details from the passage to guide and support their answers. A considerable number of candidates gave a general statement about the reliability of Suetonius and his reliance on gossip, which could have been applied to any piece of his writing. Candidates should engage with the passage, and, using what they know of the writer, consider whether the details in the passage are likely to be accurate or reliable.
- 8a** Candidates responded well to this question, often looking carefully at the detail, and commenting effectively on each of the elements of the passage. In general, there was good understanding of reactions of those present and their significance. Candidates were also able to evaluate Tacitus effectively, and some even compared this passage to Suetonius by way of evaluation.
- 8b** Responses to this question were of varied quality. The best were able to look at different members of the imperial family, and consider Nero's reasons for removing them. Most candidates had something to say about Agrippina and Nero's relationship with his mother, although all too many failed to recall details and discuss these in support of their answer. A considerable number of candidates resorted to outlining how Nero went about removing Agrippina with accounts of the various attempts on her life, but then failed to address the issue of *why* Nero might have taken these actions. Many candidates considered only Agrippina and Britannicus, and only the best went further afield.
- 9** This question proved the less popular of the two, with about a third of the Agrippina candidates choosing it. A common failing of the answers was a lack of detail about the early years of Nero's reign and Agrippina's influence therein. Many candidates dealt in generalities about Agrippina's role, and may also have included details about Seneca and Burrus. Evaluation of the sources for this essay was excellent in places, but all too often just generic comments about Tacitus and Suetonius, which, whilst they earned marks, did not help to support the candidates' arguments.
- 10** This question proved much the more popular of the two essay questions in this option. Candidates showed a good knowledge of Agrippina's character, but often failed to carry this through with detailed support for their arguments in her actions. Some were able to write effectively about her activities listening in at the Senate or wishing to appear in public next to Nero. Only a minority of candidates took this question to the next level and considered what was meant by her being like an emperor, and what this might mean given her position within the imperial court. Many candidates discussed Agrippina in an unbalanced way with detail about her relationship with Claudius or her relationship with Nero, but failed to look further at her wider role in the imperial court and beyond. Often candidates concentrated on sources that showed Agrippina as an emperor while neglecting any evidence that may have shown her as a mother to balance their argument.

A034 Controlled Assessment

General Comments

This year it was encouraging to see that as the number of candidates had risen, a wider range of titles was attempted by the candidates. The majority of centres once again opted for all their students taking one title, and some continued to allow their students the choice of topic. There seemed to be very little difference in outcome for these two routes.

It is, however, worth noting that students need to have sufficient background knowledge of a topic to be able to effectively evaluate the sources which they are studying, and to show an understanding of both the events and the sources which contribute to their arguments. It was noticeable that a number of candidates failed to show proper understanding of the sources in particular, and that this caused some difficulty with the marking of AO2. Teachers should take note of the descriptor for 'thorough' under AO2, in that it requires candidates to demonstrate a thorough understanding of issues, events and sources. It is all too easy for candidates to lose marks in this area, because such marks are often linked with the knowledge and understanding required to interpret, evaluate and respond to the historical events and sources credited under AO3.

Candidates should be reminded of the importance of using ancient source material in preparing their answers. The exercise in the Controlled Assessment – as in the examination units – is to use ancient source material to construct an argument. In some cases, candidates were making excessive use of modern scholarship or simply writing a narrative of a topic. Candidates should always consider how something is known: what is the evidence from the ancient world which tells us that – for example – the Egyptians worshipped particular deities or that the Persians used a particular battle-formation. It will not be appropriate in every case to pursue such questions, but the more often a candidate can support key points with this type of reasoning, the more likely it is that the answer will be classed as thorough. The need to use ancient sources is clearly stated both in the questions themselves and at the top of the question papers.

The administration of the Controlled Assessment went well this year, but centres should be reminded of the need for a word-count and bibliography to be included with all work. The former is essential for ensuring that the marks under A01 have been appropriately awarded, as the word-limit features in the descriptors for awarding marks. The latter, on the other hand, is needed to ensure that candidates acknowledge support that they have had from other sources.

A small number of candidates made excessive use of the internet, and appeared to have copied material directly from websites which were traced by the moderators. As stated in the specification, it is a requirement of producing Controlled Assessment that candidates use their own words, or specifically acknowledge quotations when they are used. Centres are reminded of the importance of the Centre and Candidate Authentication forms, and the need to ensure that arrangements are in place to ensure the integrity of the examination process.

The moderators would once again like to thank centres for their diligent work in marking the Controlled Assessment, and ensuring that the paperwork is correctly organised. It is particularly helpful when the comments on the cover-sheet (CCS/A034) are clear and detailed, and explain why the marks have been awarded. Likewise, annotations throughout the scripts indicated AO1, AO2 and AO3 are most helpful in enabling us to ensure consistency of standard. On an administrative matter, centres are also reminded of the importance of entering for the correct option: A034/01 means that work should be submitted by the repository (online), whilst A034/02 means that the work will be submitted by post to the moderator.

Comments on individual questions:

Option 1: Ancient Egypt 3000-1000 BC

1. How far does the evidence help us to reconstruct the life and achievements of any one Egyptian pharaoh?

A considerable number of candidates attempted this question, with varying degrees of success. The best answers selected a wide range of archaeological evidence, and interpreted this thoroughly to come to reasoned conclusions about their chosen pharaoh. There were, however, a number of notable pitfalls in this question, which included the following. Candidates had a tendency to include pictures of archaeological remains, without really analysing them or saying what they contributed to their argument. All too often the points drawn from the evidence were rather weak, and candidates did not look at the background to their chosen items to help develop their arguments. It is worth noting that much of this evidence is subject to considerable ambiguity in its interpretation – something which the best candidates addressed adeptly. Candidates also included considerable amounts of narrative about their chosen pharaoh, without giving any clues about the evidence which had been used to develop that narrative. Some of the best answers managed to cross reference an impressive range of evidence to produce nuanced, insightful answers.

2. How useful is the archaeological evidence in helping us to understand the importance of religion within Ancient Egyptian society?

This was also a popular choice, but, again, there was a tendency for candidates to rely on finding and commenting on information on the internet, rather than focusing on sources from the ancient world. Some basic comments on the usefulness of sources were sometimes credited too high in AO3. This moderator sometimes wondered whether the candidates had been taught about the context in enough detail before they began their research. However some centres tackled this with verve and really engaged well with the sources. The best answers considered how well the evidence applied to different sections of society. Disappointingly some centres had apparently approached the Egypt questions with little or no background teaching, as the candidates' responses suggested that they had simply been given the question, and time in the school ICT suite. This impacted across all three AOs.

Option 2: Ancient Crete: Minoan Civilisation 2000-1400 BC

3. How useful are the sources in helping us to understand the political organisation of Minoan society?

There were only limited entries for this title. It was pleasing to see that the students had clearly had access to a range of appropriate sources, and did not have to rely on internet resources. There was some excellent analysis of archaeological evidence, some of which had been experienced first-hand. Candidates showed considerable enthusiasm for the topic, and made effective use of both archaeological and written evidence.

4. How accurately can we assess the technological achievements of the Minoans?

This question attracted a wide range of responses. The best demonstrated a clear focus on the idea of technology in the Minoan world, and made excellent use of the available archaeological evidence, which was duly evaluated to take into account some of the problems associated with early Minoan archaeology. There was, however, a tendency in

answers to move away from the specific theme of technology, and deal more generally with Minoan palaces or society. Candidates also need to be reminded to discuss the challenges of the evidence, and ensure that they are evaluating what evidence they have to support the conclusions which they are drawing. Some of the interpretation of evidence in this topic was little more than recounting that evidence, rather than a full interpretation and analysis.

Option 3: Troy and the Mycenaeans 1450-1100 BC

5. How much can we learn from the sources about the social and political structure of Trojan society?

The entries for this title were limited. Pleasingly the students had responded in a lively way and provided full and well-researched answers, supported with carefully chosen illustrations.

6. How clear an understanding of the everyday life of the Mycenaeans can we gain from the archaeological evidence?

This question was well answered by some candidates, who had clearly taken the time to gather considerable amounts of archaeological evidence and use it to form a persuasive argument in support of their viewpoint. There was considerable discussion of Linear B, and its use in helping to answer this question. Some candidates included highly well-informed and perceptive discussions of its use and developed excellent conclusions based on what has been found in the Linear B tablets. On the other hand, too many candidates were vague in their approach, and were both inaccurate in their discussion of the archaeological evidence (much of this related to confusing time-periods) and in their definition of the terms in the question. Generally the work from centres that opted for the Mycenaean topics was of a high standard.

Frustratingly, some candidates noticed the Linear B tablets but did not mine them for the wealth of information they contain or did not try hard enough to find relevant evidence.

Option 4: Ancient Persia 630-499 BC

7. How much can we learn from the sources about the development of cities and other settlements within the Persian Empire during this period?

In the limited sample of answers in response to this question, a good range of sources had been used and understood by the candidates, which is essential to address this question effectively.

8. How clear an understanding of the weapons and tactics used on Persian military campaigns can we gain from the evidence?

The best answers on this topic made good use of the Greek sources, and compared these with a variety of Persian inscriptions to develop cogent arguments in support of their points. Herodotus featured heavily (as he should) in many arguments, and was effectively evaluated by the best candidates. Not all candidates seemed to grasp the limitations of the evidence, and discuss the challenges of constructing an argument about Persian weapons based on the accounts of their enemies (the Greeks) who had, in the main, conquered them. The discussion of tactics suffered a similar fate to that of weapons.

There were some outstanding essays on this question exploiting a wide range of Persian archaeological and inscriptional evidence skilfully cross referenced with the Greek literary evidence, considering both soft and hard tactics as well as weaponry. Unfortunately, some candidates' work relied too heavily on events outside the period.

Option 5: The Hellenistic World 323-133 BC

9. To what extent do the sources help us to understand the political developments in Alexander the Great's empire after his death?

This question was generally answered very competently, especially since it could have daunted candidates who had not been prepared fully for their research. Candidates almost invariably were successful in describing the complex political situation, and how it unravelled. Excellent use was made of sources by many candidates. Only a small minority of candidates produced simple narratives, and an overwhelming majority engaged with material from a range of contemporary authors. Candidates really seemed to know the material on this question, and exploited iconography on coins as well as using the literary sources.

10. How far does the archaeological and literary evidence help us to reconstruct the development of any one Hellenistic city during this period?

This question was less popular than question 9, but still answered very well. The centres that chose the Hellenistic questions all seemed to have access to relevant resources, and the students had clearly tackled the controlled assessment as part of a taught unit, as suggested in the specification. Alexandria was, of course, the overwhelming favourite, although Pergamon featured in a few centres' responses. There was also some work on Athens. The development of Alexandria was considered from a wide range of perspectives with a pleasing diversity of sources both archaeological and literary.

Option 6: The Celts c. 500 BC-AD 500

11. How full an understanding of the importance of mythology in any one Celtic society can we gain from the evidence?

Some candidates struggled with this question and did not identify one society which subsequently affected their answers across all three Assessment Objectives. Many candidates did not attempt to distinguish between mythology and religion and focussed on ritual without applying their observations back to the question. There were some excellent answers on Irish, British and Gallic mythology that exploited a diverse range of source material. Often obscure local gods and their cults were cross-referenced with impressive etymological analysis of place names and titles.

12. How far does the evidence help us to understand the nature of warfare in any one Celtic society in this period?

This question elicited a range of responses, some of which were excellent, and showed a firm grasp not only of the source material, but also of the issues within their chosen Celtic society. In particular, there were some excellent discussions of the challenges of reading classical authors who were writing on peoples whom they thought to be inferior. On the other hand, there were some common pitfalls with this question which could easily be avoided. Some candidates failed to define which society they were writing about, which naturally limited their ability to show a thorough understanding both of that society and of the sources used to describe it. There is a danger in dealing with Celtic society that

candidates do not go back to the original sources adequately, and focus overly on the modern scholarship. This scholarship can be used to help identify ancient sources, as well as help with the evaluation. Nevertheless, moderators are looking to see that the sources have been included and adequately discussed. It was also good to see that some candidates had been on a trip to the British Museum as part of their research for their controlled assessment. Some candidates evaluated secondary sources for this unit or included artists' reconstructions of Celtic warriors as primary source material. Considerable care is needed in doing this as the focus of the responses must always be on primary source material from the ancient world. Candidates who use such modern reconstructions should always take them back to the ancient evidence on which they are based, where possible, and use the reconstruction to help analyse that evidence.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England
Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

© OCR 2014

