



Department  
for Education

# **Classical civilisation**

**GCE AS and A level subject content**

**February 2016**

# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| The content for AS and A level classical civilisation | 3  |
| Introduction  | 3  |
| Aims and objectives                                   | 3  |
| Subject content                                       | 3  |
| Source material and scope of study                    | 4  |
| Knowledge, understanding and skills                   | 8  |
| Appendix A  | 13 |

# The content for AS and A level classical civilisation

## Introduction

1. AS and A level subject content sets out the knowledge, understanding and skills common to all AS and A level specifications in a given subject. They provide the framework within which the awarding body creates the detail of the specification.

## Aims and objectives

2. AS and A level specifications in classical civilisation should provide students with a broad, coherent and rewarding study of the literature and culture of the classical (Greco-Roman) world, drawn from the time period 3000 BCE to 500 CE, which builds on the knowledge, understanding and skills of GCSE. Prior attainment of a GCSE qualification in classical civilisation is, however, not a requirement. AS and A level specifications in classical civilisation should help students to understand the legacy of the classical world, whilst equipping them to progress to higher education.

3. AS and A level specifications in classical civilisation must enable students to:

- acquire a sophisticated level of knowledge and understanding of the literature and culture of the classical world through studying a diverse range of ancient material and making connections and comparisons between them
- understand classical literature, thought and material culture in its context; including how issues and values relevant to the society in which they were created are reflected in ancient sources and materials
- further develop skills of critical analysis and evaluation and apply these to the range of source materials studied in order to gain insight into aspects of the classical world
- articulate an informed response to the material studied, using a range of appropriate evidence to formulate coherent arguments with substantiated evidence based judgments
- acquire a sound basis for further study of the classical world

## Subject content

4. Both AS and A level specifications in classical civilisation must focus on Rome and its surrounding world, and/or Greece and its surrounding world. Topics or sources for study must be drawn from the time period 3000 BCE to 500 CE.

5. AS level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the classical world through study of a compulsory element of literature

(in translation), which must form a minimum of 30% of the specification, and one of either:

- classical thought, forming a minimum of 15% of the specification, or
- material/visual culture, forming a minimum of 15% of the specification

6. A level specifications must:

- require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the classical world which covers all three of the following areas:
  - literature (in translation), which must form a minimum of 30% of the specification
  - classical thought, which must form a minimum of 15% of the specification
  - material/visual culture, which must form a minimum of 15% of the specification
- include material from both ancient Rome and its surrounding world, and ancient Greece and its surrounding world. Each must form a minimum of 20% of the specification

## Source material and scope of study<sup>1</sup>

### Literature

7. Specifications will clearly identify the literature to be studied for all relevant components. Specifications must require that, where literature is the focus of study, the amount of material to be studied per 20% of the qualification must be equivalent to, as specified in Appendix A<sup>2</sup>, at least:

- at AS level:
  - 3200 lines of epic, or
  - 2 full plays, or
  - 800 lines of extended verse, or
  - 560 lines of shorter verse, or

---

<sup>1</sup> This section outlines the amount of material it is expected that a specification will cover for literature and visual/material culture. Specifications may combine material from within and across both areas in one component, as long as the equivalence of material is clearly preserved.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix A gives a list of ancient authors, divided by types of work. The list at Appendix A is not exhaustive and awarding organisations may include further authors in specifications. Where this is the case awarding organisations must include a rationale for these to demonstrate that they are comparable to those listed and that they are clearly relevant to the subject.

- a book<sup>3</sup> of non-fiction prose, or
  - a novel or equivalent fable material, or
  - 2 speeches or 10 letters
- at A level:
    - 8000 lines of epic, or
    - 2000 lines of extended verse, or
    - 4 full plays, or
    - 1400 lines of shorter verse, or
    - 2 books of non-fiction prose, or
    - 2 novels, or
    - 4 speeches or 20 letters

## Classical thought

8. Where classical thought is the focus of study, the amount of material to be studied per 20% of the qualification must be equivalent to at least:

- at AS level one area of thought from the list given below and the ideas of at least one key thinker/figure within this area
- at A level one area of thought from the list given below and the ideas of at least two key thinkers/figures within this area

9. Specifications will clearly identify the areas of thought and thinkers/figures to be studied, which may be studied through the use of one or more classical texts.

10. Specifications must draw from the following areas of thought; the cultural context and development of classical ideas on<sup>4</sup>:

- religion and belief in the classical world, including:
  - the nature and existence of the god(s) worshipped by the Romans and/or Greeks
  - the relationship between this/these god(s) and mankind
- classical political theory and philosophy, including:
  - classical ideas about the nature of the ideal state/authority

---

<sup>3</sup> Ancient works are split into “books” which, in turn, are divided into “chapters”; this is a standard and unambiguous term within classical scholarship.

<sup>4</sup> In cases where terminology is used it should be noted that ancient thinkers/sources may not use precisely these terms, however, specifications should clearly show how they are addressing the stated areas/concepts.

- classical ideas about the duties and rights of citizens/subjects
- ethics and values, as discussed by classical thinkers/figures, including:
  - classical ideas about the nature of “good” and “bad”
  - applied ethics and values in the ancient world (what was considered right or wrong in a specific context or situation)
- theory of knowledge (epistemology) as discussed by classical thinkers/figures, including:
  - classical ideas about the nature and origin of knowledge
  - classical ideas about how knowledge is acquired
- metaphysics as discussed by classical thinkers/figures, including:
  - classical ideas about the nature of reality
  - classical ideas about the origin of reality
- personhood as discussed by classical thinkers/figures, including:
  - classical ideas regarding the characteristics of a “person”
  - classical ideas about the existence or non-existence of a soul/purpose

11. Specific key thinkers chosen will be reliant on the period and geographical area being studied, however, a key thinker/figure must fulfil the following criteria:

- there must be extant ancient source material which outlines their views or opinions
- they must have had a discernible impact on the area of thought being studied<sup>5</sup>

### **Visual/material culture**

12. Specifications will clearly identify what visual/material culture<sup>6</sup> is to be studied for all relevant components. Specifications must require students to study:

- architecture, or
- artefacts and artworks, or
- a combination of both

---

<sup>5</sup> Examples may include: Aristotle (Ethics, Political Philosophy, Metaphysics), Plato (Epistemology, Political Philosophy, Metaphysics), Epicurus (Religion and Belief), Cicero (Political Philosophy, Religion and Belief), Lucretius (Religion and Belief, Metaphysics).

<sup>6</sup> Defined as the study of the physical remains of the ancient world.

13. Where a “type” is referred to, this is defined as a subset of either architecture or artefacts and artworks that:

- is recognisable and has distinct characteristics
- has a specific, common purpose
- has sufficient extant and known examples to enable coherent and meaningful study

14. Specifications must require that, where architecture is the focus of study, the amount of material to be studied per 20% of the qualification must be equivalent to at least:

- at AS level:
  - two types of architecture<sup>7</sup> with two examples<sup>8</sup> of each, or
  - one type of architecture and four examples
- at A level:
  - one type of architecture and ten examples, or
  - two types of architecture with five examples of each

15. Specifications must require that, where artefacts and artworks are the focus of study, the amount of material to be studied per 20% of the qualification must be equivalent to at least:

- at AS level:
  - one type of artefact or artwork<sup>9</sup> and eight examples<sup>10</sup>, or
  - two types of artefact or artwork and four examples of each

---

<sup>7</sup> Types of architecture may include temples, palaces, theatres and amphitheatres, residential buildings, baths, stadia, villas or other types of buildings or defined spaces.

<sup>8</sup> An “example” is an individual piece belonging to that particular type: examples may include the Parthenon in Athens, the Palace at Mycenae, the Athenian Agora, the Pnyx in Athens, the Pantheon in Rome, theatre at Epidaurus, the theatre of Dionysus at Athens, the amphitheatre at Pompeii, the baths of Caracalla at Rome, the villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii.

<sup>9</sup> Types of artefacts and artworks may include pottery, sculpture, mosaics, wall-paintings or other specific types of artefacts and artworks.

<sup>10</sup> An “example” is an individual piece belonging to that particular type: examples may include the vase depicting Achilles and Penthesileia by Exekias (British Museum), the statue of Laocoon and his Sons from Rome (Vatican Museums), the Alexander Mosaic from the House of the Faun in Pompeii (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples), the gravestone of Dexileos from the Athenian Ceramicus, wall-paintings from the Ixion Room in the House of the Vettii, Pompeii, the Warrior Vase from Mycenae, the Prima Porta portrait statue of Augustus, the reliefs of the Ara Pacis, Rome.

- at A level:
  - one type of artefact or artwork and twenty examples, or
  - two types of artefact or artwork and ten examples of each

16. For all key areas both AS and A level specifications must require that the amount of material each student studies increases in proportion to the weighting of the topic in the qualification.

17. In addition, A level specifications must require that:

- if more than 40% of the qualification is literature, students must study at least two genres/types of work as listed in Appendix A
- if more than 40% of the qualification is classical thought, students must study at least two areas of thought
- if more than 40% of the qualification is visual/material culture, students must study both architecture and artefacts and artworks

## **Knowledge, understanding and skills**

18. AS and A level specifications in classical civilisation must require students to:

- understand, interpret and analyse a range of evidence from appropriate classical sources in their social, historical and cultural context
- evaluate and use this evidence to form substantiated evidence-based judgements and responses to the material studied
- present these judgements and relevant information in a clear, concise and logical manner

19. A level specifications must require students to:

- make use of knowledge and understanding of relevant secondary scholars and academics in order to further develop their analysis and argument
- draw on a greater depth and range of content and evidence
- build upon the knowledge, skills and understanding gained at AS level to evaluate with more sophistication, and demonstrate a deeper, more complex understanding of the literature, ideas and materials studied, as well as their cultural context
- produce analytical responses, and effectively substantiated judgements

## **Literature**

20. Specifications must require students, in relation to the literature studied, to show knowledge and understanding of:

- ways in which writers shape meanings in classical texts, including:



- use of literary devices
  - choice of language
  - use of themes and motifs
- ways in which classical texts might be interpreted by different readers or audiences both in an ancient and modern context
  - ways in which classical texts relate to the historical, social, political, religious and cultural contexts in which they are written and received, including:
    - the contexts in which the set texts were produced
    - the author's intention in producing them
    - the ways the texts were performed or read (as applicable)
    - how they were received in the cultural context of the ancient world
  - ways in which classical texts relate to literary traditions and genres of the classical world, including:
    - the characteristics of the literary genres of their set texts, and whether the texts are typical or atypical of the genre
    - the ways in which literary genre and the form and arrangement of the set text shapes and influences its meaning
    - how the themes of the text relate both to its genre and to its cultural context
    - the stylistic choices made by the author and the literary terminology used to describe these choices

21. Specifications must require students, in relation to the literature studied, to:

- respond critically to texts and consider how the attitudes and values of the classical world or author are expressed
- apply their knowledge of cultural contexts to support, substantiate and inform evidence-based judgements about the classical texts
- use classical texts to demonstrate an understanding of the social, historical and cultural context of the classical world, with recognition, where appropriate, of the complex issues of reliability and the difference between what a text might say and what can be inferred from this
- critically explore and explain the possibility of different responses to a text from different audiences, both from the classical period and later times, up until the modern day

### **Classical thought**

22. Specifications must require students, in relation to the area of classical thought studied, to show knowledge and understanding of the development and impact of classical ideas within the cultural and intellectual context of the Greco-Roman world including:

- key ideas and concepts within classical thought, including:
  - the central questions and ideas within the area of thought studied during the classical period
  - correct terminology and definitions of key concepts
- key classical thinkers central to the areas of study chosen
  - the development and distinctive features of their ideas
  - the classical contemporary response to them and their ideas
  - their impact on the area of thought studied within classical thought
- the development of thought and ideas, how and why they emerged, and how this was influenced by the social, historical, political, religious and cultural context of the classical world, including (as far as possible or appropriate):
  - the specific ways in which the social, historical, political, religious and cultural context influenced ideas within the area of thought studied and why ideas were influenced in this way
  - controversies arising in the classical context, and their influence on the development of ideas
  - relevant and related ideas contemporary to those which are the main focus of study
- the influence of thought and ideas on the social, political, religious and cultural context of the classical world, including (as far as possible or appropriate):
  - the specific ways in which thought and ideas influence the social, political, religious and cultural context and why this occurred
  - the ways in which ideas caused controversy, or became widely accepted, within the classical world and the reasons for this
- ways in which the ideas and concepts studied can be interpreted, both in an ancient and modern context

23. Specifications must require students, in relation to the area of classical thought studied, to:

- respond critically to the ideas and concepts studied, considering how they reflect the social, historical, political, religious and cultural context
- apply their knowledge of cultural contexts to support, substantiate and inform their evidence-based judgements about the areas of thought and thinkers studied
- use their understanding of classical ideas and thinkers to demonstrate an understanding of the social, historical, and cultural context of the classical world with recognition, where appropriate, of the complex issues of the difference

between what might be implied is the ideal or legitimate philosophical conclusion, and the reality of a situation or the beliefs of everyday people at that time

- critically explore and explain the possibility of different interpretations of ideas from different audiences, both from the classical period and later times, up until the modern day

## Visual/material culture

24. Specifications must require students, in relation to the visual / material culture studied, to show knowledge and understanding of:

- the range of visual/material culture studied, including:
  - the appearance, style, content and original location of the examples studied
- what the examples of visual/material culture can tell us about the classical world, and what they cannot, including (as appropriate):
  - issues of reliability
  - the limitations and problems of analysing different types of material culture, including issues raised by the nature of the type of material or the specific examples studied; fragmentary, damaged or relocated material; and the limitations of what can be deduced from the extant evidence
- the ways in which the social, political, religious and cultural context of production impacts on the creation of visual/material culture, including (as appropriate):
  - how visual material responds to religion, literature, myth and/or legend
  - the political context of its production, including reflection of contemporary, classical issues and values
- appropriate methods of analysis and interpretation, including issues of purpose, production and form, including (as appropriate):
  - the reasons why the key works were built/produced
  - how they were produced (including where relevant their materials and technologies involved in production)
  - recognition and explanation of decorative techniques and styles and how these relate to the form and function of the key work
- the range of possible interpretations of visual/material culture when looked at from different perspectives, in an ancient and modern context

25. Specifications must require students, in relation to the study of visual/material culture, to:

- respond critically to artefacts, identifying different possible interpretations, taking account of issues such as those of audience and purpose
- know and understand how materials and artefacts relate to their wider context and how this social, historical, political, religious and cultural context affected their creation and interpretation
- evaluate the usefulness of visual/material culture when investigating the classical world
- apply their knowledge of cultural contexts to support, substantiate and inform their evidence-based judgements about the visual/material culture studied
- use their understanding of visual/material culture to demonstrate an understanding of the social, historical and cultural context of the classical world with recognition, where appropriate, of the complex issues of the limitations of evidence
- critically explore and explain the possibility of different responses to materials from different audiences, both from the classical period and later times, up until the modern day

## Appendix A

The following literary genres, authors and corresponding amounts of material are for use in designing the sections of a classical civilisation specification focused on the topic area of "Literature". Where awarding organisations wish to include material which is not on this list they must include a rationale for these to demonstrate that they are comparable to those listed and that they are clearly relevant to the subject. When studying classical thought, a text or texts may also be studied, but the focus there is on the ideas, intellectual context and key thinkers rather than the literature/text itself and as such the "quantification" of the material to be studied in such units focuses on areas of thought and key thinkers, not amount of text.

The nine types of work which can be studied are:

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Epic poetry       | narrative hexameter poems of substantial length on a mythological or historical theme  |
| Drama             | the scripts of tragic and comic ancient performances   |
| Extended verse    | single poems or works of substantial length, although shorter than epic (minimum 300 lines), on a single theme   |
| Shorter verse     | poetry which is shorter than that found in extended poetry, may be composed on a variety of diverse themes; including elegiac poetry, lyric poetry, epigram and satire |
| Non-fiction prose | works of narrative or descriptive prose covering historical and geographical topics  |
| Novel             | works of fictional narrative prose   |
| Fable             | brief prose stories featuring anthropomorphised animals, objects and natural forces, and mythological characters, which carry a moral message                          |
| Oratory           | rhetorical prose works, which may have been (but not necessarily) delivered as real-life speeches  |
| Letters           | prose works in epistolary style, which may have been (but not necessarily) composed as real-life communications  |

Some authors/collections wrote/contain works of more than one genre/type. Where this is the case their name may appear more than once, in more than one column.

Literature written in Greek: material studied per 20% of qualification must be at least the equivalent of:

| <b>Epic</b><br><b>AS: 3200 lines</b><br><b>A: 8000 lines</b> | <b>Extended verse</b><br><b>AS: 800 lines</b><br><b>A: 2000 lines</b> | <b>Drama</b><br><b>AS: 2 plays</b><br><b>A: 4 plays</b> | <b>Shorter verse</b><br><b>AS: 560 lines</b><br><b>A: 1400 lines</b> | <b>Non-fiction prose</b><br><b>AS: 1 book<sup>11</sup></b><br><b>A: 2 books</b> | <b>Novel and fable</b><br><b>AS: 1 novel</b><br><b>A: 2 novels<sup>12</sup></b> | <b>Oratory</b><br><b>AS: 2 speeches</b><br><b>A: 4 speeches</b> |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| Homer  | Hesiod  | Aeschylus   | Sappho   | Herodotus   | Achilles Tatius   | Lysias  |
| Apollonius of Rhodes   | Homeric Hymns   | Sophocles   | Pindar   | Thucydides  | Longus  | Demosthenes   |
|  |   | Euripides   | Callimachus  | Xenophon  | Lucian  | Isocrates   |
|  |   | Aristophanes  | Theocritus   | Arrian  | Aesop   | Aeschines   |
|  |   | Menander  | Herodas  | Polybius  |   | Hyperides   |
|  |   |   | Alcaeus  | Dionysius of Halicarnassus  |   |   |
|  |   |   | Ibycus   | Appian  |   |   |
|  |   |   | Simonides  | Josephus  |   |   |
|  |   |   | Bacchylides  | Procopius   |   |   |

<sup>11</sup> Ancient works are split into “books” which, in turn, are divided into “chapters”, this is a standard and unambiguous term within classical scholarship

<sup>12</sup> OR the equivalent in fable material where 30 fables are equivalent to half a novel

| <b>Epic</b><br>AS: 3200 lines<br>A: 8000 lines | <b>Extended verse</b><br>AS: 800 lines<br>A: 2000 lines | <b>Drama</b><br>AS: 2 plays<br>A: 4 plays | <b>Shorter verse</b><br>AS: 560 lines<br>A: 1400 lines | <b>Non-fiction<br/>prose</b><br>AS: 1 book <sup>11</sup><br>A: 2 books | <b>Novel and fable</b><br>AS: 1 novel<br>A: 2 novels <sup>12</sup> | <b>Oratory</b><br>AS: 2 speeches<br>A: 4 speeches |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|---|
|  |   |   |  | Plutarch <sup>13</sup>   |  |   |
|  |   |   |  | Cassius Dio  |  |   |
|  |   |   |  | Strabo   |  |   |
|  |   |   |  | Pausanias  |  |   |

---

<sup>13</sup> For "Plutarch" one "book" is taken as being equivalent to one "Life"

Literature written in Latin: material studied per 20% of qualification must be at least the equivalent of:

| <b>Epic</b><br><b>AS: 3200 lines</b><br><b>A: 8000 lines</b> | <b>Extended verse</b><br><b>AS: 800 lines</b><br><b>A: 2000 lines</b> | <b>Drama</b><br><b>AS: 2 plays</b><br><b>A: 4 plays</b> | <b>Shorter verse</b><br><b>AS: 560 lines</b><br><b>A: 1400 lines</b> | <b>Non-fiction prose</b><br><b>AS: 1 book<sup>14</sup></b><br><b>A: 2 books</b> | <b>Novel and fable</b><br><b>AS: 1 novel</b><br><b>A: 2 novels<sup>15</sup></b> | <b>Oratory and letters</b><br><b>AS: 2 speeches / 10 letters</b><br><b>A: 4 speeches / 20 letters</b> |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| Virgil   | Lucretius   | Plautus   | Horace   | Sallust   | Petronius   | Oratory   |
| Lucan  | Virgil  | Terence   | Catullus   | Caesar  | Apuleius  | Cicero  |
| Statius  | Ovid  | Seneca the Younger                                      | Ovid   | Livy  | Phaedrus  | Pliny the Younger   |
| Ovid   |   |   | Propertius   | Valerius Maximus  | Seneca the Younger  | Panegyrici Latini   |
| Silius Italicus  |   |   | Tibullus   | Velleius Paterculus   |   | Letters   |
| Ennius   |   |   | Gallus   | Tacitus   |   | Cicero  |
|  |   |   | Sulpicia   | Suetonius <sup>16</sup>   |   | Pliny the Younger   |
|  |   |   | Martial  | Ammianus Marcellinus  |   | Fronto  |

<sup>14</sup> Ancient works are split into “books” which, in turn, are divided into “chapters”, this is a standard and unambiguous term within classical scholarship

<sup>15</sup> OR the equivalent in fable material where 30 fables are equivalent to half a novel

<sup>16</sup> For “Suetonius” one “book” is taken as being equivalent to one “Life”



| <b>Epic</b><br><b>AS: 3200 lines</b><br><b>A: 8000 lines</b> | <b>Extended verse</b><br><b>AS: 800 lines</b><br><b>A: 2000 lines</b> | <b>Drama</b><br><b>AS: 2 plays</b><br><b>A: 4 plays</b> | <b>Shorter verse</b><br><b>AS: 560 lines</b><br><b>A: 1400 lines</b> | <b>Non-fiction prose</b><br><b>AS: 1 book<sup>14</sup></b><br><b>A: 2 books</b> | <b>Novel and fable</b><br><b>AS: 1 novel</b><br><b>A: 2 novels<sup>15</sup></b> | <b>Oratory and letters</b><br><b>AS: 2 speeches / 10 letters</b><br><b>A: 4 speeches / 20 letters</b> |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|
|  |   |   | Juvenal  | Historia Augusta  |   | Seneca the Younger  |
|  |   |   | Persius  |   |   |   |
|  |   |   | Virgil   |   |   |   |



Department  
for Education

© Crown copyright 2016

This publication (not including logos) is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

To view this licence:

visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

email [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

write to Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London, TW9 4DU

About this publication:

enquiries [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)

download [www.gov.uk/government/publications](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications)

Reference: DFE-00036-2016



Follow us on Twitter:  
[@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)



Like us on Facebook:  
[facebook.com/educationgovuk](https://facebook.com/educationgovuk)