

2021 ASSESSMENT REPORT

ANH315117 - Ancient History

Introduction

In 2021, 205 students were enrolled in Ancient History. A significant number of students did not sit the exam again this year. In 2021, the civilisations studied included Greece, Rome and Egypt, with Greece remaining the most popular choice. Around 10% of students opted to study a second civilisation on Section C this year, a smaller number compared to previous years.

The external assessment specifications were updated in February 2021 and there were two significant changes to Section B. This year, students could choose which Structure and which Feature they would write on, allowing more choice and more opportunity for preparation. Element two of Criterion 6 was also removed from external assessment, meaning that students no longer had to discuss the impact of structures and practices on features of the civilisation.

The exam questions gave students ample opportunity to show their knowledge and skills, sections A and C being very similar to the 2020 exam questions. Students were required to read the question carefully and respond to all parts of the question, including the stimulus statement. The question for Section A required students to analyse the relationship between the evidence and our understanding of the ancient past. They had to demonstrate their content knowledge of the sites and events listed, as well as demonstrating their understanding of the nature of the available evidence. Overall, students performed quite well on this section of the exam.

The question for Section B asked students to describe a Core Element, and then discuss how beliefs and values are reflected in one Key Feature. Given that students were able to choose which Structure and which Feature to discuss this year, they were able to carefully prepare their responses to this question.

In Section C, the question asked students to analyse the context, motivations and impact of a specific historical individual. All three exam questions reminded students to utilise primary and secondary source information to support their arguments, but a significant number of students failed to do so in Sections B and C. Teachers should ensure that students understand that they must utilise primary and secondary sources in all of their exam responses, as supporting arguments with evidence is a key historical skill.

As in previous years, it was disappointing to see the number of pre-prepared responses in 2021. Examiners become aware of this preparation when students do not refer to the terms or stimulus from the question in the introduction of their essay. These responses often require the marker to scour the response for relevance to the question, as they provide a general or unclear discussion of the topic. It is firmly recommended that teachers provide students with a wide variety of essay questions throughout the year, including revision questions prior to the exam, in order to allow students to explore and adapt their knowledge to the question at hand.

Without this specificity and deep analysis in response to the question, students cannot achieve higher than a C rating on the content criteria. The strongest responses utilised the terms and concepts from the question consistently throughout, especially in the introduction, topic sentences, linking sentences and conclusion of the essay. Students are encouraged to rehearse basic essay structure throughout the course of the year in preparation for the exam.

Criterion 3 – General Comments

For each section of the exam, students are required to demonstrate their capacity to communicate historical interpretation and analysis in a logical, coherent and direct way. This required students to respond to the question using an essay structure for all three sections of the exam in 2021. Clarity of communication is imperative if a marker is to fully appreciate the quality of discussion and the relevance of evidence used to support the student's argument. The more successful responses were broken into planned and organised paragraphs which were all connected to and advanced an argument, beginning with a topic sentence which referred to the language of the essay question and ending with a linking sentence. In weaker responses, the purpose of each paragraph was unclear, and information appeared to be disorganised. These responses also used colloquial language or a conversational tone. Students are reminded of the importance of planning their response prior to writing it out, as this will not only ensure that there is an argument with supporting points, but that communication of those points is organised and consistently linked to the question.

Given that the exam requires essay responses for all three sections, students are reminded to keep their language and tone formal. Suggestions include writing in third person, consistently using past tense to describe events and avoiding statements which suggest personal opinion. For instance, students are encouraged to use phrasing such as "evidence suggests" rather than "I believe". Students are also reminded to use precise language rather than general or informal language. For instance, instead of describing "a man named Homer", it is better to identify that Homer was a poet. Students are reminded to avoid exaggeration or hyperbole, such as "women had no rights". This statement implies a value judgment and is factually incorrect. Instead, students might write "The rights and freedoms of women in ancient Greece were dependent upon their social class", and then go on to detail what those rights and freedoms were. Better responses often correctly incorporated Greek, Latin or Egyptian terms and concepts relevant to the selected civilisation. These terms should be italicised or underlined to distinguish them from other more commonly used words. Students are also reminded to write in pen rather than pencil.

Criterion 4 – General Comments

Discussion and evaluation of available evidence is one of the most important aspects of the study of Ancient History. For Criterion 4, markers are looking for the use of historical sources, as well as specific historical details pertaining to the question. The better responses made a clear argument which was backed up by primary and secondary source evidence and included highly accurate details such as dates and specific events. While most students demonstrated a clear understanding of ancient and modern texts and archaeological sources, several students did not refer to any specific source material in their responses. All 2021 exam questions reminded s to include source material, and it was unfortunate that some responses provided quite a lot of historical detail but completely omitted sources. For instance, it is not enough to say that Agrippina the Younger is an example of a Roman woman who managed to have a role in politics.

This is an example, but it is not evidence. The student needs to add the source of this information: an ancient Roman writer such as Suetonius or Tacitus, an image on a coin, a work of art, or a modern historian making this point. Quality historical discussion and analysis must be based upon evidence.

The highest quality responses demonstrated critical selection of source material, they synthesised those sources into their argument and evaluated their relevance by analysing any potential biases of the author. These responses were accurate and detailed. Many s included quotations from both primary and secondary sources, which were best used when directly relevant to the argument at hand. Students should note, however, that succinct paraphrasing of an author's ideas are just as effective in supporting an argument. Some better responses did this well.

Weaker responses reflected a list of sources that had been memorised in class and were not synthesised into an argument or directly relevant to the essay question. It is firmly recommended that while students must commit source material to memory, it is integrated into an essay response only where relevant. This will allow the student to demonstrate clarity and purpose in their writing. In addition to providing the more commonly used sources, the better responses also included relevant source material from less prominent authors, demonstrating a breadth of research and understanding.

When including modern textual source of evidence, students must provide the author's name and date of publication in brackets. Quality secondary sources, such as historians and archaeologists, are preferable to websites or online museums. For ancient written sources, the author's name and text title is required. In addition, specificity is important. Weaker responses included general statements such as "according to legend" or "ancient historians wrote about", rather than referring to a specific source. Students are encouraged to utilise primary sources as evidence to support an argument, and secondary sources as a way of analysing and interpreting that evidence. It is important to include both primary and secondary sources, rather than one or the other. The discussion, analysis and evaluation of these sources should be integrated throughout the body of the essay rather than including them in only one paragraph which analyses the source material. In order to achieve a C rating, students are required to include at least one primary and/or secondary source in their response. To achieve an A rating, students are advised to include reference to more than four highly relevant and significant sources to support their argument.

- EGYPT -

Question 1

Criterion 4

Generally, the use of evidence, including archaeological and written sources, was quite strong for this section of the exam. Better responses not only described the conclusions drawn by historians such as Breasted and Wilson, but also connected those views with historical evidence. Weaker ones simply outlined a couple of possible interpretations of the outcome of the Battle of Kadesh and the meaning and purpose of the records, without properly analysing how those interpretations are derived from the surviving evidence. Students seemed to have a solid grasp of the events of the battles and of the nature of the surviving evidence. In future, students are encouraged to mention specific sites (e.g., the Ramesseum) and perhaps to choose less well known written primary sources rather than reciting the same ones every time.

Criterion 5

Generally, students addressed the question quite well, with a number providing detailed analytical responses. The main terms of the question – ‘reliable’, ‘contested’ and ‘valid’ – were generally referred to well and essay structure was quite strong in this section. Students are reminded to explicitly address all relevant terms included in the question, in this case the terms ‘origin’, ‘purpose’ and ‘context’. Students are also reminded to be cautious of the imposition of modern concepts like ‘propaganda’ onto the historical record. Weaker responses in this section tended to describe the battles rather than responding directly to the question or analysing the nature of the evidence.

Question 2

Criterion 4

Evidence for this section of the exam was not as strong as for Section A or C. In the weaker responses, only secondary source evidence was provided rather than providing primary source evidence to demonstrate the beliefs and values of the ancient Egyptians. Often evidence used in this section was quite general, rather than using specific evidence that responded directly to the essay question. Better responses were able to synthesise their discussion of the Core Elements and the Features, integrating quality primary sources to support their arguments.

Criterion 6

Responses to this section of the exam were generally quite detailed. For the most part, students made it clear which Core Element they were writing about. Most students chose to write on the Feature of women and family, although the focus in these responses was primarily on women, with the aspect of family being overlooked in most papers. A small number of students chose to write about two Features (e.g., women and beliefs, rituals and funerary practices). Those students who discussed the beliefs and values of ancient Egyptians regarding women invariably projected their own moral judgements onto the past, rather than discussing the subject matter in a dispassionate manner. Students are reminded to write objectively and to try to avoid projecting modern biases and anachronisms onto the source material.

Question 3

Criterion 4

Students generally responded well to this section, providing a number of primary sources for their chosen individual. Hatshepsut and Akhenaten were the most popular figures chosen in this section. Better responses analysed depictions of the individuals, utilising this evidence to postulate on motivations of those individuals.

Criterion 7

Stronger responses provided relevant biographical knowledge without getting lost in it. They used this detail to discuss the effect of context on their chosen individual. They utilised primary sources, such as carvings or architectural programs, to analyse possible motivations of the individual before providing detail about the ways in which that person shaped Egypt. Some weaker responses did not postulate on motivations, and students are reminded to answer all parts of the question in their responses.

Question 1 – Delphi

The exam question for this section required students to explore the reliability, contestability and validity of our understanding of the ancient past. This led most students to explore the importance of the site of Delphi and to compare and contrast the historical arguments surrounding the site, presented in relation to the primary source material available. It is recommended that teachers explore the evidence available surrounding the site, with a particular emphasis on the origin, purpose and context of those sources, and how that evidence impacts our understanding of the site and of Greek culture. Teachers are encouraged to avoid teaching the discovery of the site as a narrative of events, as this lends itself to formulaic essays for this section of the exam.

The exam question required students to incorporate a number of terms into their response. Successful students explicitly included all terms in their response. While most students analysed how 'reliable, contested and/or valid', many did not explicitly address the 'origin, purpose and context' of the evidence. Students are encouraged to explicitly address every term in the question consistently, ensuring that the terms are acknowledged in the introduction of their essay as well as in each of the body paragraphs. The best responses evaluated the arguments of primary and secondary authors, proposing their own arguments based upon a synthesis of the evidence.

Criterion 4

Students writing about Delphi generally provided quite a bit of detail around source material. Secondary sources of evidence most commonly included the excavations by the French School and de Boer. It would be good to see students explore some less commonly used sources rather than consistently naming the same secondary sources each time. Some students focussed on one primary source, such as Herodotus or Plutarch, including listing how many times they mentioned the site of Delphi in their texts. The focus on this kind of information from only one source limited their capacity to explore the concepts of validity and contestability. Exploring a variety of sources, including both archaeological and textual sources, is recommended where possible.

Criterion 5

Better responses clearly understood the key concept of Section A, which is to evaluate the changing modern interpretations based upon a detailed analysis of primary source material. Students who achieved strong results on Criterion 5 were able to place the evidence at the forefront of their analysis and use it as the basis for our understanding of the site of Delphi and Greek society more broadly.

Weaker responses focussed on a description of Delphi and the importance of the site without referring to any sources of evidence to support these claims. Students are reminded that storytelling should be avoided as it limits the time and space to analyse and evaluate the evidence. In response to the 2021 question, narratives of the excavation of the site are only relevant when linked to issues of reliability, contestability or validity of evidence. There were some pre-prepared responses revolving around the concept of 'geographical context' which did not reflect the relevant concepts included in the question. Students are reminded to respond to the question in front of them rather than writing a pre-prepared essay.

Question 1 – The Destruction of Troy

There were quite a few students who discussed the destruction of Troy in Section A this year. It was pleasing to see more variety in responses this year, and teachers are encouraged to continue to focus on an analysis of the evidence found at the site, rather than focussing on the chronological excavation of the site which leads to narrative rather than analysis.

Criterion 4

Most responses gave some details on the chronological discovery of the site, beginning with Schliemann and detailing archaeologists who worked on the site through to Korfmann. Students are encouraged to not only mention the names of archaeologists, but to provide details of publications to count these references as secondary sources. They are also encouraged to avoid detailing a general narrative, and instead should discuss the evidence uncovered and how that specific evidence impacts upon our understanding of how and why Troy was destroyed. This said, many responses provided highly accurate primary source material in order to analyse the ways in which Troy may have been destroyed. They interpreted and evaluated theories given by secondary sources, and the best responses promoted their own theories based upon the evidence presented.

Criterion 5

The strongest responses to this section of the exam explicitly addressed all the terminology in the question, including the reliability, contestability and validity of the evidence. These responses also explicitly identified the origin, purpose and context of the evidence rather than implicitly discussing it. Highly successful students evaluated the theories put forward by scholars on how and why Troy may have been destroyed by exploring the available evidence in detail. The most successful students proposed their own theories after exploring the evidence and evaluating the theories of scholars and archaeologists.

Weaker responses attempted to discuss either geographical contexts or change over time where the question did not ask for it. Students are reminded of the importance of responding to the question in front of them rather than rehearsing preprepared essays which do not address the question. Ensuring that essays are planned out prior to the commencement of writing is integral to a well formulated response. It is also imperative to plan and utilise a clear essay structure to assist in responding to all parts of the essay question. For instance, students should address all relevant terms in the introduction, provide a topic sentence and a linking sentence for each paragraph which address the question and relevant terminology, and which help to keep the student's argument on track.

Question 2

The exam question for this section required students to describe one Core Element, and then to explore the extent to which one Feature reflected the beliefs and values of ancient Greece. By nature, this question asked students to engage in lower order discussion, making it a little more challenging for them to analyse and evaluate as well as to answer the exam question thoroughly. The best responses recognised that they must do more than simply 'describe', providing this level of analysis and evaluation in addition to providing a detailed description of the Core Element and the Key Feature. It is safe to assume that in order to achieve an A rating, analysis and evaluation are always required for a higher rating, regardless of whether this language is used in the essay question or not.

Criterion 4

For Section B of the exam, many students neglected to include source material, meaning that they were not successful on Criterion 4 for this section. Those who did provide source material successfully focussed on the primary sources relevant to the key feature that they were discussing, making those sources relevant to beliefs and values represented in the feature. Students are reminded to ensure that they know and understand the primary source evidence for this section of the course, and how it contributes to our understanding of ancient Greece between 600 and 400 BCE. Strong responses also looked at the nature of the evidence and how each type of evidence (i.e., myth, historical literature, physical remains, plays, etc.) has value and limitations. For example, plays with female characters were often used for the purpose of caricature or slander.

Criterion 6

Better responses to this question were detailed, objective and explicit, offering descriptions of one or more Core Elements and providing reasons as to why evidence had been included rather than making the markers guess. These students then tackled the evidence of the beliefs and values found in a Key Feature. These responses also included information only when relevant to either a discussion of the Core Element, Feature or of beliefs and values. Better responses that discussed the feature of women and family were able to include the variety of roles, expectations and experiences of women in different contexts (*poleis, wealth, age, citizenship*). Strong responses that analysed weapons and warfare were able to give explicit examples of the values associated with military victory such as *arete* and *aristeia*. Students were then able to point to primary source evidence that demonstrated these values and wrote about the honour and prestige afforded those who fought and won (e.g., *Marathonomachoi* or the rewards offered to *helots* for fighting). Those that described art and architecture as a key feature were often incredibly detailed in their description of buildings - their form, function and purpose - and most were able to combine this with explicit links to beliefs and values.

Weaker responses to this section lacked a clear separation between Core Element, Key Feature and the beliefs and values being described. It is important that students explicitly identify which Core Element, which Key Feature and which belief or value they are discussing, using the aforementioned language. These weaker responses also made generalisations rather than providing specific details. For instance, suggesting that “women could not apply for or hold jobs”, rather than detailing which echelon of society (i.e., citizen wives) they were referring to regarding jobs. As highlighted in previous examiner’s reports, there is little relevance in comparing women in ancient Greece to women in the 21st century. The course framework does not encourage it, and it resulted in some students arguing that women were “worse off” in ancient society than they are today or that women “were not equal to men”. Some of the details that support these arguments may have been relevant to the analysis of values and beliefs written in the question, however, students who approach ancient Greek history with a feminist lens often neglect to place this discussion in the context of ancient society. Weaker responses also seemed to have prepared for a question on historical context or change over time, which meant that they were not able to adequately address the concept of beliefs and values for their chosen feature.

When teaching about the key feature of women and family, teachers are encouraged to focus on the differences between distinct groups of women rather than to present a comparative study between the sexes. How society valued women and what they believed about women depended very much on the role and expectations of women in different socio-economic and *polis*-specific contexts, and learners would benefit from this conceptual approach. Students are also encouraged to tackle any historical events in chronological order where possible.

Question 3

The question for this section of the exam asked students to explore context, motivations and impact of a significant individual. Many students appeared to overemphasise the “rise to power”, “nature of power” or “nature of evidence” concerning their individual and found it difficult to adapt to this question. Given that one third of the course is dedicated to investigating one individual, it was disappointing to see some glaring errors in historical details, such as attributing victory in the Peloponnesian War to Themistocles. Students are encouraged to revise the details of their individual carefully prior to the exam in order to ensure that they are accurate.

Criterion 4

Many students compared written sources of information about the individual, cross referencing Herodotus, Plutarch or Aristotle, but did not provide an explanation for what these sources suggested about context, motivation or impact. For this section of the course, teachers are encouraged to explore the elements of the rubric for Criterion 7 and ensure that their students have access to ancient source material that supports an analysis of these elements, such as ways that their socio-historical context may have influenced them, or possible motivations of the individual. This way, students will be able to draw upon highly relevant sources when answering future questions for this section of the exam.

Criterion 7

Better responses were able to directly and explicitly link how the several aspects of the social and historical context of society shaped an individual, both directly and indirectly. These responses were able to identify and evaluate several potential and clearly identifiable motives, using ancient sources as evidence of these motives. They were also able to give several clear examples of how their chosen individual shaped society through their actions or beliefs.

Weaker responses often provided some highly accurate information but did not explain how the context shaped the individual. These responses often neglected to argue for specific motivations or provide specific examples of impact.

Weaker responses attempted to evaluate whether an individual's motives or impact were “good or bad”. Instead, students are encouraged to explore what the impact was on the political, economic, social or cultural life of the civilisation, or to explore the short-, medium- or long-term impact of their actions. Narratives must be avoided for Section C unless they are directly linked to the question. For example, too often students wrote about Themistocles' lack of aristocratic background without arguing that he was fortunate to be a citizen and benefited from his historical context. Also, students did not link this to a potential motive of Themistocles i.e., he may have been driven to prove his worthiness of citizenship. Students are encouraged to emphasise the competitive aspect of Greek culture and discuss how this may have shaped their individual.

Question 1

Section A is designed to teach students about the nature of evidence of the ancient world, and also to introduce them to contestability around interpretations and representations of a particular event or era. Students responding effectively to this question therefore needed to place this aspect of their understanding at the centre of their response. Unfortunately, many students did not utilise an essay structure, including the use of distinct paragraphs. Introductions and conclusions were also consistently weak. It is recommended that teachers focus on explicit instruction around essay structure in response to a question.

Criterion 4

Most students who wrote on Rome for Section A discussed the Roman games. Better responses involved a discussion of the nature of the sources and how it affects reliability, contestability and validity of sources. For example, one might point out Tertullian's temporal distance from the origin of the games, and his Christian perspective as a potentially confounding bias. Students should indicate awareness of a range of important literary accounts in relation to the range of attitudes about the events of the games, the events themselves, geographic and historical context by drawing on literary sources such as: Seneca, Juvenal, Cicero and Tacitus. In addition, they might mention the wealth of archaeological evidence from Pompeii and Herculaneum. Any number of Roman texts are available, but two more authoritative texts are by historians Roger Dunkle and Alison Futrell, both of which would be worthy additions to any college library.

Criterion 5

Stronger responses in this section typically avoided providing too much factual information about the games themselves, such as what types of gladiators there were, or how the Colosseum was designed. It is better to include historical debates about the changing nature of the functions of the games whether political, religious or cultural and the central focus they played in Roman civilisation for such an enduring length of time. Some interesting essays concluded with some discussion on the changing and evolving nature of evidence as new discoveries are made. Stronger responses also examined some of the following issues:

- The location of an archaeological site, such as the Colosseum and whether this is significant
- How complete remains are
- The political or religious beliefs of an ancient writer
- The social class of an ancient writer
- The gender of an ancient writer
- How much material we have by that writer (e.g., full works or isolated scraps)
- The nature of a document (satire, ode, letter, biography, history)
- How long after an event a source was written
- Whether the writer was an eyewitness.

The weaker responses tended to spend time on details that did not address the issues of reliability, validity or contestability. They spent a lot of time describing the purpose of the games, the various things that happened in the arena, and so on, with little or no comment on how we know any of this or why we might be cautious about certain ideas because of the sources they come from.

When these responses mentioned sources of information, it was usually in passing or to simply point out that 'the author said this about the origin of the games', but not with a view toward analysing them. For this reason, these responses did not answer the question particularly well.

Question 2

This question required students to describe one Core Element and analyse the extent to which beliefs and values were reflected in one Key Feature. Many students did not address all aspects of the question this year and future students are reminded to read the questions carefully and plan a response using an essay structure to ensure that all parts of the question are covered in their response.

Criterion 4

The better essays included a variety of sources, primary and secondary, and utilised them for detailed discussion rather than just mentioning the names of these sources. Sources were best used in relation to a discussion of the Core Element, the Key Feature, or beliefs and values. Students are reminded that the skilful inclusion of source material will separate high quality responses from average ones, and to ensure that source material is used consistently and discerningly to further a point of discussion or argument.

Criterion 6

Stronger answers to this section were successful because they simply answered the question. Weaker answers sometimes contained relevant material but left the marker to infer a point, rather than offering clarity of expression. Markers cannot assess a student on what they assume the student knows, only on what they have clearly demonstrated that they know. Many students assumed that the beliefs and values would be self-evident just from describing an element or a feature. Those who wrote about beliefs, rituals and funerary practices seemed to think they were dealing with 'beliefs and values' just by describing religious beliefs and practices. In these cases, responses rarely explicitly stated how and why the historical information they had just described revealed something about values or beliefs.

There were quite a few essays where the Core Element was tangentially referred to, or where markers had to infer what the essay was trying to communicate about the Element, because the focus was almost entirely on the Feature. The course document clearly states that the structures of an ancient society should be the focus of the study of this section of the course. Some capable writers were disadvantaged by choosing to begin the essay by referring briefly to the selected Key Feature as the direction and focus of their essay. This approach limits the student's ability to really show that they can analyse at depth the chosen Element. Students are encouraged to respond equally to all parts of the question and utilise planning and essay structure to ensure that they address all relevant aspects.

Question 3

This question required students to analyse the context, motivations and impact of a specific historical individual on their relevant civilisation. Again, a student's ability to answer the question in its entirety significantly influenced how successful the student was in this section. Teachers are again encouraged to focus on the explicit teaching of essay structure. Students should be provided with ample time throughout the year to respond directly, explicitly and consistently to essay questions, and be provided with feedback to prepare them for the end of year exam.

Criterion 4

A lack of evidence was a problem in this section. A serious short falling of many responses was failure to use primary sources; primary evidence is essential to back up facts about the person's life, motivations and actions, while secondary evidence is ideal for assisting in the interpretation of the primary source evidence and in building a strong argument. There were fewer longer essays this year, meaning that students often did not provide the historical detail required to achieve an A rating in this section. Stronger responses provided primary source material that was directly relevant to the question, and utilised secondary sources skilfully to build an argument about what motivated the individual, and their impact.

Criterion 7

Unfortunately, many students resorted to narrating the life of their chosen individual in this section. The best essays explicitly identified possible motivations and examined where they might have come from. For example, Octavian may have been motivated to avenge Caesar's death. They also drew on modern historians' work to discuss the individual's motives and impact and provided evidence from the person's life to compare to the historians' claims. Weaker responses made grand claims in the beginning which they did not explore in detail; exaggerated the importance or impact of the individual; and showed a limited knowledge of the individual's life. It was also common to see students write a lot about the early phases of the individual's biography (e.g., up to Octavian's triumph over Mark Antony) and then skim over the rest in a rush. Students are encouraged to focus on answering the essay question first and to provide narratives of an individual's rise to power only when it is relevant to the question.