



OCR Exams FAQs

by Caroline Bristow

Caroline is the OCR Subject Specialist, and here she explains how the OCR Classics team is supporting teachers through general qualifications reform.

Who are the OCR Classics team?

The OCR Classics team are myself and Alex Orgee, and we bring both teaching and assessment experience to our role, as well as relevant subject knowledge. Our remit as Subject Specialists is to support and inform the Classics subject community on all issues relevant to our qualifications. As OCR is the only awarding body with a full suite of Classics qualifications, we are kept busy answering teachers' queries, working on the development of new qualifications, producing teaching and learning resources, organising CPD events and generally trying to be as active as possible within the Classics community.

Latin and Classical Greek

Is everything accredited?

Yes, all OCR qualifications in Latin and Classical Greek, at GCSE (9 – 1), AS and A Level, have been accredited by Ofqual. Our accredited specifications can be found on the OCR website [here](#).

When are the last exams for the current specification? What specification do my students need to use?

The best way to determine what specification to use is to work out what date your students will be sitting their exam (as a first time candidate, not for re-sits).

For GCSE and A Level:

- 2017 – this will be the final examination series for the current specification
- 2018 – this is the first year of examinations for the new specifications

For AS Level:

- 2016 - this will be the final examination series for the current specification
- 2017 - this is the first year of examinations for the new specifications

For AS and A Level, re-sit opportunities will be available for candidates who sit the current specification exams in 2016 (AS Level) and 2017 (A Level), and there will also be 2017 AS Level exams available for candidates who have sit the AS Level exams at the end of their second year, having begun their courses in 2015.

Are the new AS and A Levels co-teachable?

Yes, it is envisaged that AS Level content will be covered in the first year of study,

and then, when AS Level students have sat their exam, the A Level only content will be taught in the second year. We have produced a co-teaching guide to help teachers to plan and deliver a co-taught course; this will be found on the AS and A Level Latin and Classical Greek qualification pages under 'Teaching and Learning Resources'.

*Do my students **have** to translate into the ancient language in their exam?*

No, this is **optional** at GCSE, AS and A Level. Should you not wish your students to be examined on this skill then they can answer questions testing their knowledge of syntax, accidence, grammar and comprehension dependent on the level.

Why is there no defined vocabulary list (DVL) for A Level?

It is important that students who sit an A Level in Latin or Classical Greek are suitably prepared for higher level study. At degree level a student would be expected to study the language without the aid of a defined vocabulary list. We feel that the foundation provided by the AS Level DVL is a firm one, and the act of adding to this in a non-prescriptive way promotes a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the languages. Teachers and students should, however, be assured that any unusual or particularly complex words will be glossed on the exam paper, and we are very aware

of what can be expected of students of this level when constructing the papers.

Why have the set text cycles for AS and A Level reduced to two years?

This was not a decision that we took lightly. We are aware that teachers will need to plan and prepare for these set text changes, and this is why we will be producing resources to support the teaching of set texts, and our publishing partner Bloomsbury will be creating support volumes for every text. Given the structure and regulations around the new qualifications we feel a two year set text cycle is the best way to guarantee high-quality, effective assessments throughout the lifetime of the specification. In order to create co-teachable AS and A Level courses we had to have set texts which were examined both at AS Level and A Level. In practice this means that Group 1 and 3 texts need to be produce at least four question papers (two years of AS Level papers, two of A Level). This means that these texts need to produce more extracts for examination than those on the current specification.

Classical Civilisation and Ancient History

Why are these on a different timeline? What is that timeline?

There has been some confusion about the timelines of Ancient Languages (Latin and Classical Greek) versus Classical Civilisation and Ancient History. Ancient Languages are in what is known as ‘Tranche 2’, i.e. first teaching 2016. Classical Civilisation and Ancient History are ‘Tranche 3’ i.e. a year behind, with first teaching in 2017. The process for Tranche 3 subjects involved subjects being judged by Ofqual against five criteria to ensure their suitability for development:

1. Did they have a clear purpose?
2. Were they of a suitable level of demand?
3. Could they effectively differentiate student performance?
4. Could they be assessed validly?
5. Were they distinct subjects with sufficient unique content, or were there other subjects with shared content and similar purposes?

Subject Criteria documents were then drawn up in consultation with Ofqual and the Department for Education.

What are the Subject Criteria documents?

The Subject Criteria documents set out the knowledge, understanding and skills common to all specifications for GCSE (9 – 1), AS or A Level in Ancient History or Classical Civilisation. Meeting this document’s requirements is a compulsory part of the accreditation process. This document is freely available on the Department for Education’s website. The final GCSE criteria can be found here and AS and A level criteria [here](#).

When will the specifications be finished?

We will submit our specifications to Ofqual in accordance with the deadline set by the regulator. Once we have submitted our specifications to Ofqual we will release the draft documents to the public on our website. Our submission then enters the process of accreditation, helpfully outlined by Ofqual in their blog [here](#).

How do the new Ancient History and Classical Civilisation qualifications relate to one another?

The Subject Criteria set out different approaches to Ancient History and

Classical Civilisation for this round of GQ Reform. OCR will continue to offer both Ancient History and Classical Civilisation qualifications, as they have very different roles and target different teachers and students. These subjects have distinct identities, and we felt that it was important to retain both disciplines in order to give teachers and students the ability to choose the subject that is right for them. The option provided by our current Classics suite of combining the two subjects to form a hybrid AS or A Level will no longer be possible. A student would, however, be able to study for qualifications in both Classical Civilisation and Ancient History concurrently should they wish. When the new specifications are available we would encourage teachers to look at both Classical Civilisation and Ancient History and make an informed choice about which best suits them and their students. It might be that teachers who previously taught Classical Civilisation find the new Ancient History specification to be far more appropriate to their needs, and equally some current Ancient History teachers might prefer to switch to Classical Civilisation.

With our comprehensive resourcing plans, including textbooks from Bloomsbury, specialist help and support and planned CPD we intend the transition to the new specifications to be as straightforward and hassle-free as we can make it. We hope this article clarifies teachers’ queries, but if you have further questions please do not hesitate to email us at classics@ocr.org.uk or call on 01223 553998.

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