ASSessment report

ANH315117 ANCient HiSTory

It was pleasing to see so many students choosing to study this subject in order to develop their knowledge of history and skills in critical thinking. By studying Ancient History candidates further their understanding of how ancient societies faced many of the same questions that challenge us today: where did we come from; how should we live our lives; what makes life worth living; how should each human life be valued; how can we co-exist with our environment?

This report begins with general observations on the common criteria of the exam paper (Criteria 3 and 4) and the three sections of the exam before presenting specific Markers’ comments for ancient Assyria, China, Egypt, Greece and Rome, in that order. The marking tool used by the Markers was adapted so it included only the criterion elements assessed in the exam topics in 2019, while still closely following the exam specifications.

There were two major changes to the exam format this year which challenged candidates to adapt their historical knowledge to address the topic requirements. The 2019 exam paper employed a single compulsory topic for all three sections of the exam paper (rather than in just Sections B and C). Secondly, all topics contained a stimulus statement which candidates were explicitly required to consider in their response. While many candidates rose to the challenge and presented a considered argument in response to the stimulus statement, some candidates seemed to have been put off by the format. They either ignored the stimulus statement entirely or just ‘cherry picked’ the elements they wanted to address. Both of these approaches limited the candidates’ success. It is recommended that teachers provide candidates with practise in tackling a variety of topic formats throughout the year.

For the first time Assyria was studied by several candidates but there were only responses in Section C, with the most popular civilisations still being Greece, Rome, Egypt and China, in that order. In Section A there were no responses to the Destruction of Troy (Greece) or the events at Masada (Rome). Some growth continued in the number of students who chose to write on a second civilisation in Section C, particularly Rome and Egypt, and this development of offering some choice may entice more students to enrol in the course.

Despite the fact that all three topics on the paper explicitly required candidates to employ primary and secondary sources, a significant number of candidates still omitted this essential requirement of historical discourse. Since candidates have an hour in which to compose a response for each section they should have time to include their key sources in their planning before they begin writing.

Criterion 3 Communicate historical ideas and information
To successfully present their ideas, candidates are expected to use an analytical essay structure, coherent paragraphs and accurate spelling, punctuation and expression. They should apply the usual writing conventions: accurate spelling of commonly used terms and individuals’ names; consistent use of past tense rather than present tense; avoiding using slang terms and second person (you); regulating paragraph length.
The better essays presented a clear position in response to the stimulus statement in each topic. Generally these essays were at least three pages in length since each topic contained a number of elements that all needed to be included in the response. However, it was still possible to pass by presenting two pages of coherent argument that directly addressed the topic. The best responses featured articulate introductions to indicate the central thesis, well developed paragraphs and a short but confident conclusion that stressed the key points. In these effective essays historical terms were used appropriately and care was taken to ensure the accurate spelling of names and terms from the selected civilisation. These top performing candidates provided detailed analysis in a style that was engaging to read.

Less effective responses launched directly into prepared content or only referred to the stimulus statement in the introduction. Candidates are encouraged to refer to key terms and points from the stimulus in their topic sentences throughout the essay to show that they are analysing key features and developing an argument.

A storytelling mode of writing was again evident in some weaker responses which just retold the main events in a society’s development or leader’s life. An analytical approach is required for a history response in which a critical lens is used to examine parts of a subject and evaluate their significance to the whole. Stronger candidates selected the key ideas that were central to the topic and examined them in some detail, with reference to the most significant points and sources of evidence. A forceful conclusion directed the marker back to the central argument of the essay.

It is strongly recommended that candidates use a dictionary to check the meaning of any terms in the topics that may be used in an unusual way or may be unfamiliar to them. For example, the use of the terms ‘progress’, ‘coercion’ and ‘scope’ in the exam topics appeared to have been off putting for some candidates as they failed to address these concepts in their responses.

**Criterion 4 Use evidence to support historical interpretations and arguments**

The use of evidence to support assertions about past events, individuals and societies is an essential part of historical inquiry and writing. This criterion is assessed three times and the strongest candidates ably synthesised evidence and argument in all three of their scripts. Many candidates effectively supported the points in their discussion with reasoned arguments and a range of appropriate primary and secondary sources. Better responses drew upon the most acknowledged authorities and included a brief note about what made a source reliable or questionable, if applicable. In some sections markers were surprised to see responses that did not draw upon key primary sources and reputable secondary sources. Instead, minor or dubious sources were used to support arguments which lessened the impact of the response.

Candidates are advised not to cite internet sources as they are usually tertiary sources (rather than primary or secondary) and the interpretations lack the veracity of reputable historians. Of course, this does not include the internet publication of articles and book excerpts by recognised historians.

In the stronger responses the use of significant ancient and modern authors was clearly delineated by the choice of sentence structure. For example, the following phrasing: “According to author X…” and “Author X argues strongly that…” suggests that a candidate has deeper understanding of an interpretation than if an author is simply attributed at the end of a paraphrase: “In modern times, Leonidas’ actions at Thermopylae have come under renewed scrutiny (Cartwright, 2017).” Overall, most candidates successfully used the in-text citation method of listing the author and publication date in brackets to acknowledge sources. Some candidates were confused about how to directly name an historian and erroneously used brackets to begin their sentence eg “(Scott, 1978) says that the nature of
leadership at this time was still fluid,” instead of “Scott (1978) says that the nature of leadership…."

When quotations are included they need to be embedded in the argument and add to its effect rather than being ‘tacked’ onto the end of a sentence or placed in a paragraph without discussion of their content. To gain a high rating candidates needed to synthesise argument and evidence into a coherent whole within each paragraph. Teachers may need to provide more models and practise for candidates in using short, pithy quotes that add value to the argument.

Weaker responses failed to include even one primary or secondary source and some omitted sources altogether. While most candidates presented amble evidence for Section A responses, it was evident that as time ran out, weaker candidates rushed to include all their points and neglected to include sources in the other two sections of the exam.

SECTION A GENERAL COMMENTS

For the first time in this section a single topic was used to test the candidates’ understanding of how to apply investigation tools to a civilisation. The topic was general enough to suit all the prescribed civilisations and most candidates were able to discuss the historical significance of their case study in some detail. Better responses presented an argument about the meaning of ‘progress’ over the historical period and whether their case study progressed or reflected the cultural processes. It wasn’t necessary to discuss the concept of ‘civilisation.’

Responses to the second element of the topic were less successful. A considerable number of candidates failed to analyse and evaluate the usefulness of their selected sources of evidence. Few attempted to identify varying representations of the focus event, period or development in the sources. Better responses showed how sources differed in their representation due to such things as bias, the passing of time, the author’s purpose and the influence of modern discoveries. Weaker responses simply referred to several sources with little, or no, consideration of their usefulness or the reasons for their inclusion.

SECTION B GENERAL COMMENTS

The Section B topic again proved challenging as candidates struggled to structure their essay to include at least one feature, two structural elements, and also analysis of how they changed over time (together with a range of evidence). This year candidates were able to select the two structural elements and were not limited by the topic as happened in 2018. Despite this open choice, too many candidates omitted any explicit reference at all to structural elements or made only limited connections between an identified feature and structural elements. Candidates are advised to clearly show in the introduction the structural elements and feature to be analysed which makes it easy for markers to see how the topic is to be addressed.

While many candidates successfully displayed knowledge of the main elements of the topic it proved quite difficult for candidates to gain a high rating for Criterion 6. Better responses limited their discussion to just one feature and how it was impacted by changes to the structures over time.

Assessing the evidence used to support points is not part of the assessed criteria for this section so even though it formed part of the topic candidates were not penalised if they omitted this element. Very few candidates attempted to comment on the nature of their evidence since the topic already required the inclusion of a considerable amount of content.
SECTION C GENERAL COMMENTS

While Greek and Roman individuals were again the most popular choices for this section a significant number of candidates chose to study Egyptian and Roman leaders. A much smaller number selected Chinese and Assyrian individuals. In general, candidates showed depth of knowledge of their selected society and the ability to shape this knowledge to address the topic.

The stimulus statement this year was challenging but resulted in a pleasing number of thoughtful, well-argued responses. Candidates presented a variety of interpretations of the relationship between violence and power in their chosen civilisation. Candidates were expected to analyse the nature and exercise of power in a civilisation at a particular time and not just describe the career of an individual. Candidates were required to present a thesis and provide arguments and evidence to support their points, which many achieved.

Many strong responses discussed how the use of physical violence was an integral and accepted part of the culture of an ancient society, whether applied against rivals or threatening external forces. Other effective responses opposed the central tenet of the stimulus statement, arguing that in a society such as Egypt or Greece leaders (at particular times) used tradition, convention, the Rule of Law and strong alliances as more potent methods of exercising power. Few responses discussed the more subtle ways that a leader could use coercion to influence a society such as the threat of incurring the gods’ displeasure, strategic marriage alliances or a regency.

Weaker responses did not address the stimulus proposition at all or merely described the life and times of a leader in a prepared essay. The storytelling mode was quite prominent in this section of the exam which disadvantaged candidates. It may be useful for teachers to remind candidates that a key term from the exam topic should appear in each topic sentence at the start of essay paragraphs. If a direct link to the topic is missing from the opening sentence it is likely that the candidate has slipped into re-telling the main events from the individual’s life. When researching an individual’s career candidates should be expected to explore ‘why’ questions and not just ‘what’ questions - to analyse and not just describe.

Concerning sources, too many responses failed to draw upon a range of types of evidence, including architecture, artefacts and artworks rather than just literary sources. It was surprising to note the number of candidates who did not refer to texts / graphics that were written or commissioned by the leader when they were available (Akhenaten, Solon, Julius Caesar, Augustus, Cicero, Cao Cao) as these texts / graphics often showed the leader’s justification of his actions, including the use of force.

Candidates are reminded to take care when ascribing motives and thoughts to a leader in the absence of evidence from the leaders’ own texts. Examples of mind-reading included such statements as: “Cicero thought he needed to quickly despatch his rivals”; “Themistocles believed the Persians would soon return to threaten Greece”; “Hatshepsut aimed to convince her subjects that she was male.” Examining a leader’s actions within a society’s context may enable candidates to infer possible motivations.

ASSYRIA TOPIC 3

The 2019 topic suited this civilisation very well as Assyria’s leaders have traditionally been portrayed as being ruthless in their use of violence to cement their political position and conquer vassal states. Assyria was a militaristic society and its citizens expected their kings to be powerful military leaders who used force to subdue and rule the empire. Ashurbanipal’s extant letters and inscriptions portray his state-sanctioned use of physical violence to sack Susa in 647BC and punish its people through the use of extremely violent imagery.
Criterion 7 Assess the impact of human agency on an ancient society

Three candidates selected Assyrian leaders. They all successfully described the system of hereditary monarchy which dominated the period of Assyria's empire but for higher ratings needed to also show the complexity of power sharing that enabled the huge empire to function. Concerning the scope of their power, Assyrian kings may have been sole rulers who did not have to answer to a council, but they still depended upon their senior bureaucrats for advice and to ensure their orders were carried out. Few candidates recognised the significance of the code of law as a shaping force in the society or that a highly centralised bureaucracy was essential to exercise authority in the king's name to keep peace within Assyria and its border lands. Some of these bureaucrats and governors acquired considerable power such as Sargon II who was probably a member of an influential bureaucratic family rather than a royal heir. Candidates who selected Sargon II needed to show that he ruled through violence and died violently at his enemies' hands. His legacy was to be virtually forgotten by his own son and his people for reasons which are still unclear to historians.

Candidates needed to include a key problem that faced all the kings; the instability that often ensued when a leader died and his sons engaged in vicious civil wars. For example, Ashurbanipal had to fight his brother to gain the throne, despite being named as his father's successor. This instability could also influence a leader's lasting impact upon his society. While Ashurbanipal is renowned for shaping his society's cultural development through his promotion of literature, the establishment of a great library and an extensive building program his legacy was tarnished. The empire broke apart after his death as his heir and younger son waged civil war to gain the throne.

While secondary sources were often used effectively in their responses candidates are advised to make more use of the kings' own writings, inscriptions and friezes on their temple and palace walls. These primary sources may function as political propaganda but they still contain significant information about each king's goals, achievements and exercise of power and their points are often supported by other primary sources.

CHINA TOPIC I

All the candidates who selected this civilisation presented an essay that was logical, accurate and structured. It was pleasing to see that Chinese names were mainly spelled correctly. Most candidates managed to write three or more pages which enabled them to adequately address all elements of the topic.

Criterion 5 Describe and assess differing historical interpretations on issues affecting the ancient world

The topic lent itself to this civilisation as the history of this era generally written in terms of China progressing toward becoming a single, unified country as each dynasty built upon the achievements of its predecessor. Most candidates discussed the differing representations of their chosen dynasty by referring to several key primary sources. The better responses analysed the way some of these representations were used for propaganda purposes.

While the first element of the topic was managed well by most candidates, a significant number floundered with regard to the second element which concerned the use of evidence. A few candidates lacked sufficient evidence to support their points or omitted the reasons for their selection of sources and why they were most useful. Analysing the nature, range and reliability of sources is at the core of Section A in the course, and is a required part of this criterion, so candidates are expected to be able to discuss this aspect. Several very capable candidates examined their primary sources in depth, evaluating their reliability, validity and purpose when applied to their chosen dynasty.
CHINA TOPIC 2

Better responses were able to show how structures and practices impacted on the selected feature/features, and how this influence may have changed over time. However, a significant number of less confident candidates only implied the ways in which the structures and practices influenced the features rather than by explicitly identifying them.

The main features selected were once again Art and Architecture and Beliefs and Religious Practices. A small number of students examined Weapons and Warfare and Technology. Political and social structures were the most common structural elements that were discussed.

The use of Chinese place names and terms was good in most instances. However, a few responses were poorly structured and displayed too many grammatical and syntactical errors. Those candidates who were able to structure an analytical response that had a well organised introduction and conclusion and integrated the stimulus into the discussion were well rewarded. Candidates must avoid replicating responses to exam topics from previous years and practise tailoring their response to the set topic. There were candidates who presented a formula - derived essay based on the 2018 exam topic, and as a consequence they were unable to adequately answer the 2019 topic.

Better responses integrated a wide range of primary/secondary sources into their arguments. Weaker ones lacked the academic rigour needed to adequately satisfy the requirements of Criterion 4.

Poorer responses were unable to integrate the stimulus statement into their response and where they did, it was only a passing reference in the introduction. Similarly, their arguments lacked depth and mainly discussed the features and practices in general terms without observing the link between them. Better responses were able to show the impact of changes over time to the structures and practices and how these were reflected in the features. For example, as the state of Qin began to assert political ascendency at the end of the Warring States period in response to the Legalist reforms of Shang Yang, changes in both weapons and strategies of war emerged, mainly as a result of the aggressive policies of Ying Zheng. Under his leadership the standardisation of these processes occurred and were continued and elaborated on by the Western Han. Similarly, the shifting political and cultural practices between the Qin and Han periods could be observed in the ideological transition from Legalism to the morphed Legalist/Confucianist belief system of Emperor Wu Di.

Better candidates were also able to examine the changing nature of how ancestor worship and religious practices manifested themselves over this period as a result of social and cultural change.

CHINA TOPIC 3

There was an even spread of individuals selected in this section this year, with both Zhuge Liang and Cao Cao being equally represented with Liu Bei a close second. Despite this being the last section there were some lengthy, well-structured responses (some up to six pages) and the majority of candidates successfully demonstrated their level of competency against the elements for this criteria.

Better responses questioned the authenticity and reliability of modern portrayals of Zhuge Liang and Cao Cao. Key primary sources and evidence included poetry, art work and references to Cao Cao’s mausoleum in Anyang. Secondary sources included (but were not limited to) the Sangouzhi, Romance of the Three Kingdoms and various works of Rafe de Crespigny. Weaker responses generally accepted the widely viewed portrayals as seen in the Romance, particularly in relation to Liu Bei.
Criterion 7 Assess the impact of human agency on an ancient society
China’s history during the period of study was characterised by constant warfare between rivals so physical violence was a regular feature of each leader’s rise to power and reign. But China’s history is very complex due to the impact of ideologies, customary law and religious beliefs and practices. The use of violence alone does not account for a leader’s success. Stronger candidates not only analysed and evaluated the validity of the stimulus but also manipulated their discussion in creative ways. Those who discussed Zhuge Liang, for example, were able to articulate the degree of influence he wielded and how this influence manifested itself amongst the competing rivals for the ‘Mandate of Heaven’ during the chaotic end of the Han dynasty. They were also able to analyse the merit of different representations of the period and biases contained in later works, such as Chen Shou’s Records of the Three Kingdoms and Luo Guanzhong’s 14th century novel, Romance of the Three Kingdoms.

Additionally, better responses analysed and accounted for the importance of the political and social drivers that led to the tumultuous end of the Han period, as well as provide accurate and solid chronologies of the individual and key events that enabled leaders’ rise to power and/or prominence. Weaker responses fleetingly introduced the stimulus in the introduction and then proceeded to provide a generalised narrative of the individual’s life with little reference to the political and social context of the time and the nature and scope of power. Moreover, weaker responses provided little discussion of the individual’s acquisition of power and how they used that power. Here, better candidates were able to argue and evaluate competing accounts of the individual’s life and interpret the legacy and social and political ramifications of their actions in an area such as the arts, civic duties and contribution to governmental ministries and associated roles (education and agriculture).

EGYPT TOPIC 1

Generally candidates produced structured responses that showed some depth of knowledge of Egyptian war craft, Ramesses II’s motivations in initiating conflict with the Hittites and the extant sources of evidence. Most candidates successfully used the pharaoh’s own writings as a primary source and also the inscriptions and images on key temples. The best responses analysed the purpose and effect of the Egyptian sources as propaganda intended to glorify the pharaoh and show him as being worthy of the gods’ and his people’s admiration. Successful responses examined the newly translated Hittite sources and modern interpretations of the outcome of the battle as probably being a draw, rather than a triumph for Ramesses II.

Criterion 5 Describe and assess differing historical interpretations on issues affecting the ancient world
The better responses located the event within the larger Egyptian narrative of the people’s expectations that the pharaoh would maintain or increase the empire’s borders, provide for the people and protect trade routes. Since the time of Akhenaten the empire had decreased in size and its influence in Syria, and the Hittites had grown in strength and wealth. Weaker responses often just re-told the main events of the battle with little analysis of its importance to Ramesses II, the Hittites or Egypt as a whole.

Only the strongest candidates considered the challenge of the stimulus statement which was to analyse and evaluate the significance of the event to Egypt’s progress. There were several valid arguments that candidates could posit: the world’s first Peace Treaty ushered in a novel way to manage future conflict between cultures; Ramesses II was successful in keeping the important trade routes open and Egyptian pride seems to have been maintained. In the larger scheme of things, however, most modern scholars agree that the battle was just one of many that the pharaohs engaged in over the millennia and did not appear to lead to lasting progress in the society.
The third part of the topic required candidates to select and assess the most useful sources available for the study of the representations or the battle. There was some excellent discussion of the king’s own writings and the vivid graphic portrayal of him as a victorious military leader in his temples. There was some outstanding discussion of the code used in these graphics to present the warrior pharaoh as an outstanding defender of Egypt and the gods. To do well candidates also needed to consider the Hittite’s representations of the conflict and contrast them to that of the pharaoh which has led modern scholars to believe that the battle most likely ended in a draw.

EGYPT TOPIC 2

The candidates’ struggle with this section of the course continued and was once again reflected in their responses. On the surface the topic seemed to be straightforward but it required continual checking by the Marker to see if the students were writing to purpose — and unfortunately they often weren’t. There was the usual struggle to compose a good discussion between all aspects of this topic.

There were too many essays that were only two pages or less which clearly didn’t allow enough length to satisfactorily address all points of this complex topic.

**Criterion 6 Describe the nature and characteristics of an ancient society**
Candidates needed to feel confident about disagreeing with aspects of the topic, particularly the instruction to discuss changes to the structures over time. Often the study of Egypt is focused on investigating why many key structures and practices changed so little over the centuries due to the importance of tradition and rituals to preserve ‘ma’at.’

Several very good responses offered valid engagement with the topic.

Weaker candidates offered a disparate coverage of everything they knew with no apparent capacity to link the core structures and practices with a feature of the society.

EGYPT TOPIC 3

A number of responses were from candidates who had studied other civilisations – and this did not disadvantage them if they had read widely about their selected leader, their immediate predecessors and their successors. To the credit of the candidates who chose to work out of their main civilisation of study, some presented well-argued essays which used focused and clear evidence to support their arguments.

This was a very good topic which prompted a number of very well answered responses. The introduction required the use of the key topic words to indicate the writer’s stance – this was done too rarely. Too many responses retold the leader’s life story rather than addressing the topic specifically. Many essays required a tighter structure which did not repeat material or mix up the life sequence. There was also a lot of informal language and slang used in responses which was not appropriate for a formal written examination paper, and detracted from otherwise good passages of analysis. There was also a lot of confusion with tense as past and present tense being used within the same essay.

**Criterion 7 Assess the impact of human agency on an ancient society**
Hatshepsut and Akhenaten continued to be the most popular Egyptian leaders, perhaps because candidates are intrigued by the highly unusual careers of these two individuals in a civilisation based upon conformity to tradition and convention. Of course, to fully appreciate the unique features of these leaders’ reigns candidates need to have a solid understanding of the usual pattern of a pharaoh’s succession, responsibilities, actions and impact.
The question appeared large but actually presented students with an opportunity to use what they knew about pharaonic leadership and turn it into an argument about the use of violence and coercion, or the employment of other means used by pharaohs to influence their society. Several responses did this very well by presenting a clear thesis that violence was not primarily used in the pursuit of the leader’s agenda. Some responses seamlessly incorporated well-chosen primary and secondary evidence in support of their argument. It was good to see some students used well-chosen quotes even though it is not a compulsory aspect of the examination process.

The best papers had a clearly articulated introduction which clearly established a thesis and then constructed an argument which supported that stance. The use of evidence was clearly and usually seamlessly incorporated into the essay to sustain and continue the argument. The evidence used was from both primary and secondary sources and all aspects of the topic were covered.

GREECE TOPIC 1

The question required students to do three things: consider to what extent Delphi contributed to the progress of Ancient Greek civilisation; identify the key primary and secondary sources and assess their usefulness.

Criterion 5 Describe and assess differing historical interpretations on issues affecting the ancient world
In addressing the first part of the stimulus statement, some candidates identified Delphi as a major religious site instrumental in the progress of Ancient Greek religion—this was an acceptable, albeit rather narrow, interpretation. Others highlighted the use of the oracle as a means of ratifying political decision making which was important in progressing democracy. Some of these answers offered Themistocles’ second appeal to the oracle and the establishing of the Athenian fleet as an example. This was a successful approach, as was the choice by only a couple of students to disagree with the statement and suggest that the site ‘reflected’ rather than ‘progressed’ the civilisation.

Only the most successful answers covered all three parts of the topic. A number of candidates did not ‘identify the key sources’ and even fewer considered the usefulness or reliability of the sources. The best answers identified archaeological evidence as ‘key’ alongside the main written primary sources in Herodotus and Plutarch. A large number successfully considered the classical source evidence for the inspiration of the Pythia and the two key revisions of that evidence in the French excavations and the interdisciplinary study of Hale, de Boer, Chanton and Spiller. In this way they considered the ‘usefulness’ of the three sets of evidence.

GREECE TOPIC 2

Candidates should remember that Criterion 4 is marked in all three questions and the failure to offer primary sources of evidence in this section was one of the weakest areas, whereas the use of topic specific terminology was generally good.

Criterion 6 Describe the nature and characteristics of an ancient society
This question required candidates to consider change over time as demonstrated in the impact the structures and practices of the society had on at least one feature. This was a reversal of last year’s topic that required candidates to outline the structures and practices and consider the evidence for them offered by the feature. Some candidates were unable to adapt their information to suit that change. The vast majority of answers examined Warfare and Weaponry or Women and the Family as their feature.
A few discussed Art, Architecture and Drama. Some candidates attempted to include three or more features which inevitably meant they were unable to offer much analysis of ‘change over time.’ Most responses examined Athens or Athens and Sparta.

The requirement to consider ‘change over time’ seemed to work well for the candidates who had chosen Warfare and Weaponry as they were able to consider the relationship between political and social developments and changes in the way warfare was conducted such as the role of the oarsmen/thetes in the second Persian invasion leading to the further radicalisation of democracy in Athens. A number of the candidates who had chosen Women and the Family successfully argued that there was not a lot of ‘change’ in the roles and status of women in Ancient Greece. Others offered the reforms of Solon and Pericles’ citizenship law as possibly bringing about a change in status and legal rights. Architecture answers linked the construction of buildings in the Agora to the development of Athenian democracy.

GREECE TOPIC 3

This section overall satisfied Criterion 3 very well with the vast majority of candidates using sound essay structure and generally correct syntax, punctuation and spelling. Use of specific terminology was also generally good, although the spelling of Greek words and names was erratic.

Criterion 4 was probably the worst handled in this section. In Section A where students were expecting to discuss the historiographical issues, there was considerably better use of primary source material. A number of responses tended to refer to secondary sources which were merely paraphrasing the primary sources—clearly it is preferable if the candidate uses the relevant primary in the first instance. It is also not particularly useful to offer a point of generally accepted knowledge with the author of a secondary source’s name in brackets afterwards eg “Citizenship was restricted to adult (18 years of age) males” (Bradley, 2001). Secondary sources are useful because they comment on the evidence, offer an interpretation or speculation about the gaps in the evidence or offer a judgement on the topic in question.

Criterion 7 Assess the impact of human agency on an ancient society

The most popular leader choices were: Themistocles, Peisistratus, Solon, Cleomenes and Thucydides.

Candidates needed to address all three parts of the topic: whether the individual used violence and coercion to shape their society, the nature and scope of their power and their impact on their society. The stimulus statement was generally addressed, although many did not shape their introductions around it which hampered their line of argument, so that it became an ‘add-on’ at the end of the essay. Teachers should remind students that they are expected to study a stimulus statement in a topic and make a judgement about how valid it is with regard to their selected leader, civilisation or period of history. While many candidates argued that Peisistratus and Cleomenes I made use of violence and coercion, it was necessary to disagree with the thesis with regard to other leaders such as Solon. Students often dealt with Themistocles by suggesting that, as a strategos, he used violence by necessity and offered his “persuasion” of the ecclesia regarding the ‘wooden wall’ as an example of coercion.

Only the best answers considered the nature of the individual’s power by defining their position as archon, strategos, king, tyrant etc. and explaining how the position operated within the society and the checks and balances the constitution provided on their use of violence or coercion. The strongest part of the essays was on the individual’s impact on their society.
ROME TOPIC 1

The concept of ‘progress’ in relation to the Roman Games was problematic for candidates as it is such a value-laden term, with many modern scholars being repelled by the violence, cruelty and barbarity of the gladiatorial games, in particular. Perhaps rather than progressing the society it could instead be argued that the Games reflected developments and changes in Roman thought and practices over time.

Some strong candidates were able to present very clear and well organised essays in response to the topic. The more able candidates were able to effectively consistently respond to, and integrate cohesively, the stimulus statement throughout their essay. They defined key terms in their introduction and respond to key words from the topic and also from the stimulus statement. These candidates also were skilful in returning to the stimulus statement both within their essay body and also in their concluding comment. Use of specific terms and concepts was well done in many instances. Too many candidates appear to have stumbled over the stimulus statement or ignored it completely.

Candidates are still having problems with Criterion 4. Brief random quotes which have no real impact on an argument appear too frequently. Considering the power even a simple quote such as ‘bread and circuses’ can bring to an argument this is surprising. Too many candidates used Juvenal but didn’t really understand or explain the context of the phrase panem et circenses. This does seem to illustrate the difficulty many students have in assessing the usefulness of sources.

**Criterion 5 Describe and assess differing historical interpretations on issues affecting the ancient world**

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they could identify differing historical interpretations of the significance of the games. More able candidates did this most effectively by establishing a sound historical context. Few candidates were able to effectively convey their awareness of the great span of history represented here. Gladiator sport was the sole focus of too many responses with many not even mentioning ludi circenses or ludi scaenici. A wider focus on how and why the games were entrenched in the political and social context would have brought greater meaning to their discussion.

Less successful candidates failed to respond at all to the stimulus material. Longer essays (3-4 pages), were often more successful in managing to discuss the historical context whilst presenting clear and logical analysis. The problem may have been to do with not being able to equate the notion of progress with the Roman Games phenomenon. It was the rare candidate who saw an opportunity to discuss the criticism from the Christian writers and equate this to any rejection of the base nature of the violence at the heart of Roman society, or for that matter to reject the notion of progress completely.

The underlying question concerning the origins of the games was not always well understood. Many candidates asserted Etruscan origins without mentioning or even rebutting a Campanian alternative theory. There were quite a few candidates who seemed to think it was more important to examine the different historical interpretations of the police verso or whether there were actually female gladiators. Few students explored the idea that images of carnage and slaughter may have been exaggerated and that loss of life may have been controlled to an extent through the matching of different fighting styles due to economic realities.

ROME TOPIC 2

Students seemed to respond more effectively to the manner in which the topic for this section was presented this year. The shift to ‘the impact of the core elements structure and practices’ on the feature made more sense and seemed more logical to candidates. Unfortunately the premise of the topic “to what extent…” was largely ignored. Many candidates seemed to think that the topic of the exam was just
discussion of a single feature in detail, and made no attempt to refer to the structural elements and practices. Again this year, the multifaceted nature of this topic proved quite complex for many candidates.

Many candidates incorrectly used a title at the start of their response as though it were a report, rather than an essay e.g. calling the essay ‘Women and Family’ or ‘Roman Religion.’ The introduction is the place where candidates should outline their choice of structures and a feature to be analysed.

Many essays in this section failed to refer to adequate primary or secondary sources. A glaring omission from many essays was secondary sources as many useful secondary sources exist on this topic, and should be readily available to candidates. For example, when discussing the feature of Art and Architecture the architecture itself is useful as a primary sources but there are many sources that also provide information related to the functions and characteristics of Roman architecture. Many candidates were unable to name specific examples of architecture and instead relied solely on generalised comments about temples and aqueducts. Reference to the works of Vitruvius, the famous first century architect, was a notable omission. Writing from Seneca, Strabo, Martial, and Pliny are all part of the historical record. Also valid and valuable are translations of graffiti and epigraphy from Pompeii and Herculaneum. Candidates who used sources consistently throughout their essay were well rewarded.

Women and Family and Beliefs, Rituals and Funerary Practices formed the majority of responses to this section. There were a few excellent responses which included a wide range of quality secondary source material, particularly pertaining to Women and Family (Sarah Pomeroy, Eva Cantarella and Mary Lefkowitz) but as a rule candidates struggled to synthesise evidence in their discussion. The mere listing of a range of names of ancient writers in an introduction still occurs too frequently.

**Criterion 6: Describe the nature and characteristics of an ancient civilisation**

Again, the stimulus seemed to trouble many candidates with some reaching to events outside the period identified in the course document. Candidates in many instances failed to consistently identify the relevant core elements of political, social, economic or cultural structures and practices. To respond adequately to this question candidates should have been able to indicate that they understood the significance of political, social, economic and cultural structure and practices of ancient Rome.

There were also a few candidates who had selected features which seemed to produce difficulties. For example, there were several candidates who tried to respond to the ‘changed over time’ requirement when discussing the Colosseum, the Temple of Venus at Pompeii or even the Temple of Mars Ultor in Rome. It was perhaps more a distraction which they were not expecting but it seemed to diminish the primacy of the feature they had studied. They therefore failed to demonstrate their understanding of the feature.

If the feature of Women and Families was selected the topic required candidates to explain how women could participate in their society, to demonstrate awareness of their social and legal rights and show how status related to participation in the society. Candidates who were able to identify that many Roman women had citizenship and also possessed powers over their property, their freedom and wellbeing contingent on their relationships with husbands and fathers and their social class, were rewarded. Candidates often failed to identify that women’s position in society frequently depended on prevailing attitudes to marriage, and also changed over time. Candidates who discussed this early in their essay and then developed their argument by providing specific examples supported by sources and evidence were rewarded for their analysis and knowledge. Few candidates, apart from one notable exception, discussed the education of Roman women. Evidence suggests that many elite Roman parents recognised the value of education for their sons and daughters. Many candidates also failed to mention the direct and indirect religious roles available to women.
Most candidates were able to show that attempts to obtain a full picture of women in Roman society, are difficult because too little that women themselves wrote has survived. However, weaker candidates showed only superficial understanding of the importance of letters, inscriptions, sculpture, women’s toiletries, jewellery and clothing styles, tomb inscriptions, remnants of poetry and graffiti as valid forms of evidence. Juvenal devotes a satire of over 600 lines to what he felt was wrong with women of his day. Pliny the Younger, Suetonius, Cicero and Ovid are also useful literary sources. There was often only a superficial mention of the prominence of the status of women of the elite orders and the lot of the less powerful women was ignored, including slave women under Roman law.

Some candidates who attempted the feature of Architecture seemed to lack awareness of the content of the course document where explicit reference is made to using the evidence from Pompeii and Herculaneum relating to historical and geographic context.

**ROME TOPIC 3**

This topic provided the greatest opportunity to present well prepared responses and in general essays were reasonably well structured and argued. A danger was that candidates would rely upon a prepared essay and fail to adapt their content to address the stimulus statement. Successful candidates were able to write at length, with confidence, and were able to also provide an analysis of the stimulus material.

The lack of paragraphs in too many responses is an on-going concern. This is a facet of many candidates’ writing which needs attention. Paragraphs are used for a reason and candidates who present excessively long paragraphs, or no paragraphs at all, fail to understand the impact this has on the quality of their communication.

Students should also be able to demonstrate an awareness of sources of evidence for their selected individual. Without the backing provided by a range of scholarly sources the essays in this section were not convincing and some responses on Augustus, in particular, were disappointing.

**Criterion 7: Assess the impact of human agency on an ancient society**

This section provides the greatest opportunity for candidates to engage with ancient history and there seemed to be a greater level of confidence in responses. Of course all too frequently responses turned into life stories rather than analysis of the nature of power and authority in ancient Rome. Unfortunately, most candidates paid little attention to the importance of family background and status, education, wealth and patronage in each leader’s rise to power. Individuals tended to be the product of successful political careers, the cursus honorum. Marriage for career advancement was acknowledged. The impact on their society was explained well.

Most responses to this section focused on Julius Caesar or Augustus and, to a lesser extent, Cicero or Livia. Generally responses were solid with better than average results. Violence and coercion are almost always embedded in the nature of leadership of Rome so candidates had to consider the nature and effect of this coercion or violence. Unfortunately, most candidates did not extend their analysis or evaluation and merely nodded at the wielding of an individual’s power. Candidates who selected Caesar had a far greater range of primary and secondary sources to play with and this was reflected in the quality of the responses. The best students were able to bring into their discussion the evidence from Caesar’s writings and its role in his success. Candidates found Livia more difficult to pin down. There was scant acknowledgement of the problematic nature of the portrayal of Livia in Tacitus. Cicero also presented a few difficulties. Such a complex character presents a range of challenges. Most students used the Catiline Conspiracy constructively to respond to the stimulus.