

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2008

GCE

GCE Ancient History (9278)

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General Comments

While there were as always a few candidates who seemed out of their depth, the overall standard was very encouraging with quite a number of very good, full, confident responses to both papers. Some candidates clearly need to address basic issues of exam technique. Proper time planning and discipline would have significantly helped some candidates who simply failed to complete the required number of questions. A few made this far worse by crossing out answers which were often quite substantial and would certainly have earned marks, then not having time to complete the paper. Very few attempted more questions than allowed especially in the case of question 1 on paper 02.

Some candidates wrote out every question in full. This is good if it helps focus the mind on what is properly relevant so long as it does not take up too much time. Such caution also applies to the use of essay plans. Some candidates wrote very short answers which they must have realised could not possibly constitute proper attempts at an A-Level answer. Finally, there was in the answers of some candidates a tendency to be much too generalised in their approach and not properly focused on the specific requirements of the question in front of them.

Paper 01

There were some attempts at all questions, although as always a few were more popular than the rest. The questions on Philip (11) and Alexander (12) were attempted by surprisingly few candidates. Questions 13 and 14, on more general topics were attempted only by a small number of candidates. Question 10, on the Athenian democracy, consistently caused problems with a majority of those who attempted it doing so on the basis of the 5th century BC and not, as clearly stated, on the 4th century BC.

A few candidates answered question 1, on the abuse of the Delian League down to well past the Peace of Callias. There were many good answers to questions 3, on Pericles, but too many ignored the last part of the question about opposition to him. Too many candidates were limited in their answers to question 4, the role of Corinth, dealing only with the casues of the Peloponnesian War. Question 6, on Nicias, produced many full and detailed answers.

Paper 02

All five parts of question 1 were attempted (e) very much the least popular. There were a great many good or very good answers which is most encouraging. Some candidates still need to recognize the link between allocated marks and size of response but most seemed to get this about right. A few failed to pay sufficient attention to detail in the wording of questions eg. 1c iv as to what happened to the Athenians not what happened to Athens.

There was a very encouraging spread of responses to the essay questions with some very good answers to all of them. No question was misunderstood and the only observation concerns the approach in general. Some candidates who clearly had a reasonable factual knowledge failed to go beyond this into analysis and evaluation. On this paper in particular there is a requirement not only to provide the factual information but also to show some analysis and evaluation as required by the question.

Statistics

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Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
Raw boundary mark	100	67	59	51	44	37	0
Cumulative % of candidates		17.2	44.3	59.8	73.8	80.3	100

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