2019 VCE History: Ancient History examination report

General comments

Questions 1a. 'Outline'

These questions require students to show comprehension of the source, summarising the overall meaning of the source while highlighting the features required by the question. Full marks are given for identifying at least three key points.

'Clearly' means using specific quotations from a written source or accurately describing specific features of a visual source. 'Comprehensively' means showing that the student understands what these quotations or features mean in the context of the source. Using a bullet point approach is not advisable. Even if three relevant points are provided, they will not necessarily show a comprehensive understanding. It is not necessary to provide additional historical meaning or to quote historians.

Questions 1b. 'Explain'

These questions require students to show causal relations – why and how things happened in the ways they did. This means the student is expected to discuss the ideas raised in the source but also show the importance of relevant external factors.

Summarising the source will usually mean that a response gains about half of the available marks. Including other factors and explaining why they are important moves the response towards full marks. Historians can be quoted here to add weight to explanations but specific historical details (names, dates, facts, statistics, people, places or events) are essential for the highest marks.

Questions 1c. 'Evaluate'

These questions require students to show both the importance of some main factor explicitly stated in the question as well as other factors not stated in the question. These factors must be discussed in relation to a larger historical context. High-scoring responses usually divide the answer into two clearly separate sections introduced with a conjoining word (such as 'however' or 'additionally').

The 1c. questions highlight the challenge of this study. Ancient History is a history survey study (Area of Study 1 covers hundreds of years) and these questions usually involve a survey answer. They provide an opportunity to show broad knowledge of the area of study, especially by considering historical change and continuity over time. The questions assume students have a grasp of the broad social, political and economic narratives of the ancient civilisations. The highest-scoring responses were ones that understood this and provided a nuanced survey of trends, developments and key events using specific examples.

A student who only discusses the factor stated in the question is essentially suggesting that it is categorically the most significant factor. Conversely, a student may attempt to entirely reject the main factor stated in the question. Neither position will lead to a genuinely evaluative response. Some students wrote a couple of lines to the effect that the main factor was not very significant.

Some development of this is needed, but it is a generally valid approach to devote most of the response to other factors instead, so long as the main factor receives some attention.

The highest-scoring responses saw the sources as providing some strategy, logic or starting point for addressing the question. The sources often present a narrow perspective and high-scoring responses provided a bigger-picture understanding. Specific historical details are required; quotations from historians are appropriate and typically feature in the highest-scoring responses, but are not essential.

Essays

The assessment provide a description of what is expected. The criteria are applied holistically. However, the principle of relevance underpins all the criteria for the essay and is a key determinant of how the essay is assessed. It is difficult to reward a student's use of historical thinking concepts, sources and interpretations if they are not organised in the service of a relevant response.

Because relevance is so important, students should not usually reject the premise of the question. Generally, whenever elements of the study design are given in the question, those elements require a thorough and focused discussion. The wording of most topics allows for the premise to be given a lesser emphasis. However, the highest-scoring responses tended to either retain a consistent focus on the specific wording of the topic throughout or provide a specific, conceptual link between ideas even when moving beyond the explicit terms of the topic.

Although there are no prescribed conventions for the essay response, a conventional format is appropriate for most essay topics. It is usually appropriate to address the topic, provide an outline, discuss, then reach a meaningful conclusion. Different essay topics may lend themselves to different formats (when a comparison between two events or persons is required, for example).

Specific details such as names, dates, people, places, statistics or events, are essential. When a response makes a claim about something that happened in the past it should be supported by specific historical facts. Likewise, quotations from primary sources and historians are important, but must be relevant to the topic. A good way to use these quotations is to reinforce the student's own judgment about why some historical event was significant.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report are subject to rounding that may result in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Civilisation chosen	none	Egypt	Greece	Rome
%	0	22	39	39

Section A – Egypt

Part 1 – Living in an ancient society

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	22	2	5	15	55	2.8

This question required analysis by students as they had to decide what constituted 'significance'. Most students understood that the source was a way for Hatshepsut to make claims about her right to exercise power and, once they had this clear, were able to find elements in the source that related to that purpose.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Source 1 dictates that the god Amun acted with haste and conviction in his conception of Hatshepsut with Queen Ahmuse, acting "immediately", "imposing" himself and even "ensuring" his divine form was recognised, implying an importance to the event as stressed by the god's transparency and overt intentions.

Additionally, in his personal speech, the god proclaims that Hatshepsut shall assume an "excellent kingship", enabled by his bestowment of his "soul" and "bounty", the god passing on his personal attributes and confidence to ensure that she will "rule the two lands" with divine […] The source also includes another god to emphasise significance, the god Ahum proclaiming he will fashion Hatshepsut to be "more exalted than the gods" to rule with "great dignity", further stressing divinity's pertinant action in crafting Egypt a profound ruler in their stead, Hatshepsut.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	21	2	6	20	24	20	8	3.2

The question was about the economics of New Kingdom Egypt, but most responses focused on Hatshepsut's expedition to Punt. While this event could certainly form the basis of the response, other elements needed to be considered, such as military booty and tribute.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

The growth in Egypt's economy via trade and tribute acquired from expeditions, such as Hatshepsut's expedition to punt in Source 3 and military campaigns such as the victory at Megiddo in 1456 by Egypt led by Amutmase III, allowed for further external growth, and, the ability to adorn and embelish Egypt internally. Source 2 alludes to the vast amount of "luxury goods" received by Egypt via their own resource extraction, and that which was found in Nubia. As Beard pertains, Hatshepsut "donated" those goods in "Amun's honour", taking the form of constructive projects at Karnak, the Queen erecting large obelisks in honour of the god outside the entrance way. Hatshepsut was not alone however, the influx of "wealth" into Egypt which occurred during the 18th dynasty allowed for internal growth and elaborate building projects, none more monumental than the mortuary temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el Buhri, her "most enduring monument" as remarked by Bryan, as the impressive temple at Luxor, commissioned by Amenhotop III, which was "wrought with gold" as described in a building statue outside of his mortuary temple.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	24	1	7	8	9	14	11	10	8	5	2	**4.1**

This question contained a range of key terms that had to be dealt with, especially 'co-regency' and 'god-king'. High-scoring responses dealt with both the way Hatshepsut made claims to pharaonic power (particularly through the way she represented herself) as well as her relationship with Thutmosis III. Other appropriate considerations were changes and continuities in the role and nature of the god-king. Some students, for example, suggested that Thutmosis' military prowess showed that at least some aspects of the god-king were not significantly challenged.

Part 2 – People in power, societies in crisis

Question chosen	None	2	3
%	25	60	15

Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	26	1	2	3	2	3	5	4	6	3	7	5	5	7	6	6	3	3	3	0.3	0.3	**7.7**

Question 2

Most responses focused on Akhenaten although the topic was about the Eighteenth Dynasty. The higher-scoring responses looked at the actions of Amenhotep III, then Akhenaten and Nefertiti and finally the restoration of traditional religion under Tutankhamun.

Question 3

There were relatively few attempted responses to this topic and many misinterpreted the question. Most responses focused on Akhenaten introducing changes after Amenhotep III rather than discussing changes in Egypt generally at the end of Amenhotep's reign.

Section B – Greece

Part 1 – Living in an ancient society

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	1	3	10	82	**3.7**

Responses to this question were generally clear and relevant, outlining the steps in a programmatic way. The format of the source presented a challenge to some students, especially when they were unsure who Homer and Thucydides were.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	7	14	20	20	19	10	**3.4**

Most students were able to make use of the map and table to inform their responses with specific details. The highest-scoring responses discussed a range of social, economic and environmental factors such as stasis, division of land among inheriting sons and the lack of arable land in Greece.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	12	5	10	10	12	15	10	10	9	5	3	**4.5**

An ideal response to this question would discuss the importance of colonisation as a factor in development and then move on to other factors such as the growth of legal and constitutional systems, the so-called hoplite revolution or the rise of tyrants. There was a tendency to see Greece as a nation state, like Rome, with both cultural cohesion and a specific expansionist agenda. This led to claims that colonisation allowed for Greek military dominance over the Mediterranean. This highlighted the need for responses to this sort of survey question to demonstrate an awareness of how things changed over time. The term 'Hellenistic' was often used, which is anachronistic for this time period. It may have been conflated with 'Hellenic', possibly as a result of discussing shared, panhellenic cultural features. It was adequate to simply use the word 'Greek'.

Part 2 – People in power, societies in crisis

Question chosen	None	2	3
%	11	61	29

Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	14	4	7	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	6	6	6	5	4	3	2	1	**8.4**

Question 2

A variety of strategies were used in response to this question. Most students looked at Athens in one paragraph and then other factors in the paragraphs that followed (usually the role of Sparta and then the role of other city states or elements of Greek history and character). Lower-scoring responses accepted the premise of the topic without critique and argued that Athens was indeed solely to blame for the war; these essays tended to have weaker arguments and a more limited range of points to make.

Question 3

The highest-scoring responses focused on Lysander in comprehensive detail, dividing the information into distinct periods of time and discussing Lysander's actions in the context of military and political developments in the war. Most students were not able to maintain this degree of focus and only wrote one paragraph on Lysander and the other two on other factors. This was a valid strategy considering the wording of the topic. Alcibiades was a popular choice but other factors included Pericles, the Sicilian Expedition, Athenian populism and Spartan militarism. The lowest-scoring responses virtually ignored Lysander.

Section C – Rome

Part 1 – Living in an ancient society

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	1	5	11	79	**3.6**

Most students demonstrated a clear understanding of the information in the source.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	10	4	13	30	19	14	10	**3.3**

This question required students to recognise that the Assembly in question was the Centuriate Assembly; many responses did not use this term. Many responses relied almost exclusively on the source to provide an overview of the form of the Assembly and some of its functions. The Assembly changed over time – from a military to a clearly political organisation – and high-scoring responses showed some understanding of these changes.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	13	6	13	10	11	10	8	10	7	6	5	**4.4**

One of the 'historical narratives' in the survey approach to the study of Rome is the development of political power and the complex relationship of its various parts: assemblies, councils, senate, magistrates, tribunes, priesthoods and people. This question required students to consider whether the assemblies (plural) were the most important political feature (from among a range of features) over a 350-year period. A good survey answer is one that shows an understanding of the components of the Roman constitution and how they developed and interacted over time. Many responses did not clearly differentiate between the various assemblies. High-scoring approaches contrasted the powers of the assemblies with the senate and discussed the way that new assemblies were created over time in response to social and political change (especially the changing role of the plebeians).

Part 2 – People in power, societies in crisis

Question chosen	None	2	3
%	9	44	47

Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	13	3	5	5	6	5	6	6	5	5	4	5	6	4	5	4	4	2	3	2	1	**8.2**

Question 2

This question contained a number of features from the study design; the highest-scoring responses engaged with all of these. A common and valid strategy was to look at the role of Marius, then Sulla and then the Civil War over three paragraphs. Some tried to look at Marius and Sulla in the first paragraph, the Civil War in the second and then other factors in the third (such as the Gracchi or Augustus). The wording of the topic focused on comparing these two conflicts, so extraneous factors were hard to link into a conceptual whole.

Question 3

Most high-scoring responses to this topic explored the conflict between Octavian and Antony in chronological order, dividing their conflict into early, middle and late phases. Other appropriate approaches included focusing the third paragraph on Augustus' actions after the defeat of Antony. Some responses considered the conflict of Octavian and Antony in only one paragraph and then looked at other causes of the fall of the republic in the other paragraphs (usually some version of the Gracchi/Marius and Sulla/Civil War narrative). This could be a valid approach but was rarely executed effectively. For this approach to work some sustained thematic link was needed, and if the information was presented chronologically, it may take a long time to get to Octavian and Antony, which would undermine the relevance of the response.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

> *The rivalry between Octavian and Mark Antony represented the struggle for the future of Rome. As Gwynn explains, Octavian had no intentions of restoring the republic, wanting to create his own personal empire. The rilvary the two men had represented the struggle and the culmination of the failing republic, as the final civil war between two men fighting for individual power. However, this rilvary showcases Octavian as the figurehead of the republic's downfall, the man who established the creation of an empire by his personal ambition, rather than the result of his duel with Antony. Whilst the struggle between Octavian and Antony contributed to the republic's fall, it was the portrayal of Octavian during this period that ultimately led to the final collapse.*
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> *The rivalry demonstrated the failings of the Roman political system. Like the predessors before them, Octavian an Antony wished to take control of the vunerable political situation for their personal gain. As Gwynn explains, the will of the people wished stability, despite resenting sole rule. After Caesar's death in 44, the 'power vacuum' left open enabled Octavian and Antony to seize an opportunity of being the ruler of the republic. However, as Beard suggests, Octavian wanted to "avenge" the death of his adoptive father and finish what he wanted to create. This pitted him against Antony, who had joined forces with Cleopatra the VII of Egypt – as […] highlights, the east represented monarchy, backwardness and oppression compared to the western values of liberty – by utilising this difference, Octavian was able to exploit this conflict with Antony and rebranding it as defence of republican values. As Beard explains, it illustrated him resenting the new cult of Antony's Dionysus. This culminated in Actium in 31, and the pressing defeat of Antony's forces, and his death in 30, showcased Octavian as the Saviour and hero of the Roman Republic. As Gwynn suggests, this allowed him to take the Roman political scene by storm making all in Rome […] his desire for empire. The defeat of Antony in a fractured political system allowed for the decline of the Roman republic.*
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> *Octavian's character was also represented during his clash with Antony. Despite the obvious timing, the period further illustrated Octavian's desire for sole power of Rome. As Jones suggests, Octavian had no desire to restore the empire to its former glory, unlike that of both Marius and Sulla. For Octavian, his ambition was the representation of the "New Caesar", according to Gwynn, and demonstrated his lust for individual power over the senate. The rivalry between him and Antony presented the same opportunity as Caesar and Pompey in 49-45, yet he needed to achieve his desires unlike that of Caesar, according to Humble. His deliberate avoidance of certain offices, especially that of dictator enabled him to win favour with those in the senate as well as the common people. The rivalry with Antony presented him as a savour of the republic (Beard) yet he desired to destroy it for his personal gain. The two settlements of 25*

and 23 allowed Octavian to remain both a friend of the people and a protector of republican values despite its fall earlier. His change of name to 'Augustus' (revered one) also demonstrate his ambitions throughout the course of the rivalry culminating in his victory and love by the people. Thus, Octavian's character of power hungry and ambitious both was a major factor in him defeating Antony and creating the successful installment of the Roman empire. Octavians character was highlighted in his feud with Antony.

The rivalry between Octavian and Antony ultimate was a key cause in its collapse. Not only did this rivalry allow Octavian to take control of a weak political situation, but also add to his positive portrayal in Rome despite his sinister motives. The feud of Octavian and Antony greatly contributed to the fall of the Roman Republic.