Marking and classing guidelines used in the Classical Tripos

These guidelines are intended to help students understand the principles on which marks and grades are assigned in Classical Tripos and Preliminary exams. Since the standards and expectations differ from one year of the course to the next, the guidelines are interpreted flexibly, so as to fit the level of attainment expected at each stage.

TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH

Class	Marks – Alphabetic	Marks – Numerical (out of 100)	Typical features
I	Leading α, including $\alpha\beta$	Normal 70 to 80. Higher marks may be given for exceptional work.	Excellent comprehension of the original, with few if any mistakes. Good English style. The quality may range from $\alpha+$, indicating a translation which can scarcely be improved, to $\alpha\beta$, indicating that overall quality is First Class but there are some weaknesses.
II.1	Leading β^+/β^{++}: β^+ to $\beta\alpha$	About 60-69	Good comprehension of the original, sound vocabulary and understanding of syntax, and generally good English style. But several mistakes and/or gaps, and sometimes a tendency to paraphrase. Where appropriate, intelligent guesses can make up for deficiencies in vocabulary.
Very good II.1	Mainly β^{++}, often with some α	About 67-69	Few basic errors, but occasional imprecision or paraphrase or gaps. Weaknesses may be compensated by signs of α quality.
Mid II.1	β^+ to β^{++}	63-67	Usually consistent II.1 quality. Signs of α quality rarely compensate for weakness.
Low II.1	β^+	60-62	Competent translation, but too many errors for comfort. No signs of α quality, but sometimes signs of II.2 quality.
II.2	$\beta\gamma$ to β including $\beta?+$	50-59	Adequate comprehension of the original, but wavering and/or partial. Some control of vocabulary and syntax, although with not infrequent deficiencies and confusions and perhaps some gaps. Style mostly workmanlike, but may contain weaker patches. There may be a tendency for paraphrase or guesswork to extend over entire sentences or clauses. Often the quality will vary between II.1 and III.
III	Leading γ, $\gamma\beta$ to $\gamma\delta$	40-49	Some comprehension of the original, but distinctly patchy, on account of limited vocabulary and/or misunderstanding of syntax. Often gaps, with little or no attempt to guess, making any sense of style insecure. Script may well be very incomplete.

Fail	Leading δ	Normally 30-39	Little or no comprehension of the original. Ignorance of even basic vocabulary. Translation often nonsensical. Many gaps. No attempt to guess. So incomplete a script that no judgement can be made of the quality of performance in the paper.

COURSEWORK

Class	Marks – Alphabetic	Marks – Numerical (out of 100)	Typical features
I	Leading α, including αβ	Normal 70 to 80. Higher marks may be given for exceptional work.	Undergraduate work that contains original ideas in support of which good evidence and plausible arguments are adduced is rare at any level. If found, it will be rewarded with very high First Class marks. More normally, First Class work will show evidence of reading thoroughly understood that is wider than one would normally expect from students at that stage; intelligent and relevant use of sources; clarity of expression and structure; some signs of the development of an ability to think independently; excellent organisation and presentation covering major points; no irrelevant material.
II.1	Leading β^+/β^{++}: β^+ to βα	About 60-69	Reading interpreted intelligently, perhaps with some signs of independent judgement. Well organised and presented with little or no irrelevance; full documentation, correctly presented.
Very good II.1	Mainly β^{++}, often with some α	About 66-69	A thoroughly well-informed, well organised performance without sufficient sign of independence to pass the First Class boundary.
Mid to low II.1	β^+ to β^{++}	60-65	Solidly informed and solidly organised.
II.2	βγ to β including β?+	50-59	Lightweight material and analysis, with an incomplete understanding. A sound general sense of relevance, although sometimes wavering and unreflective. May contain errors and/or exhibit confusion and/or give short measure.
III	Leading γ, γβ to γδ	40-49	Two alternatives: (i) Little evidence of some independent work, but limited in scope and with a sense of relevance that may be limited. Some competence in presentation. Likely to contain errors, exhibit confusion and give short measure. (ii) Seriously underweight essay with evidence nonetheless of work of at least Second Class standard.
Fail	Leading δ	Normally 30-39	Two alternatives: (i) Fails to demonstrate understanding of texts or data. Gross irrelevance. (ii) So short an essay that no judgement can be made on quality.

An essay may combine features indicative of one class with features indicative of another. In such cases, the numerical mark should indicate the average level attained by the essay. Unevenness that is particularly striking may be indicated by cross-marking when giving the alphabetical mark.

ESSAY PAPERS

Class	Marks Alphabetic	Marks Numerical (out of 100)	Typical features	Level
I	Leading α, including αβ	Normal 70 to 80. Higher marks may be given for exceptional work.	Undergraduate work that contains original ideas in support of which good evidence and plausible arguments are adduced is rare at any level, and is extremely rare in examination scripts. It is awarded a very high First Class mark. More easily achieved, and still leading to good First Class marks are clear evidence of independent thought, a capacity for critical judgement, and an ability to make connections. Clear evidence of ability to analyse material, to argue or make a complex point coherently. Range and precision of knowledge of primary material impressive. Excellent organisation and presentation covering key points and avoiding irrelevance. A low First Class mark will show these characteristics to a lesser extent..	75-80: original & challenging 70-74: incisive and thoughtful
II.1	β^+ to $\beta^{++}/\beta\alpha$	About 60-69	A characteristic of a good Upper Second script is the sound presentation of evidence without mistakes but without the range of imaginative connections or independent judgement of the First Class script. Scripts at the top end of the range will exhibit a capacity for critical judgement and an ability to make some connections. All Upper Second scripts will exhibit some evidence of ability to analyse material, to argue or make a complex point coherently. Range and precision of knowledge of primary material good. Solid organisation and presentation covering key points and largely avoiding irrelevance.	65-69: resourceful use of material 60-64: good basic coverage
II.2	$\gamma\beta/\beta$ to β (including $\beta?+$)	50-59	Exercise of thought and judgement mostly competent, but dependent and limited in scope, and likely to include some mistakes and exhibit some confusion. Straightforward treatment of material, with limited ability in analysis and argument. Mostly sound level of knowledge, covering some basic points. Adequate presentation of material, with a sound general sense of relevance, though perhaps wavering and unreflective.	55-59: some good passages 50-54: coverage thin and without penetration.

III	γδ/γ to γ++/γβ	40-49	Evidence of some comprehension, but also many signs of confusion. Evidence of knowledge, but not well supported by detail and severely limited in scope or deficient in argument. Intermittent competence in presentation, but sense of relevance may be limited.	45-49: makes some points 40-44: lacking direction
Fail	Leading δ and below	Normally 30-39	Little sign of comprehension. Information erroneous and may be very incomplete. Deficient presentation and/or argument and/or sense of relevance.	30-39: very thin 20-29: gross inaccuracy Below 20: hardly any evidence of study

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Not every script of a particular standard will necessarily exhibit all the features typically associated with performance at that level.

Candidates' performances may often be uneven, exhibiting features characteristic of more than one class (variation may occur within a single answer or as between answers to different questions). In such cases examiners will balance stronger and weaker elements to determine the overall mark on the paper.

Thus for example: a wide-ranging script evidencing plenty of independence and ability to make connections but also some confusion, irrelevance and weakness in analysis might be judged II.1 overall; similarly a seriously incomplete script showing evidence nonetheless of knowledge and abilities typical of at least second class standard would probably be judged deserving of a III.

PROSE AND VERSE COMPOSITION

Mark	Class	Marks Alphabetic	Marks – Numerical (out of 100)	Typical features
GL	I	α range including αβ	70 or above	Prose: Wide and apt vocabulary. Ability to handle a range of constructions, and to reflect the style of a particular author or genre. Few or no errors of syntax or word-formation. Verse: Vocabulary and style apt for the genre. Few or no syntactical or metrical errors. The quality may range from α+ (a composition which reads like a piece of authentic Greek or Latin) to αβ (the overall quality is First Class but there are some weaknesses associated with the II.1 Class).
GL	High II.1	Generally β+ to β++	65-69	Prose. A generally accurate and stylish composition, showing apt vocabulary and ability to handle constructions. Verse. Generally apt vocabulary and style and competent handling of metre. The composition may fail to achieve a First Class mark for one or more reasons: because it is rather limited in vocabulary, or because its sentence- structure lacks ambition, or because it contains several errors of syntax or word-formation or metre, or some stylistic infelicities.
gl	Low II.1 and II.2	generally β+ to βγ	50-64	The minimum requirement is that the composition shows, in prose, an adequate vocabulary and ability to use the basic constructions; in verse, a knowledge of basic vocabulary and metre. The composition will remain intelligible as simple Greek or Latin,
				despite the less than perfect command of the language. At the upper end of the range, it will show, in prose, a good sense of style and a fairly wide and apt vocabulary; in verse, generally apt vocabulary and style and competent handling of metre. But it fails to qualify for GL, because it is marred by too many errors or stylistic infelicities. At the lower end it will show a general competence but also many mistakes.

	III and fail	Γ range and below	49 and below	The composition may reveal elements of sound vocabulary and some knowledge of basic constructions or of metre (if not it will fall below a Third), but these are likely to be overshadowed in most sentences by errors and confusions. The composition may be partly or largely unintelligible as Greek or Latin.

Note**:** In Greek Composition papers 'Credit will be given for a knowledge of the general principles of Greek accentuation'. The application of that knowledge may help the composition to achieve a high classification or may compensate for weaknesses which would otherwise cause it to deserve a lower classification.

PART II THESIS

Class	Marks Alphabetic	Marks Numerical (out of 100)	Typical features	Level
I	Leading α, including αβ	Normal 70 to 80. Higher marks may be given for exceptional work.	The best scholarly work contains original ideas in support of which good evidence and plausible arguments are adduced. In a dissertation, this may manifest itself in the ability to ask new and significant questions about texts or collections of material; it may be expressed with sophistication and elegance. Such work is rare but has been achieved by some dissertations. It is awarded a very high First Class mark. More easily achieved, and still leading to a good First Class mark, is a performance which would include some or all of the following characteristics: evidence of wide and intellectually demanding reading analysed in depth and thoroughly understood; first-hand research showing technical and/or methodological sophistication; excellent organisation, argument and presentation covering all major points, with no irrelevant material.	75-80: original & challenging 70-74: incisive and thoughtful
II.1	β^+ to $\beta^{++}/\beta\alpha$	About 60-69	Wide reading, interpreted intelligently, perhaps (at the top end) with some signs of independent thought and judgement. Well organised and argued, well presented with little or no irrelevance; full documentation, correctly presented.	Generally thorough use of material
Very good II.1	mainly β^{++} often with some α	About 67-69	Two alternatives: (i) uneven performance with originality or sophistication earning α marks but the argumentation not of a consistent level or the presentation good enough to pass the First class boundary; (ii) a thoroughly well-informed, well organised performance without sufficient sign of independent thought to pass the First class boundary	

Mid II.1	β+ to β++	63-67	As the two very good II.1 alternatives, but weaker: either some α quality detected, but within a more uneven performance; or solidly informed, solidly organised, without α quality.	
Low II.1	β+	60-62	Just enough material and ability to organise, argue and present it to merit a II.1 (cf. general criteria for II.1 and II.2).	45-49: makes some points 40-44: lacking direction
II.2	βγ to β including β?+	50-59	Relatively lightweight material and analysis, with a competent but dependent or incomplete understanding and with adequate presentation and referencing. A sound general sense of relevance, although sometimes wavering and unreflective. May contain errors and/or exhibit confusion and/or give short measure.	55-59: some good passages 50-54: coverage thin and without penetration
III	Leading γ, γβ to γδ	40-49	Two alternatives: (i) Evidence of independent work, but limited in scope and with a sense of relevance that may be limited. Some competence in presentation, but referencing may be deficient or absent. Likely to contain errors, exhibit confusion and give short measure. (ii) Seriously underweight thesis with evidence nonetheless of work of at least Second Class standard.	Make some points but lacking direction and knowledge
Fail	Leading δ	Normally 30-39	Two alternatives: (i) Fails to demonstrate independent work or ability to ask serious questions of texts or data. Gross irrelevance. (ii) So underweight a thesis that no judgement can be made on quality.	Little sign of any proper work on the thesis

CRITICAL DISCUSSION
Preliminary to Part IA and Part IA

The essence of a critical discussion is to show understanding of the passage of text set for examination. In Part IA papers 1–4, if a student chooses to write on a passage of historical, philosophical, or linguistic significance, they will be expected to comment on historical or philosophical or linguistic matters in addition to making any appropriate literary points.

Class	Marks Alphabetic	Marks Numerical (out of 100)	Typical features	Level
I	Leading α	Normally 70 to 80	Shows a detailed knowledge and understanding of the passage and keeps the focus of the discussion on the passage at hand, but can indicate where and how such a discussion might be relevant for work as a whole. Displays independent thought. Can conduct a coherent and persuasive argument for the way, or ways, in which to read the passage and what the value of such reading(s) may be. If appropriate, can evaluate the passage as evidence for historical, philosophical, or linguistic topics or problems. Can discuss detailed syntactical and linguistic matters accurately and in a way that makes them relevant to the wider discussion of the passage; such discussion may be more appropriate to passages whose main interest is literary and not historical or philosophical. The very best answers may include cogent remarks made independently of the secondary literature on the texts.	75-80: original & challenging 70-74: incisive and thoughtful
II.1	β⁺ to β⁺⁺/βα	60-69	Shows a good understanding of the passage and can contextualise it relevantly, but displays less evidence of independent thought than that found in First Class scripts. If appropriate, has a broad understanding of the value of the passage as evidence for philosophical or historical problems. If appropriate, can argue for a particular reading, but, where relevant, shows some awareness that this might not be the only way of approaching the passage. Clear evidence of a good understanding of the passage in the original and an awareness of its key linguistic features as they relate to the interpretation of the passage.	65-69: resourceful use of material 60-64: good basic

II.2	γβ/β to β (including β?+)	50-59		Shows a fair understanding of both the passage and the work as a whole, but also likely to make some mistakes. May display a tendency to use the passage as a stepping stone to a discussion of the text as a whole, although still some reasonable attempt is made to engage with the passage. May show insecurity in determining the value of the passage as evidence for historical and	55-59: some good passages 50-54: coverage thin and without penetration

			literary problems. Some ability to perceive and discuss points closely related to the language of the passage.	
III	γδ/γ to γ++/γβ	40-49	Shows a poor or faulty understanding of the passage with some evidence of patches of incomprehension of the original. Has some knowledge of the text as a whole but is insufficiently able to engage with the passage at hand.	45-49: makes some points 40-44: lacking direction
Fail	Leading δ (and below)	39 and below	Shows no knowledge of the text and little or no understanding of the passage in the original; answers which show no familiarity with the text from which the passage is taken a mark below 20.	30-39: very thin 20-29: gross inaccuracy Below 20: hardly any evidence of study

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Thus for example: a wide-ranging script evidencing plenty of independence and ability to make connections but also some confusion, irrelevance and weakness in analysis might be judged II.I overall; similarly a seriously incomplete script showing evidence nonetheless of knowledge and abilities typical of at least second class standard would probably be judged deserving of a III.

Class	Marks Alphabetic	Numerical (out of 100)	Typical features	Level
I	Leading α	Normally 70 to 80	Clear evidence of independent thought, a capacity for critical judgment, and an ability to make connections. Clear evidence of ability to analyse material and to argue or make a complex point coherently. Range and precision of knowledge of set texts impressive, including a detailed knowledge and understanding of the passage(s) set for the question. Can conduct a coherent and persuasive argument for the way or ways in which to read the passage(s) and what the value of such reading(s) may be. Can discuss detailed stylistic and linguistic issues in any passage(s) set from Schedule A texts accurately and in a way which makes them relevant to the wider discussion. Excellent organisation and presentation covering key points and avoiding irrelevance. A low First Class mark will show these characteristics to a lesser extent.	75-80: original & challenging 70-74: incisive & thoughtful
II.1	β^+ to $\beta^{++}/\beta\alpha$	60-69	Scripts at the top end of the range will exhibit a capacity for critical judgment and an ability to make some connections. All Upper Second scripts will exhibit some evidence of ability to analyse material and to argue or make a complex point coherently. Range and precision of knowledge of set texts good, including a good understanding of the passage(s) set for the question. Can contextualise the passage(s) relevantly and can perceive and discuss points closely related to the language of any passage(s) set from Schedule A texts; but displays less precision, breadth of knowledge and evidence of independent thought than found in First Class scripts. Can argue for a particular reading, but shows some awareness, where relevant, that this might not be the only way of approaching the passage.	65-69: resourceful use of material 60-64: good basic coverage
II.2	$\gamma\beta/\beta$ to β (including $\beta?+$)	50-59	Exercise of thought and judgement mostly competent, and shows a fair understanding of the set texts and of the passage(s) set for the question, but dependent and limited in scope, and likely to include some mistakes and exhibit some confusion. Straightforward treatment of material, with limited ability in analysis and argument. Mostly sound level of knowledge, covering some basic points; some ability to perceive and discuss points closely related to the language of any passage(s) set from Schedule A texts. Adequate presentation of material, with a sound general sense of relevance, though perhaps wavering and unreflective.	55-59: some good passages 50-54: coverage thin and without penetration
III	$\gamma\delta/\gamma$ to $\gamma^{++}/\gamma\beta$	40-49	Evidence of knowledge, but not well supported by detail; severely limited in scope or deficient in argument and/or showing signs of confusion. Has some knowledge of the set texts as a whole but is insufficiently able to engage with the passage(s) at hand; shows a poor or faulty understanding of any passage(s) set from Schedule A texts, with some evidence of patches of incomprehension. Intermittent competence in presentation, but sense of relevance may be limited.	45-49: makes some points 40-44: lacking direction
F	Leading δ (and below)	39 and below	Shows no knowledge of the text and little or no understanding of the Greek or Latin of any passage(s) set from Schedule A; deficient presentation and/or argument and/or sense of relevance. Answers which show no familiarity with the set texts earn a mark below 20.	30-39: very thin 20-29: gross inaccuracy Below 20: hardly any evidence of study

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PICTURE QUESTIONS

Class	Marks Alphabetic	Marks Numerical (out of 100)	Typical features	Level
I	Leading α	Normally 70 to 80	Shows a very detailed knowledge and understanding of the artefact, drawing, or plan and its context, making appropriate and productive comparisons with other artefacts. Displays independence of thought in conducting a coherent and persuasive argument for the way, or ways, in which to interpret the artefact, drawing, or plan and what the value of such interpretation(s) may be. The very best answers may include cogent remarks made independently of the secondary literature on the artefact, drawing, or plan, using what the candidate sees in the picture, and knows about classical art and archaeology, to reveal a detailed and nuanced understanding of it and its significance for antiquity and/or the discipline.	75-80: original & challenging 70-74: incisive and thoughtful
II.1	β^+ to $\beta^{++}/\beta\alpha$	60-69	Shows a good understanding of the artefact, drawing, or plan and can contextualise it effectively, but displays less evidence of independent thought than that found in First Class scripts. Scripts at the top end of the range will construct arguments based on sound observation and, where relevant, may show some awareness that there may be more than one way of approaching the artefact, drawing, or plan.	65-69: resourceful use of material 60-64: good basic
II.2	$\gamma\beta/\beta$ to β (including $\beta?+$)	50-59	Shows a fair understanding of artefact, drawing, or plan, but also likely to make some mistakes. May display a tendency to use the image as a stepping stone to a less focussed and less relevant general discussion, although still some reasonable attempt is made to engage with the image.	55-59: some good passages 50-54: coverage thin and without penetration
III	$\gamma\delta/\gamma$ to $\gamma^{++}/\gamma\beta$	40-49	Shows a poor or faulty understanding of the artefact, drawing, or plan, with failure to identify image or context. Has some knowledge of context but is insufficiently able to engage with the particular artefact, drawing, or plan set for discussion.	45-49: makes some points 40-44: lacking direction
Fail	Leading δ (and below)	39 and below	Shows no, or virtually no, understanding of the artefact, drawing, or plan, with failure to identify both image and its context; answers which show no familiarity with the artefact, drawing, or plan will be given mark below 20.	30-39: very thin 20-29: gross inaccuracy Below 20: hardly any evidence of study

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