18th September, 2023

Dear OCR,

We write as representatives of the Classical Association Teaching Board (CATB) to raise our concerns about the grade boundaries for Ancient History A Level this summer (2023).

**2023 Grade boundaries and statistics**

Our questions concern the data which we have provided in the table below, made available by OCR, which compares OCR A Level Ancient History results in 2023 with those of OCR Classical Civilisation and OCR History, two similar subjects which are often taught by teachers of Ancient History, as well as with the national average for all A Level grades.

We have now heard from 30 centres who entered candidates for the Ancient History A Level exam this summer, and the feedback we have received from teachers is that their strongest candidates are missing out in significant numbers on A* and A grades which they had been expected to achieve. For these strong candidates, their Ancient History grade is typically their lowest or equal lowest grade.

Our **key** question is therefore as follows:

- How is it that Ancient History awards so many fewer A*'s and A grades in comparison with Classical Civilisation, History, and the national average?

We believe that ‘daylight is the best disinfectant’, and so if you can show us why these figures are justified for Ancient History, we and our teacher community will no doubt be reassured.

In addition, we would like to drill down into the data and ask these follow-up questions:

- The ‘B cumulative’ percentage for Ancient History is very similar to Classical Civilisation (59.16 / 60.59), and yet there is a 7.78% gap between the ‘A cumulative’ percentage (19.40 / 27.18), and a 2.85% gap between the rates of A* (2.75 / 5.6). How do you explain this?

- The ‘B cumulative’ percentage for Ancient History is 2.43% greater than for History (59.16 / 56.73), and yet there is a 5.5% gap in History’s favour between the ‘A cumulative’ percentage (19.40 / 24.9), and a 2.85% gap between the rates of A* (2.75 / 5.6). How do you explain this?

- Classical Civilisation and History A* and ‘A cumulative’ percentages have increased notably since 2019, while Ancient History has increased fractionally on its A* percentage from 2019, and decreased on its ‘A cumulative’ percentage. How do you explain this?

- With reference to the point above, how is it that the Ancient History A* percentage has increased slightly, but ‘A cumulative’ percentage has decreased? You are saying that there will be more candidates who will reach A* standard than in 2019, but fewer
who will reach A standard. Is this realistic?

- It is our understanding that no A*s were awarded to candidates that entered both H407/13 (Macedon) and H407/21 (Republic), which is entry Option G. Is this a realistic outcome? Are you satisfied that candidates offering this Option are being examined as consistently as candidates offering other Options?

- Many centres are reporting that there was a significant difference between the marks their candidates scored on the Greek paper and the Roman paper, with the Roman paper often being 10 or more marks higher. How great is the difference between the average (both mean and median) for each paper?

We would be very grateful for your answers to all these questions.

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<tr>
<td>Ancient History</td>
<td>2.75 (2.43)</td>
<td>19.40 (19.60)</td>
<td>59.16</td>
<td>84.55</td>
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<td>27.18 (24.87)</td>
<td>60.59</td>
<td>84.69</td>
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<td>99.20</td>
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<tr>
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<td>25.49 (25.14)</td>
<td>56.73</td>
<td>80.77</td>
<td>94.08</td>
<td>98.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>All GCE</td>
<td>7.7 (7.8)</td>
<td>25.4 (25.5)</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>97.6</td>
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As the dialogue between the Classical Association Teaching Board and OCR continues to develop, we welcome this opportunity to support you in addressing the concerns that have been raised, and are committed to continuing to support the dialogue between you and the Classics teaching community.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sharon Marshall (CATB Chair)
Gráinne Cassidy (CA Education Co-ordinator)
James Renshaw (CATB subject representative for Ancient History)