2022 VCE Latin external assessment report

General comments

This was the first examination under the revised Latin study design. The examination paper was reduced slightly from those in previous years, which seems to have had a positive impact on the responses of students. The mean score for the examination was 60.25. A good proportion of students performed very well in the examination.

Specific information

Section 1 – Translation of an unseen passage

This is one possible version of the unseen passage. Others are acceptable.

*In the first charge the Romans were superior to such an extent [so victorious] that they not only won with their battle-line but also drove back the enemy and pursued them [pursued the driven back enemy] into [to, towards] their camp, and were soon also attacking the camp. Hannibal, when he had placed a few defenders on the rampart and the gates, took [received] the rest of the troops [the others] in a mass into the middle of the camp and ordered them to wait intently for the signal to break out from the camp. It was already almost the ninth hour of the day, when Sempronius, as he had exhausted his troops without success [when the soldiery had been fatigued in vain], and there was no hope of capturing the camp, gave the signal to withdraw. When Hannibal realised this, he immediately sent out cavalry against [towards] the enemy on the right and left and burst out of the middle of the camp himself with the infantry. Either the Romans or the Carthaginians might have been victorious [would have conquered/won], if daylight [the day] had allowed the battle to continue; however [but], darkness [night], brought an end to [interrupted] the battle.*

Poor use of the dictionary is illustrated by the following: *acie* translated as ‘sharp point’; *solum* as ‘lonely’; *vallo* as ‘valley’; *portis* as ’harbour’ and ‘haven’; *intentos* as ‘stretching out’, ‘threatened’, ‘strictly’, ‘intense’, ‘having been spread out’ and ‘having been strained out’; *signum* as ‘standard’; *nona* as ‘no, none’; *ferme* as ‘carry’; *fatigato* as ‘tormented’; *receptui* as ‘refuge’; *diei* as ‘gods’; *peditibus* as ‘feet’; and *vicissent* as ‘in turn’ (*vicissim*) and ‘lived’. Many students also failed to choose the appropriate meanings for the various prepositions in the passage.

The mean mark for the unseen passage was 28.65. Students in the 2022 examination could be divided into three groups: about a third of the students translated the passage very well and showed a very good knowledge of grammar and syntax; about 40 per cent encountered difficulties with some sections of the passage, but were still able to score quite well by accurately translating other sections; about 15 per cent, however, made very basic errors, such as failing to recognise case and number of nouns and adjectives, the tense, mood and voice of verbs and the use of prepositions. Such errors suggest that there are students attempting the Latin examination who have a very poor understanding of the basics of the language and, consequently, very little ability to translate an unseen passage. Such students would benefit from learning to divide the passage by use of brackets so that they can identify the separate clauses and phrases, as is shown below. Square brackets […] are used at the start and end of sentences. The round brackets (…) surround the clauses and phrases within those sentences. Prepositional phrases are shown in italics.

[(primo concursu adeo Romani superiores fuerunt) (ut non acie vincerent solum) (sed pulsos hostes *in castra* persequerentur,) (mox castra quoque oppugnarent.)] [(Hannibal, (paucis propugnatoribus *in vallo portisque* positis,) ceteros confertos *in media castra* recepit) (intentosque signum *ad erumpendum* exspectare iubet.)] [(iam nona ferme diei hora erat,) (cum Sempronius (nequiquam fatigato milite,) (postquam nulla spes erat potiendi castris,) signum receptui dedit.)] [(quod ubi Hannibal cognovit,) (extemplo equitibus dextra laevaque emissis *in hostem*,) (ipse *cum peditibus* mediis castris erupit.)] [(aut Romani aut Poeni vicissent,) (si extendi pugnam dies sivisset;)] [nox autem proelium diremit.]

For assessment the passage is divided into sections with marks allocated to those sections, as shown below.

*primo … fuerunt* (3 marks)

There were some students who did not make the Romans the subject of the verb but treated *Romani* as a genitive. There was nothing difficult in the vocabulary and grammar of this first clause. It should have helped the students to make a good start, but too many could not make sense of the clause, partly because they did not find appropriate meanings for *concursu* (mistranslated as ‘gathering’) and *superiores* (mistranslated as ‘upper class’, while the Collins gem dictionary gives the meaning ‘victorious’ under the heading of ‘battle’).

*ut … solum* (2 marks)

Too many students did not realise that *ut* introduces a result clause, which is signposted by the use of *adeo*. The conjunction *ut* introduces a variety of clauses, not just purpose. *non..solum – sed* (*etiam*) is a very common Latin expression and one with which students ought to be familiar.

*sed … persequerentur* (3 marks)

Some students treated the deponent verb *persequerentur* as passive. Several students translated *castra* as ‘camps’, but it is a plural form with a singular meaning.

*mox … oppugnarent* (2 marks)

Most students translated this clause successfully, although some mistranslated the verb as passive. A ]number thought that *oppugnarent* meant the same as *pugnarent* and translated it as ‘fought’ rather than ‘attacked’.

*Hannibal … ceteros … recepit* (3 marks)

Although most students understood the gist of this clause, many found it difficult to express in suitable English, because they did not find the correct meanings for *confertos*, *in* and *recepit*.

*paucis … positis* (3 marks)

Students needed to recognise that the ablative absolute is *paucis propugnatoribus positis*, which literally means ‘a few defenders having been placed’. Students are urged to start by translating the ablative absolute in this way before putting it into more appropriate English by use of a clause beginning with a conjunction such as ‘when’. The word ‘absolute’ is the important one in this type of phrase and means ‘separated from’. Latin happened to choose the ablative case, whereas Classical Greek used the genitive. Students are advised not to think of it as ablative and to use ‘by’ or ‘with’ for this reason. Where the defenders are placed is expressed by the prepositional phrase. ‘In’ is not an appropriate meaning of *in* here, as a rampart is a raised structure, usually of earth.

*intentosque … iubet* (4 marks)

Most students understood this clause, but many struggled to find appropriate meanings for *intentos* and *erumpendum*.

*iam … erat* (3 marks)

Most translated this sentence well, but a few failed to recognise the ordinal number *nona*. Poor dictionary use produced ‘almost nothing’ for *ferme nona*.

*cum Sempronius … signum … dedit* (2 marks)

The indicative follows *cum* here because it is the use of inverse *cum*, where the main idea of the sentence becomes subordinate. Some students applied *nequiquam* to the verb *dedit* rather than the short ablative absolute. Some did not find the correct meanings of *signum* and *receptui*.

*nequiquam fatigato milite* (2 marks)

Livy here uses the singular for the plural. Literally this ablative absolute means ‘the soldiers having been exhausted in vain’, which should become a clause in English.

*postquam … castris* (3 marks)

The verb *potior* is one of a very small number which can be followed by an object in the ablative, but most students coped successfully with this and its use as a gerund.

*quod … cognovit* (2 marks)

Many students did not recognise the use of the connecting relative *quod*, a very common usage, which should be translated as ‘this’. It is not acceptable to translate it as ‘who’ or ‘which’.

*extemplo … hostem* (3 marks)

Although both *dextra* and *laeva* are feminine ablative singular as if agreeing with *manu* (hand), which is not expressed, too many students translated this as ‘with his right and left hand’ rather than ‘on the right and the left’. The preposition *in* needs to be translated as ‘against’ or ‘towards’. Livy again uses a singular *hostem* when students might have expected the more usual *hostes*.

*ipse … erupit* (3 marks)

Students needed to translate *ipse* (many left it out), and *erumpit* needed to be translated as ‘burst out from’. Where Hannibal burst out from is expressed by the ablative *mediis castris.* There is no preposition as it is understood from the prefix of the verb.

*aut … vicissent* (2 marks)

The main clause of this impossible/unfulfilled conditional ought to have been straightforward, but some failed to translate the pluperfect subjunctive with ‘might have / would have’ and some treated the nominatives *Romani* and *Poeni* as if they were accusatives and objects of the verb. *Poeni* must be translated as ‘Carthaginians’.

*si … sivisset* (3 marks)

*‘dies’* is the subject of the verb, a fact that was ignored by some. Too many translated it as an accusative expressing time how long.

*nox … diremit* (2 marks)

Most students translated the last sentence correctly.

Section 2 – Comprehension, interpretation and analysis of the prescribed seen text

Part A – Comprehension and analysis of the prescribed seen text

The mean mark for this section was 11.6.

Question 2a.

The speaker is Anna.

Almost all students answered this question correctly.

Question 2b.

Dido has told Anna that she is falling in love with Aeneas, but feels that she should be bound by her oath not to remarry after the death of Sychaeus.

Question 3a.

Iarbas is a local king in (North) Africa.

Some students gave longer answers than were needed, but most answered this question correctly.

Question 3b.

He is described as ‘*despectus*’ (scorned, despised, rejected) because Dido had rejected his offers of marriage.

An answer that simply stated that ‘he is rejected’ was not enough; it had to link the rejection to Dido.

Question 4

The Syrtes were sandbanks just off the coast of North Africa and were dangerous to sailors.

‘Sandbanks dangerous to ships/sailors’ was enough or ‘Sandbanks off the coast of North Africa’. The sandbanks are north of the African coast or southeast of Carthage; inaccurate geographical description (terrain/desert) was not accepted. Nearly three quarters of the students did not answer this question correctly.

Question 5a.

This means that Juno is favourable, as Anna thinks that the Trojans have reached Carthage with the aid of Juno. Students received a mark for conveying the idea of Juno’s support/favour/aid.

Question 5b.

It is ironic because Juno opposed Aeneas and the Trojans and was not considered to be on their side.

Students received a mark for stating that it is ironic as Juno is typically opposed to Aeneas (and the Trojans.) Most students answered both parts of this question correctly.

Question 6

There are three possible benefits:

* The city and kingdom will be enhanced.
* Carthage will benefit in a military respect.
* Carthage will achieve glory.

Students received a mark for any two of these points. Eighty per cent of students scored full marks.

Question 7

Anna tells Dido to seek forgiveness from the gods, to make appropriate sacrifices, to humour her guest and give him many reasons for staying in Carthage.

There are four instructions and students received a mark for any two instructions mentioned. A high proportion of the students answered this question correctly.

Question 8

Anna inflamed Dido’s mind with love, gave hope to her wavering mind and freed her conscience from her feelings of shame (4.54–5).

*his dictis impenso animum flammavit amore  
spemque dedit dubiae menti solvitque pudorem.* 55

There are three possible points and students received one mark for any two points. Just over half of the students answered this question correctly.

Question 9

Dido went to the shrines and sought peace. She made sacrifices and offerings to Ceres, Apollo, Bacchus and Juno most of all, as she was the goddess responsible for marriage. She inspected the entrails for signs. (4.56–64)

One mark was given for each of any two of the following:

* approaching the shrines
* making sacrifices to the gods (no need to name specific gods)
* pouring libations
* inspecting entrails

Two thirds of students scored full marks.

*principio delubra adeunt pacemque per aras  
exquirunt; mactant lectas de more bidentis  
legiferae Cereri Phoeboque patrique Lyaeo,  
Iunoni ante omnis, cui vincla iugalia curae.  
ipsa tenens dextra pateram pulcherrima Dido* 60 *candentis vaccae media inter cornua fundit,  
aut ante ora deum pinguis spatiatur ad aras,  
instauratque diem donis, pecudumque reclusis  
pectoribus inhians spirantia consulit exta*.

Part B – Interpretation of the prescribed seen text

The mean mark for this section was 8.18.

Question 10

*īt pōr|tīs iŭbă|r(e) ēxōr|tō // dē|lēctă iŭv|ēntūs*

Students had to avoid scanning the initial ‘i's of *iubare* and *iuventus*. There is an elision in the third foot. The caesura comes in the fourth foot, but a second foot caesura was allowed. The final vowel of the line is long because third declension nouns ending in -*us* and *-utis* have a long final syllable in the nominative singular.

For scansion questions, students were required to scan the line correctly. Only a few students scanned line 10, because they were answering Question 10, rather than line 2, as the question asked. Only a third of students scanned this line correctly and over 40 per cent did not score.

Students need to be clear on what is and what is not acceptable for questions on scansion. The acceptable method is shown above, as was outlined in the 2021 Examination Report. First, students must write out the line as it appears on the paper. Some students fail to do this and merely write something like SDDSDS as their answer, which is completely unacceptable, or they provide scansion in the correct manner without writing out the line, but this means nothing without the line written out below. Some students did the scansion below the line in such a way that it is very difficult to identify which syllable is being scanned in a particular way. Scansion must be above the line. The caesura should be shown by a double line, as above, or some other marking which clearly distinguishes it from the ending of feet. Not all caesuras will occur in the third foot. Sometimes it is difficult to state where the main caesura occurs and assessors are usually generous and flexible in such cases. Elision should be shown by bracketing the syllable elided, as above, or by placing a cross through the syllable. There is disagreement among commentators as to whether the elided syllable is slurred or completely ignored, but all agree that there is no marking on the elided syllable. The marking comes on the syllable which follows the elided syllable. It is not acceptable to show some link between the elided syllable and the following syllable with the marking of length hanging in mid-air between the two. The scansion of the last syllable in the line is debatable. If the line ends in a vowel, students must decide whether that vowel is short or long according to well established rules, as in Question 15. If it ends in a vowel plus a single consonant, the two methods for teaching scansion disagree. One demands that the syllable is long, the other that it may be long or short according to whether the syllable is pronounced long or short. It is not acceptable to mark the final syllable with anything other than a long or a short, such as a cross.

Question 11a.

The line ends in a monosyllable.

‘Unusual’ was the key word in the question. There are only 50 lines in the *Aeneid* where there is a monosyllable as the last syllable in the sixth foot. It is not unusual to have a line with many dactyls, as some students suggested. Only a quarter of the students gave the correct answer.

Question 11b.

*Māssl|īquě rŭ|ūnt ěquĭ|tēs // ět ŏd|ōră căn|ūm vīs.*

This produces an agitated end to the line with clash of accent and ictus to reflect the excitement of the scene.

Students that stated that the use of four dactyls suggests the rushing around of the men and animals received a mark. The scansion of the line is shown above, as it clearly indicates how some answers were incorrect.

Question 12

The accusatives *reginam* and *cunctantem* enclose the ablative *thalamo*.

As it is an explanation, mention had to be made of the cases or agreement of *reginam* and *cunctantem,* which enclose *thalamo*; labels or merely referring to the English were not adequate. The 2021 Examination Report clearly pointed out that students should be guided by the explanations given in the study design. Only just over a quarter of the students answered this question correctly.

Question 13

There is alliteration of both s and f (***s****tat* ***s****onipe****s******s****pumantia* and ***f****rena* ***f****erox*). There is assonance of the sound of the vowel ‘a’ in *spumantia* and *mandit*.

Students received a mark for identifying the alliteration and assonance correctly, Students had to identify the words which produce their chosen alliteration and assonance by writing them out and highlighting the letters which give rise to the alliteration or assonance. Students did not have to identify both examples of alliteration, one was enough. Most students scored full marks.

Question 14

The brilliance of gold (*auro, aurum, aurea*) and the brightness of purple (*purpuream*) add colour to the scene being described. Both colours are associated with royalty.

Students needed to make two points (with appropriately quoted Latin) – gold is one, purple the other. Three quarters of the students scored full marks.

Question 15

*Crētēs|quē Drŏ|pēsquě frě|mūnt // pīc|tīqu(e) Ăgă|thrsī;*

Students had to remember to scan the two ‘y’s – one short and one long. This point was made in the 2021 Examination Report. The first *-que* is lengthened in arsis, a very rare occurrence. There is elision in the fifth foot. The caesura comes in the strong position in the fourth foot rather than in the weak position in the third, but assessors allowed the weak third. Again, a small number of students scanned line 15, because it is Question 15, rather than line 18 as the question asks. The acceptable form for the scansion of the line is shown above. Although this line of scansion was considered to be more difficult, more students scanned it correctly than in Question 10, and slightly fewer failed to achieve marks.

Question 16

Apollo is always portrayed as a god of male beauty. Here he arranges his hair and holds it in place with foliage (laurel?) and gold (ribbon?). He is striding out just as Aeneas strides out. As Aeneas is likened to Apollo, it enhances both his physical appearance and his actions.

For full marks students had to make two points. One had to refer to the physical beauty of Apollo (flowing hair, etc.) and the other to the physical motion (striding out) in lines 19 and 20. Over half of the students scored one mark, but only 20 per cent scored full marks.

Question 17

This is synchesis/interlocking word order. The nominatives *tantum* and *decus* are interlocked with the ablatives *egregio* and *ore* in an abab order.

Students were required to identify the interlocking word order and identify how the words make it interlocking to receive full marks. Reference had to be made to the cases or agreement of the pairs of words to achieve the mark; it is not sufficient merely to use labels a and b. Nearly half of the students failed to score on this question and only a quarter scored full marks.

Part C – Analysis of themes and ideas from the prescribed seen text

Question 18

The mean mark for this question was 2.93.

Wicked Rumour (*impia Fama*) brought the news of the preparations of the fleet to Dido, who is in a frenzy (*furenti*). *furor* is used to describe the forces which oppose *pietas* and rational behaviour in the *Aeneid.* Dido is in a rage (*saevit*) and lacks reason (*inops animi*). She is inflamed (*incensa*) with anger as she roams through the whole city. She is in a frenzy like a follower of Bacchus (*bacchatur*). The simile from *qualis* to *Cithaeron* elaborates the circumstances and the manner of such Bacchic revelry.

Marks were awarded for each valid point presented. As shown above, there were really five words that emphasised Dido’s state of mind at this point. Students had to quote the Latin in brackets to support the points they were making in English. If no Latin or some token Latin from the passage was quoted, students could not receive full marks, no matter how good the response. If students did not put the Latin in brackets, they did not receive any marks. The terms *pius/pietas* and *furor* as part of the English response were accepted, as they are basic concepts used in the *Aeneid*. There were many very good answers very similar to the answer given above. Some wrote more about the simile than was necessary, as it describes the behaviour of the followers of Bacchus rather than Dido’s state of mind. There were still some students who didn’t quote the Latin that illustrated their points and a very small number who wrote a mixture of English and Latin. About a third of the students scored 0–2, but nearly 40 per cent scored 4 or 5, a good percentage of whom scored full marks.

Question 19

The mean mark for this question was 8.89.

The purpose of this question was to make the students focus on one of the sections prescribed for study. The question asked them to use high-order skills in evaluating the arguments of Dido and Aeneas. The assessors’ aim was to give the students plenty of freedom to develop a response as they wished.

A major feature of Book 4 is Virgil’s use of rhetoric, as there are several verbal discussions and arguments between humans and gods in the narrative, as well as individual speeches, such as those of Iarbas and Mercury.

[Virgil uses very vivid language (lines 279–282) to show the effect that Mercury’s appearance and message have on Aeneas. Lines 283–295 show that Aeneas does not know what to do or how to approach Dido with the news that he is leaving, although he tells his men to quietly prepare for departure. These lines occur before the confrontation starts, but might have been relevant to a student’s answer.]

There follows a summary of the points made by Aeneas and Dido in their speeches in these lines. Students were asked to evaluate the strength of the arguments presented. They were then asked to explain which of Dido and Aeneas is presented more sympathetically to them as a reader.

Dido: The case for the prosecution (296–330).

At the beginning of the confrontation, it is Dido who seizes the initiative and begins the argument (*tandem his Aeneas compellat vocibus ultro*). She begins with an angry attack, but then her mood changes in line 320. The main points of her speech (305–320) are:

* Aeneas is betraying her, especially if he hoped to leave secretly.
* Does their relationship, which she considers to be a marriage (*data dextera*), mean nothing to him?
* Does the thought that Dido will die (the first sign of how the book will end) not move him?
* Why is Aeneas considering sailing during winter, a period during which he would not even consider going back to Troy? She considers him to be cruel for doing so. [These first four points are made angrily.]

She pleads with him to stay and continue what she repeats is a formal marriage (316), as she seeks to arouse pity in him for her situation and that of her kingdom. She cannot understand why he is running away from her. [Her tone changes to one of begging.]

She becomes consumed by self-pity as she considers what her situation will be if Aeneas and the Trojans leave. She claims that she will be bound to die (323). She fears that either Pygmalion or Iarbas will attack her. [She is consumed by self-pity.]

She ends pathetically that she wished Aeneas had left her with a child to remind her of him and to provide her some comfort. [These last lines are full of pathos.]

Aeneas: The case for the defence (333–361).

Before Aeneas begins to reply, Virgil reminds the reader that Jupiter’s warnings, brought to him by Mercury (remember the vivid picture of the effect on Aeneas [279ff]), are still clearly governing his actions. Line 332 aptly describes the difficulty that his decision is causing him.

He begins by acknowledging all that she has done for him and says that he will never forget her. He claims that it is not his intention to sneak away. [He tries to humour her.]

In lines 338–9 he makes it very clear that he has never offered marriage and does not consider that a marriage exists in strong and blunt contrast to Dido’s claims. R.G. Austin *P Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quartus* Oxford 1955 (p.108) notes ‘The gulf between the two is now plain to see: in Dido, desire could always deceive duty, in Aeneas, desire could never win the last battle’. [Here the two sides of the argument about the events in the cave becomes clear.]

He makes clear what he would like to do, if he was free to choose: he would be back at Troy rebuilding the city. The choice is not his, however, as Apollo has made clear that his future lies in Italy. Significantly, he says that Italy is now his love (not Dido) and his homeland (*hic amor, haec patria est* 347).

He then compares their situations. Dido is a refugee too and has established her city in a new land. Why, then, does she object to the thought that the Trojans are seeking their promised land?

He then turns to the importance of family. He is haunted by warning dreams from his father Anchises. He does not want to cheat his son Ascanius out of his due inheritance.

He then points out that he is responding to the vivid recent commands of the gods. [These last four points are offered as his reasons for the decision he has made.]

He ends by begging her to accept the situation by not making things worse with her complaints.

He emphasises (361) that he is not leaving because he wants to (*Italiam non sponte sequor*). [This last, very short and very emphatic point ends his case very strongly.]

In fact, Aeneas’ speech is more passionate than many allow.

One of the problems which have beset this passage is the fact that most have assessed it through a modern lens rather than through the lens of a Roman contemporary of Virgil, as Austin does.

Austin *op.cit.* (105–6) refutes the opinion of Page that Virgil makes Aeneas seem despicable. He writes ‘The speech is Virgil’s way of showing the conflict between Dido’s uncontrolled emotion and Aeneas’ pale cast of thought. She has appealed to feeling, he answers by reason and logic. Her speech gives fact, as she sees it; his gives fact as he sees it. He does not disguise the stark and brutal truth, that she has deceived herself, he has not deceived her. The tone is cold and formal, and at the end we see why it is so; had he not controlled himself [and the tenseness of his struggle is clear from 360–1], he would have broken down and yielded. His speech, though we may not like it, was the Roman answer to the conflict between two compelling forms of love, an answer such as a Roman Brutus gave, when he executed his two sons for treason against Rome. It is no fault of Virgil’s that the harsh conflict between duty and desire is what it is; and given that conflict, Virgil knew that this was how he must show it. Aeneas has wronged Dido, and he knows it; he has wronged God, and he knows it; atonement either way means pain for ever; and it is our pity that we should give him, not our scorn’.

Dido’s response to the case for the defence is predictable, but lacks calmness and logic. It is that of a very angry woman (362–392).

In 362–4 Virgil paints an excellent picture of Dido’s disbelief and disdain. She bursts out in anger (*accensa*). Again (366 as in 305) she attacks his treacherous behaviour.

He is so hard-hearted that Dido claims he must be the offspring of mountains rather than a god and a human.

She gives full vent to her tears and wonders why Aeneas is not moved to pity her.

She repeats what she considers she has done for him and his Trojans and says that, if this is his response, how can anything be trusted in life.

She scorns the idea of messages and commands from the gods. Yet she showed her belief in them in 4.56–64. See also 1.445–6, 1.632 and 1.731–5.

She tells him to go, but hopes that, if there is any justice (*pia* is heavily ironic), he will be duly punished.

She promises that she will haunt him when she is dead and hopes that news will reach her of his punishment when she is in the Underworld.

Dido breaks off and rushes into the palace, leaving Aeneas in a state of fear and trying hard to think of what to say. She collapses and is carried to her chamber by her attendants. [The dutiful Aeneas, however (line 393 is the first time the epithet *pius* is applied to Aeneas in this book), much as he wants to calm her, soothe her and take away the pain of her suffering, returns to his men to continue with obeying the instructions of the gods. This happens after the confrontation ends but might be mentioned legitimately by students.]

These are some of the facts students could have relied on while evaluating the strength of the arguments put forward by Dido and Aeneas. They had to give some form of evaluation, but were free to develop their arguments as they saw fit. Many leant towards Dido in their assessment, some favoured Aeneas. There is no one right answer. Students were assessed on the validity of their argument and the evidence they produced to support it. Assessment was made according to the [assessment criteria](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/exams/latin/latin-crit-descriptors-w.pdf) as published on the VCAA website.

Students were also free to present any valid argument to the second half of the question. It is worth pointing out, though, that the views of Virgil’s contemporaries may have been very different from those of a modern reader. To the Roman, Dido is the forerunner of Hannibal, their most hated enemy, as Virgil makes clear in 621–9. The irrationality of Dido and her behaviour, not in line with that of the ideal Roman matron, may not have appealed to Roman readers. For them, Aeneas is likely to appeal for his pietas and his willingness to put duty before personal feelings. In modern times scholars have been more sympathetic towards the presentation of Dido than that of Aeneas. Students were free to develop their own argument for which character is presented more sympathetically. It was hoped they would choose one or other as more sympathetically presented rather than sitting on the fence. The case they presented was assessed by following the criteria:

* relevance of response to the question
* knowledge and understanding of the text and its themes and ideas, including understanding of the historical, cultural, philosophical and mythological background of the text
* quality of supporting evidence
* validity and cohesiveness of argument.

Students seemed able to respond to this question at great length. Students are reminded, however, that it is the quality of their answer, not its length, which gains them marks. Most important of all is relevance. Teachers and students are advised to pay particular attention to the published criteria. These make clear that responses that are not relevant to the question are likely to fall into the medium or lower medium range. There were some students who wrote at some length, but did not address the question. They will have expected to be rewarded with a high mark, but the criteria clearly make this impossible. Although the question directed students to consider the confrontation in lines 296–392, there were still students who directed their responses to the whole of Book 4 or felt compelled to mention events in other books of the *Aeneid.* The final question in the examination in future years may well require students to consider the whole of the set book, not just the prescribed lines of that book, or to consider the prescribed lines in the context of events in other books of the *Aeneid*. The question this year specifically directed them to address part of the prescribed lines of Book 4.

Many responses addressed Dido’s first speech and Aeneas’ reply quite well, but totally ignored Dido’s second speech with its very different tone. The highest-scoring answers concentrated on each of the three speeches and assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the cases being presented, and did so with good supporting evidence from the text. Answers that did not score well, perhaps because the students had already written on the topic, tended to concentrate on the question of whether Dido was presented sympathetically in the whole of Book 4 and only addressed the speeches in the confrontation in a superficial way. There were some students who did not understand what the words ‘presented sympathetically’ meant. The students were being asked to state whether they had more sympathy for Aeneas or Dido from their reading of the set text and to give reasons for their choice. They were not being asked to decide whether Aeneas or Dido showed more sympathy in the confrontation. Students are reminded that in a question like this there is no one right answer. Students are assessed according to the assessment criteria on the strength of the argument presented, the relevance to the question asked, the understanding of the text and its historical background, and the supporting evidence presented from the *Aeneid*.