

## Research Article

# Classical Studies Trends: teaching Classics in secondary schools in the UK

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### Abstract

The Classical Association, working with the charity Classics for All, is conscious of the vulnerability of Classics in the secondary education system and wants to understand the reasons behind this. Concern about the decline of classical subjects at GCSE and A Level has been mounting, indicated largely by exam entry data suggesting that entries for classical subjects are low and in the case of the ancient languages in decline.<sup>1</sup> The Council of University Classics Departments Bulletin annually publishes statistics for student entries for national examinations at GCSE and A level in classical subjects. But this does not capture the full picture, nor does it represent the other constituent parts of the UK, which have their own examination systems. Therefore, in late 2021 the Classical Association and Classics for All designed a new Classical Studies Survey (the ‘Survey’), to fill in more detailed information about what is going on in schools’ classics departments more widely through the UK, across Key Stages 3–5, and to provide practising teachers with an opportunity to make recommendations for future developments in courses for classical subjects. The Survey asked teachers to comment on the current situation for Latin, Ancient Greek, Classical Civilisation and Ancient History, the factors affecting these trends, and what support they considered they would need for Classics to survive in their institutions. This Survey collated data rigorously and enables the Classical Association on behalf of the classics teaching community to make compelling arguments in relation to education policies and examination reform.

**Keywords:** Latin, Greek, Classics, National Survey, Classics education

### Introduction: the need for a survey

The British Council has carried out an annual survey of trends in language teaching for over 20 years, aiming to assess the impact of policy measures in respect of languages and to analyse strengths and weaknesses based on quantitative measures (such as numbers of students at each key stage and entered for examinations) and qualitative evidence drawn from teachers’ statements. It is only very recently that data have been collected in that survey in relation to ancient languages. While this is good news, it is inevitable that the picture we get from that survey is lacking detail, with the vast majority of respondents commenting on modern languages. According to the 2021 Language Trends Survey (British Council, 2021) fewer than 3% of responding primary schools offered one of Ancient Greek, Arabic, British Sign language, Danish, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese or Latin (p. 8), and 34 of responding secondary schools offered Latin at Key Stage 3. The same survey notes ‘a stark divide’ between independent and state schools’ offering of ancient languages, with 65% of independent schools offering Latin and one in three offering Ancient Greek, whilst only 9% of state schools offered Latin and fewer than 2% Ancient Greek. Of A level there is

no mention. No mention, either, of course, of the non-linguistic Classical Civilisation or Ancient History.

This Report brings together the responses to the Survey and is intended to be useful for a range of stakeholders, including policy makers, higher education institutions and exam boards. It will conclude with recommendations for the future.

### Impact of Covid-19

The 2020–21 school year brought challenges to schools across the UK in ways which no-one could have anticipated. The Covid-19 lockdowns put teachers in an almost impossible position to leave their classrooms and schools and to undertake as best they could new forms of teaching practice, online, at very short notice, with minimal training and experiences. On behalf of the Classical Association and Classics for All, we would like to thank the teachers who found time to participate in this research.

Additionally, a survey published in 2020 gauged the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the status of classical subjects across these exam years, the findings of which demonstrated that the effect had been negative (Dixon, 2020). Respondents expressed real concern that the apparent disparity between the treatment of classical subjects and that of other subjects was likely to have a detrimental impact on the teaching of classical subjects in their schools.

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## Research outline

The research questions guiding the study were:

1. What is the current situation for teaching and learning classical subjects in state secondary and independent schools in the UK?
2. What recommendations do teachers have for improving the situation for teaching and learning classical subjects in state secondary and independent schools in the UK?

The research method was in keeping with the British Council's Language Trends Survey, that is to use questionnaires. These questionnaires were developed in Spring 2021 in consultation with an Advisory Panel made of representatives from the Classical Association, Classics for All and the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge. The Survey was devised by Annabel Jackson from AJA Ltd, using the online survey site SurveyMonkey, the link to which was shared across social media on Twitter (now X) and Facebook, as well as circulated to the mailing lists of the Classical Association and Classics for All. The Survey opened on 22 November 2021 and closed on 13 December 2021, during term time, with the intention of capturing as many practising teachers as possible.

## Rate of response to the survey

The Survey produced a substantial body of work from which to draw conclusions, with 361 responses. We cannot calculate a response rate as the survey was publicised through the partners' social media as well as through direct emails. This was a good response, given that teachers are exceptionally difficult to survey because of their time pressures. It reflected roughly 300 centres, and more than 438,000 students. 71% of the centres were from the state-maintained sector and 29% from the independent sector. This was a good response rate and demonstrated good engagement within the Classics teaching community.

This was a very long survey, but the analytics show that on average teachers spent 11 minutes completing it, so it was manageable. There was some attrition by the end of the survey.

## Location of centres in the survey

The geographical spread of respondents' schools is broadly representative of the spread of all schools offering classical subjects across the country: two-thirds of the centres surveyed are in London and the South (Figure 1). The small number of responses from schools outside London and the South reflects the areas of the UK where access to the study of classical subjects is known to be limited (Hunt and Holmes-Henderson, 2021). However, there was a good uptake of responses from schools in the North West, with 38 responses, likely as a result of strong Classics for All networks in this area, based at Liverpool College.

## Teachers and departments

40% of the 213 state-maintained departments which responded had one teacher. 45% of the 89 independent school departments had

four or more teachers. The departments represented in the Survey varied considerably in size, with a distribution which favoured independent schools (although independent schools might be offering more subjects to more students than state-maintained schools might be).

13% of teachers had no qualifications in a classical subject; 9% had GCSE; 14% had A Level; 56% had a degree. The Survey did not differentiate between the age-level or the type of classical subject being taught, so it is hard to draw conclusions from these responses. However, 39% of all teachers said that they had specialist teaching qualifications in Classics, with 62% of those in independent schools saying they had them.

## Provision of classical subjects in schools

Teachers then made their responses for each classical subject separately, from Key Stages 3 to 5: Latin, Ancient Greek, Classical Civilisation and Ancient History. If their school did not offer the subject, they could skip to the next one until the survey was completed. Two sorts of response were provided, depending on the question asked: a tick-box option or a free response.

For convenience and ease of comparison, this report discusses the responses first for Latin and Greek together, and then for Classical Civilisation and Ancient History together.

### Latin at Key Stage 3

65% of the surveyed schools offered Latin at Key Stage 3 (N = 358). The length of courses at this Key Stage varied, with 18% offering a one-year Latin course, 29% a two-year, and 53% a three-year (N = 217). In half the schools Latin was compulsory in Years 7 and 8, but this dropped to a quarter in Year 9. Timetabled lesson provision seems to be very varied. Some schools do not offer Latin at Key Stage 3. When it is offered, the number of students taking Latin varied considerably, probably according to the size of the school cohort and depending if it is offered to all or to a select group or as an optional subject (Figure 2). What information can be drawn from this, however, is that some cohorts of Latin students at Years 7 and 8 are very large and must need a great deal of staffing capacity.

Schools tended to provide 1–2 hours per week for Latin at Key Stage 3. Some schools seem to offer only up to an hour in Key Stage 3 (19% of schools in Year 7, 17% in Year 8 and 12% in Year 9). There is no way of telling from the responses whether those who receive little time allocation in Year 7 receive more in the following years to compensate.

### Greek at Key Stage 3

20% of the schools surveyed offered Greek at Key Stage 3 (N = 321). The length of courses at this stage are in marked contrast to that of Latin, with the majority (65%) offering only a one-year course and only 14% a three-year course (N = 56). The vast majority of lessons for Greek start in Year 9 (63%) and across all three years where it is available, it seems to be offered only to selected students or as an optional subject rather than a compulsory one. Similar to Latin,

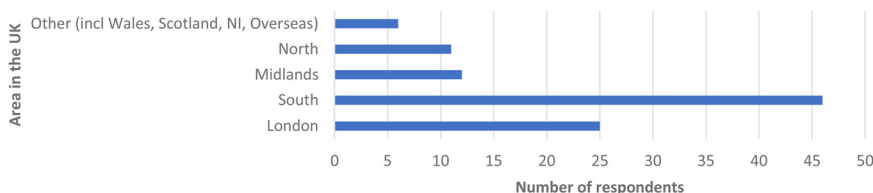


Figure 1. Location of respondents' schools.

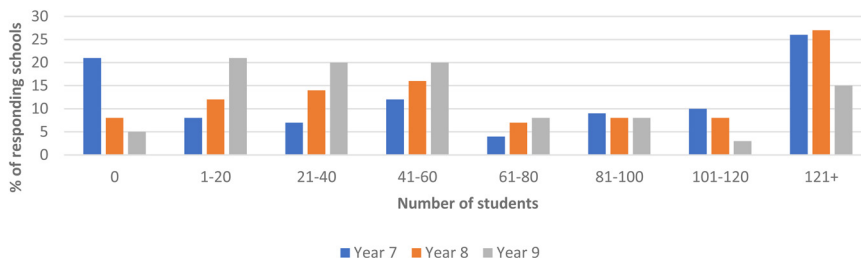


Figure 2. Number of students studying Latin each year in Key Stage 3.

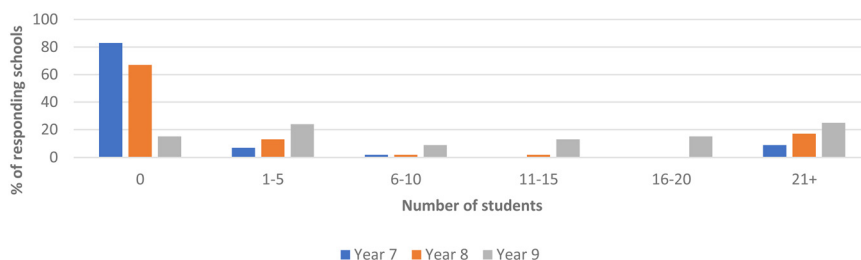


Figure 3. Number of students studying Greek each year in Key Stage 3.

there seems to be variation in the number of students who take Greek (Figure 3), but with much smaller cohorts. Most schools which offer Greek in the crucial Year 9 (prior to choosing it for GCSE) have small cohorts, with the majority having fewer than 20 students and nearly a quarter having five or fewer. This must bring into question the viability of the subject with such small numbers from which to recruit to GCSE and beyond. Those schools which offered Greek in Years 7 to 8 tended to provide around 1–2 hours per week for Greek. In Year 9 – the crucial year for recruitment – 33% received less than an hour, 43% between 1–2 hours, and 15% between 2–3 hours per week. Again, there is no way of telling if students who received less time (or any) in Years 7–8 were compensated with more in Year 9.

A comparison of the two languages at Key Stage 3 suggests that Latin numbers are holding up well, supported by the subject being compulsory in many schools, often with very large cohorts. In contrast, Greek is often awarded optional status with consequently much smaller numbers. Survival of Greek in many schools is fragile.

**Latin and Greek at Key Stage 3 – trends**

Teachers were asked about the trend for their school’s teaching of Latin and Greek over the last three years (Figure 4). For these schools, the percentage of responses which report that the teaching of Latin has increased is greater than those for whom it has decreased. For Greek, the increase is also greater than the decrease, although the cohort size is smaller, as we have seen, and the number of responses is less (Latin N = 216; Greek N = 56). The welcome increases may be a reflection of some of the sample being connected to one of the survey partners Classics for All,

which has been supporting state schools to introduce Latin and Greek at Key Stage 3.

**Causes of an increase in Latin and Greek teaching at Key Stage 3**

Teachers were asked, if there had been a change, what had caused it.

Several teachers noted that their school was expanding in cohort size and/or leadership was introducing Latin across the cohort. Some schools were improving provision by offering opportunity to all through Latin clubs or twilight classes. Optional classes had been made compulsory. A number of initiatives by teachers themselves had improved participation, including new resources, a recruitment drive and incentivisation through competitions such as the Olympus Challenge.<sup>2</sup> Several teachers attributed their success to the increasing awareness and popularity among parents. For Greek, although the numbers were smaller and schools were unlikely to make it compulsory across the cohort, teachers drew attention to several approaches which worked: making especial efforts to attract students who were ‘sufficiently capable’ of the course at GCSE; attracting funding from Classics for All; switching Latin courses which excited students’ interest in the ancient world more than previously.

**Causes of a decrease in Latin and Greek teaching at Key Stage 3**

Covid was mentioned by several teachers as a cause for numbers dropping. One Latin teacher noted:

*‘The priority became to ensure English was being delivered consistently to children working at home. When children came back into school, the focus has been on bridging gaps in learning.’*

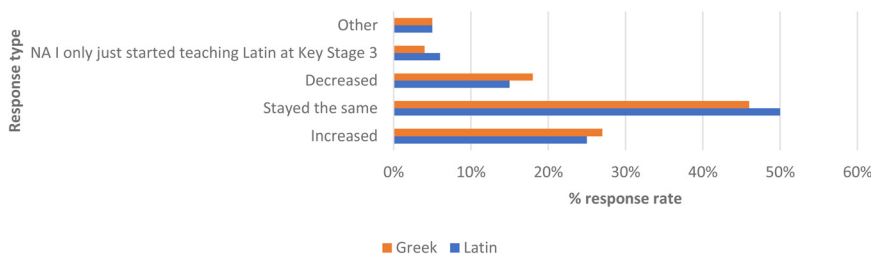


Figure 4. Trends in Latin and Greek teaching at Key Stage 3.

A Greek teacher reported:

*'Lockdown saw no recruitment of GCSE Greek from Year 9.'*

In other causes of decline for Latin, teachers cited competition against other options as a problem: options are limited; where modern foreign languages are given preferred treatment by senior leadership, Latin is at a disadvantage as being an 'extra' language; the perceived difficulty of the subject and its supposed lack of utility. These problems are exacerbated for Greek, with additional comments including the difficulty of recruiting and retaining students for after-school clubs or lessons, especially in the face of competing interests.

**Suggestions for increasing the teaching of Latin and Greek at Key Stage 3**

We asked what teachers thought was needed to increase or maintain their school's teaching of Latin and Greek at Key Stage 3 (Figures 5 and 6). Response categories were provided as prompts. The response categories were:

- CPD, e.g. for specialist and non-specialist teachers.
- Changes to the curriculum, e.g. clearer, more focused, a minimum timetable recommendation.
- Resources e.g. schemes of work, lesson plans, course materials.
- Fairer accreditation e.g. more manageable expectations, replacement for previous exams, accreditation to be recognised by universities.
- Advocacy/profile-raising e.g. with SLT, parents, public bodies.
- Nothing, current situation is fine.
- Other.

Respondents could choose as many of the response categories as they liked.

Teachers were then provided with a free-response question for what they thought could be done to increase or maintain their school's teaching of Latin or Greek at Key Stage 3.

For Latin, only 27% say that the current situation for Latin at Key Stage 3 is fine. The most common need is for advocacy for Latin, but all categories have support. Possibilities include:

*'Better choice of textbook.'*

*'More CPD for non-specialist teachers.'*

*'Split curriculum for those disaffected with Latin and move to more civilisation-based topics for some.'*

*'Making sure that the parents are aware of the benefits of studying Latin, including explaining the transferable skills and relevance to grammar, Science and Languages.'*

*'Teaching Modern and Ancient Languages together.'*

*'Removing the image of Latin as elitist.'*

*'More resources to help sell Latin.'*

*'Funding for books and resources and also additional staffing.'*

*'Changing the options so Latin is not pitted against e.g. Computing, and is counted as a Language.'*

For Greek, teachers particularly support advocacy, but also changes to the curriculum, resources and fairer accreditation. Only 20% of respondents said the current situation is fine. Possibilities mentioned included:

Better textbooks.

*'The development of a new and engaging textbook, the equivalent of Suburani. Linguistically rigorous but inviting to KS3 students and with lots of opportunities to explore history and myth alongside it.'*

*'More user-friendly resources. We use the Taylor textbook but it is quite dry!'*

A less demanding curriculum.

*'Less grammar in the spec would also help as it's always a dash to get to the end of the syllabus. The grade boundaries are usually quite high too for GCSE.'*

**Latin at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)**

62% of the surveyed schools offered Latin at Key Stage 4 (N = 341). It was much more likely that a school offered a two-year traditional GCSE (87%) than a three-year one (N = 203). When it is offered, the number of students taking Latin varied considerably, probably

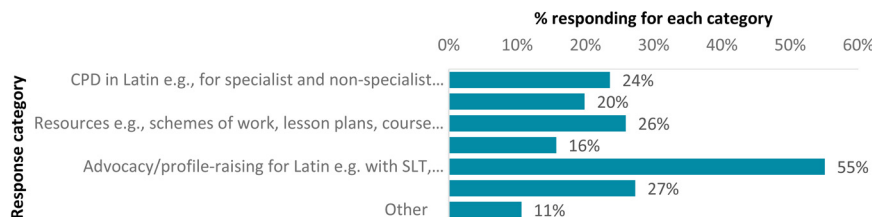


Figure 5. What do you need to increase or maintain your school's teaching of Latin at Key Stage 3?

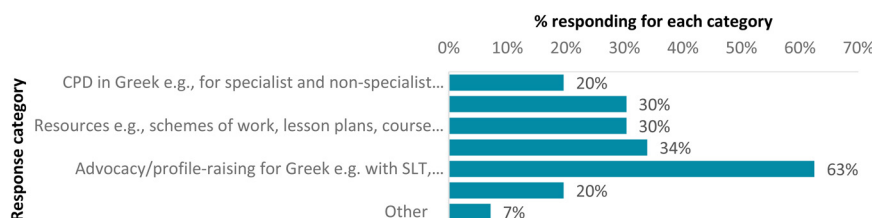


Figure 6. What do you need to increase or maintain your school's teaching of Greek at Key Stage 3?

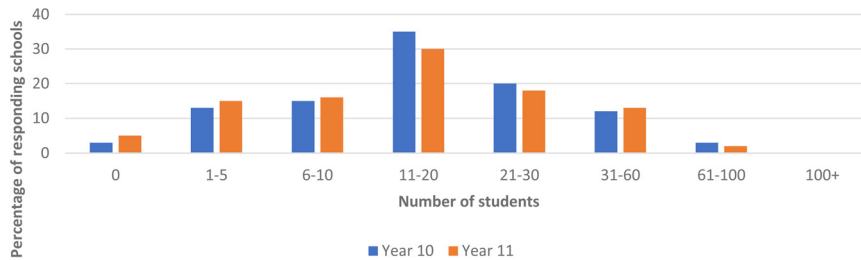


Figure 7. Number of students studying Latin each year at Key Stage 4.

according to the size of the school cohort (Figure 7). Notably, nearly 15% of teachers reported that there were fewer than 5 students in their school studying Latin at GCSE, with a further 15% having between 6–10. Around 30% of teachers have what might be considered to be a large number of students for this subject, with around 11–20 students at GCSE. The number of schools where perhaps two or more classes of GCSE Latin are provided is small, with around 15% of teachers noting 31 or more students in the school. Most schools (c70%) offered 2–3 hours of timetabled lessons each week in Years 10 and 11; a small number (11%) offered more.

#### Greek at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)

24% of the surveyed schools offered Greek at Key Stage 4 (N = 316). It was much more likely that a school offered a two-year traditional GCSE (93%) than a three-year one (N = 74). When it is offered, the number of students taking Greek is very low, often with fewer than 5 students in the class. Most schools (c45%) offered 1–2 hours of lessons each week in Years 10 and 11; a number (c28%) offered more 2–3 hours, and around 19% offered even more – most likely in the teacher's own time.

A comparison of the two languages at Key Stage 4 suggests that Latin numbers hold up fairly well, despite often being optional at this level, but large numbers of students who are taught in Key Stage 3 progress no further. This has implications for staffing – in one-person departments, the presence of the same teacher can be a positive or negative experience for some students; with larger departments, how should one deploy the more and the less experienced teachers? In the case of Greek, very few specialist teachers are generally agreed to be needed (and often in short supply), and the combination of shortness of time before GCSE and the demands of the GCSE assessment at the same level of content as that of Latin should not be underestimated.

#### Latin and Greek at Key Stage 4 (GCSE) – trends

Teachers were asked about the trend for their school's teaching of Latin and Greek over the last three years (Figure 8). For these schools, more teachers reported that the number of students for Latin had decreased than said it had increased (N = 202). In the case of Latin, 31% reported a decrease against 25% an increase; 32% of Latin, 31% reported a decrease against 25% an increase; 32%

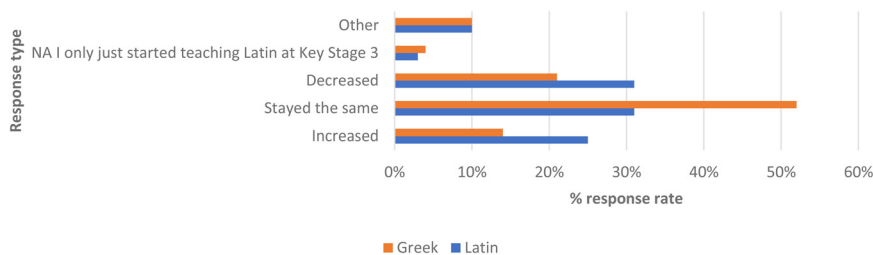


Figure 8. Trends in Latin and Greek teaching at Key Stage 4.

reported there had been no change. For Greek too there had been changes, with a smaller number noting a decrease (21%) although just over half (52%) reported no change (N = 73).

#### Causes of an increase in Latin and Greek teaching at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)

Teachers were asked, if there had been a change, what had caused it. Their responses are given below.

A good number of teachers reported a favourable senior leadership team, which valued the subjects and wanted them to succeed in the school. After-school Latin clubs made a positive impact in schools where there had not been a tradition of offering the subject. In some cases, the Latin club had been 'upgraded' to a proper GCSE option, which had been positively received by parents and students. The freeing-up of options at GCSE helped, often in contradictory ways: one teacher noted that as their school had dropped compulsory GCSE modern foreign languages, students could now choose Latin more easily, while another reported that Latin and modern foreign languages could now be chosen independently from each other, which had impacted positively on the uptake for Latin. It is clear that Latin viewed as a language or not can impact on the way in which it is offered as a GCSE option, which in turn impacts on its accessibility to students. Teacher initiative once again played a big part, with reports of enthusiastic new or more experienced staff making a positive difference, and the introduction of new course materials. The Eduqas GCSE qualification was picked out by several teachers as having been a success at motivating students. The idea that 'word gets around' was seen to be helpful – older students going on to A levels and further and a more general chirpiness about learning Classics encouraged upcoming students. For Greek, teachers commented on the improved academic calibre of students coming up through the school, or the importance of drip-feeding Greek into lessons lower down in the school. The incentive of the Intermediate Certificate in Classical Greek<sup>3</sup> as a more realistic assessment to the GCSE was given.

#### Causes of a decrease in Latin and Greek teaching at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)

As with Key Stage 3, timetabling difficulties and the impact of Covid were frequently cited as causing problems for classical

languages. The biggest impact comes from competition from other options at GCSE and the reduction of options – often from 5 to 4.

*‘Competition from other elective subjects (e.g. computer science), momentum of STEM, perceived difficulty of Latin, reduction in the number of optional subjects which can be taken.’*

*‘[There is a] cap on number of subjects and encouragement to take some from different areas of the curriculum.’*

*‘In the past few years there has been a decrease in the number of GCSEs students can take (from 11 to 10). This has seriously impacted the number of students taking the subject...Latin is only available as their one free choice (not one of the must do subjects) and, thus, [it’s] us up against all other subjects for this slot.’*

Latin is viewed as difficult and lacking utility: ‘Classics is nice but not necessarily helpful.’ Some students have been noted to be ‘gaming the system so they can do “fun” subjects (Art/Dance/Product Design/Film Studies etc) rather than the “compulsory language”’. For Greek, many of the problems are similar, especially the lack of options at GCSE. In addition, while Greek may still be offered as an extra-curricular, students have competing commitments at lunchtimes or after school. The ‘unreasonable expectations of the [GCSE] exam’ are also cited. One teacher was bemused by ‘a mystery – numbers fluctuate year on year, can be as high as 11, or a set of 3.’ It is hard to imagine many schools being willing to continue to support such variation year to year unless the senior leadership team is very willing.

**Suggestions for increasing the teaching of Latin and Greek at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)**

We asked what teachers thought was needed to increase or maintain their school’s teaching of Latin and Greek at GCSE (Figures 9 and 10). Response categories were provided as prompts. The response categories were:

- CPD, e.g. for specialist and non-specialist teachers.
- Changes to the curriculum/exams to make it/them less onerous e.g. a reduction in the number of literature texts studied.

- More accreditation options e.g. a half-GCSE qualification.
- Advocacy/profile-raising e.g. with SLT, parents, public bodies.
- Nothing, current situation is fine.
- Other.

Respondents could choose as many of the response categories as they liked.

Teachers were then provided with a free-response question for what they thought could be done to increase or maintain their school’s teaching of Latin or Greek at GCSE.

For Latin, only 16% of teachers said the current situation is fine. The most important changes is advocacy, but again all the other changes have support, especially changes to the curriculum. Possibilities mentioned included:

More engaging text books.

*‘Textbook reform – all the passages in Taylor are very military based. Would be nice to have some of the mythological passages included to make language teaching more exciting. Also would be good to reform the passages to include greater representation of women.’*

*‘Wider appreciation of the comparative value of Latin relative to other subjects.’*

*‘High profile campaigns to show how the subject has moved on and its value to business and employment opportunities.’*

*‘Encouraging view that Latin is as viable as a STEM subject. Improving sense of Latin as a relevant and useful subject at and beyond GCSE.’*

*‘More of a psychological change that encourages students to be more resilient and want to do difficult subjects.’*

Less onerous exams.

*‘A change of material assessed at GCSE and A level; the current specifications do little to engage the interests of most students and require a very high level of language proficiency that many*

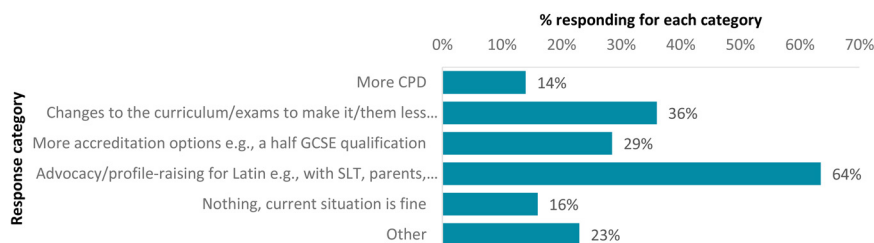


Figure 9. What do you need to increase or maintain your school’s teaching of Latin at GCSE?

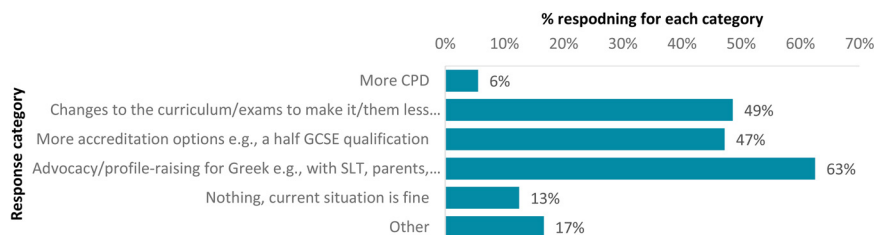


Figure 10. What do you need to increase or maintain your school’s teaching of Greek at GCSE?

*students do not see the point in acquiring, even if they are very interested in the ancient world.'*

*'The exams need to be changed so that they are more accessible for grade 1-4 pupils.'*

*'Content reduced particularly texts. Vocabulary reduced or given lists in exam.'*

*'The size of the vocabulary learning is disproportionate with other subjects.'*

*'The current GCSEs are full of massive tables and set-texts to memorise, in addition to skills. Vast tracts of rote-learning is not a way to encourage pupils.'*

*'Better sample papers and model answers for the civilisation topics/textbooks so students can be as confident as they are with the language.'*

For Greek, as well as advocacy, teachers would like changes to the curriculum and more accreditation options. Possibilities mentioned includes:

Making exams simpler.

*'Current language requirements far too high, even compared to Latin.'*

*'A reduction of learned content required for GCSE, especially vocabulary.'*

*'Support with materials and translations.'*

*'The literature specification changes frequently, which amounts to a lot of work which it's only going to be delivered to a couple of students.'*

Shorter courses.

*'Bring back short course! Much more manageable as an additional subject!'*

*'Return of an equivalent to half-GCSE. Or reduction of content at GCSE level.'*

A different syllabus.

*'Better Key Stage 5 options. More opportunity to teach myths/history with the language at Key Stage 3 to build interest.'*

**Latin at Key Stage 5 (A level)**

42% of the surveyed schools offered Latin at Key Stage 5 (N = 328). The most commonly reported figure for the number of students taking Latin at Key Stage 5 was 1-5 (N = 131); fewer than 3% reported cohort sizes of more than 10 (Figure 11). Most schools (69%) tended to provide 3-5 hours per week for Latin at Key Stage 5 (N = 130). Around 14% of schools offered less than 3 hours and around 17% offered more than 6. Around equal numbers of teachers reported that they taught the Latin prose composition option as did not (51%/49%). Anecdotal evidence<sup>4</sup> suggests that some school leadership teams reduce the number of hours for subjects with small option numbers, in the belief that teaching fewer students takes less time. However, one teacher in the Survey noted that they themselves had suggested the reduction in time allocation in order to run the class for a small cohort and keep Latin in the Sixth Form.

**Greek at Key Stage 5 (A level)**

19% of the surveyed schools offered Greek at Key Stage 5 (N = 311). The most commonly reported figure for the number of students taking Greek at Key Stage 5 was 1-5 (N = 59) (Figure 12). No teacher reported numbers exceeding 10 at either Year 12 or Year 13. There seemed to be no particular pattern to the number of hours for teaching Greek, with hours spread between around 3 to

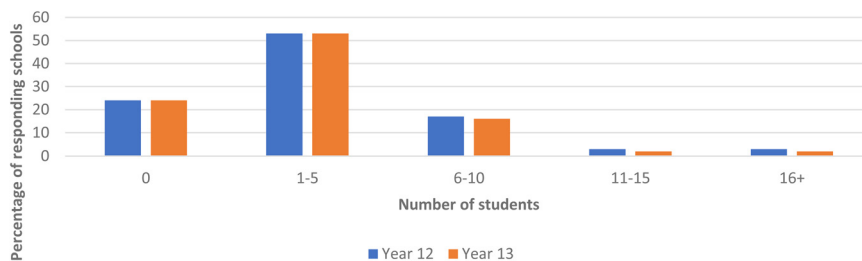


Figure 11. Number of students studying Latin each year at Key Stage 5.

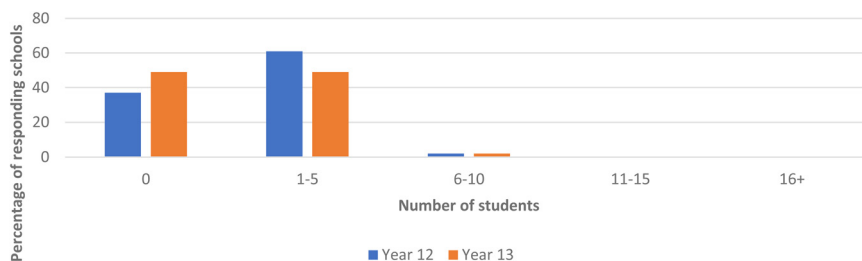


Figure 12. Number of students studying Greek each year at Key Stage 5.

8 per week. 43% of teachers said they taught the Greek prose composition option.

A comparison of Latin and Greek at Key Stage 5 suggests that numbers studying both languages are very low, with small, economically vulnerable classes. Small fluctuations in numbers can, in these cases, make all the difference between a school offering the subjects at this level or not and uptake can be highly dependent on the students' experiences lower down in the school, especially at GCSE.

**Latin and Greek at Key Stage 5 (A level) – trends**

Teachers were asked about the trend for their school's teaching of Latin and Greek over the last three years (Figure 13). For both Latin and Greek, more teachers said that teaching had decreased than it had increased, with Greek suffering a larger decline. The decline was significant: Latin said to be declining by 32% of teachers and Greek by 45%, more than offsetting those teachers who reported an increase in demand (15% in both subjects).

Teachers were asked, if there had been a change what had caused it. Their responses are given below.

**Causes of an increase in Latin and Greek teaching at Key Stage 5 (A level)**

Teachers of Latin noted that a good uptake at GCSE meant more students to draw from at A level. Recruitment lower down in the school was therefore vital. In some cases, sixth forms were able to attract in students from schools where it was not available to make viable numbers. Similarly, some schools linked together to provide Latin jointly. Others attributed younger staff with new ideas for teaching; one had raised funding to pay for the classes. Several Latin teachers pointed out that A level classes were especially dependent on success at examinations earlier in the school:

*'Improvement of GCSE experience through teaching [GCSE] Eduqas specification.'*

*'Changes made lower down in the school are now starting to pay off.'*

*'We are seeing a slight increase given the increasing class sizes at GCSE. I'm hoping this will be more profound as we move forward.'*

Others indicated that they were able to draw on a wider pool of students from other schools which had no classics provision of their own:

*'There has been an increase in the numbers seeking to join the Sixth Form from other schools and take Latin. Many other local schools no longer offer it at A Level.'*

For Greek, numbers were very dependent on student interest and the ability of the school or parents to pay for the very small classes – frequently class sizes of 1 student were mentioned. On the occasions when they described Greek as relatively secure, teachers ascribed the situation to generating greater awareness of the subject earlier in school through Latin courses such as *Suburani* or providing different access points through the students' career (such as providing classes off-timetable in Year 9 or 10 or as a supplementary GCSE to those studying A level Latin). Several teachers noted that the new Intermediate Certificate in Classical Greek was making the subject achievable in the time available and was driving uptake.

**Causes of a decrease in Latin and Greek teaching at Key Stage 5 (A level)**

The decline in numbers at GCSE impacted on recruitment for A level in both Latin and Greek. Teachers of both languages noted the negative impact on recruitment as a result of their schools reducing the number of A levels from four to three, and the decoupling of AS from A levels had meant fewer students were willing to sign up for the full courses. STEM also meant that students were directed towards three sciences; there was little room to take anything extra. The perceived difficulty of the examinations, a feeling that only the most able might be successful, and a wide range of appealing 'new' subjects at A level (such as Psychology, Law, Business Studies) attracted students away. There seemed to be less interest in studying languages generally.

**Suggestions for increasing the teaching of Latin and Greek at Key Stage 5 (A level)**

We asked what teachers thought was needed to increase or maintain their school's teaching of Latin and Greek at A level (Figures 14 and 15). Response categories were provided as prompts. The response categories were:

- More CPD.
- Changes to the curriculum e.g. to make it more relevant to those who won't be studying it at university, less emphasis in exams on testing knowledge.
- Changes to assessment e.g. inclusion of coursework, narrower specification, fewer and more equivalent set texts.
- More routes for accreditation options e.g. a replacement for AS level.
- Advocacy/profile-raising e.g. with SLT, parents, public bodies.
- Nothing, current situation is fine.
- Other.

Respondents could choose as many of the response categories as they liked.

Teachers were then provided with a free-response question for what they thought could be done to increase or maintain their school's teaching of Latin or Greek at A level.

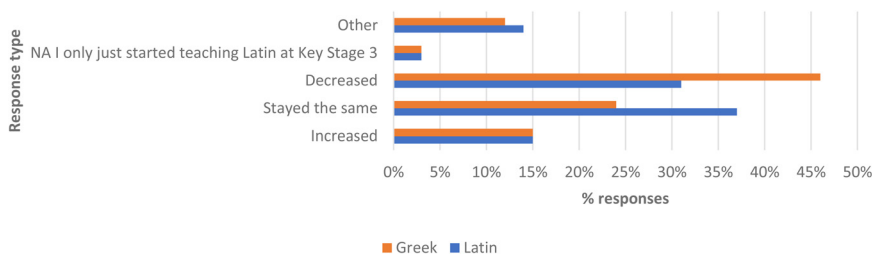


Figure 13. Trends in Latin and Greek teaching at Key Stage 5.



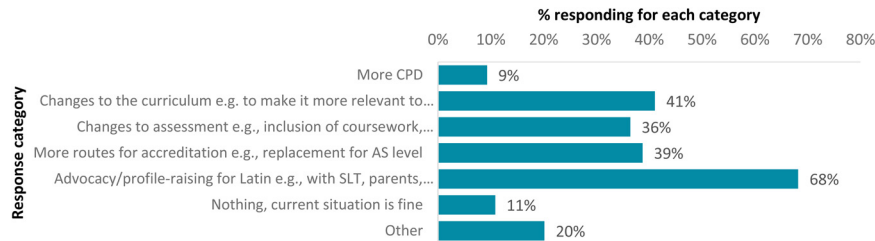


Figure 14. What do you need to increase or maintain your school's take up of Latin at A level?

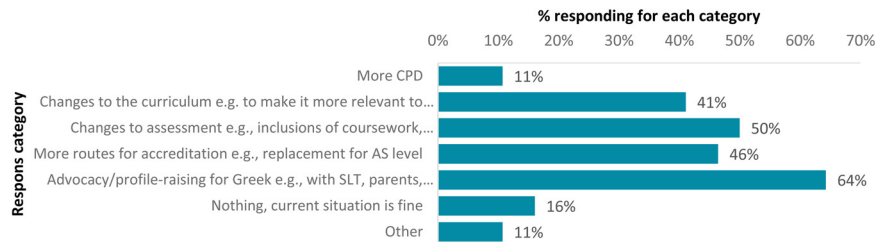


Figure 15. What do you need to increase or maintain your school's take up of Greek at A level?

For Latin at Key Stage 5, only 11% of teachers said that the current situation is fine. 41% would like to see changes to the curriculum, 39% more routes for accreditation, and 36% changes to assessment. Possibilities mentioned include:

#### More appealing exams:

*'Streamlining of the prose comprehension paper. More prose authors like Apuleius! This text was a real success.'*

*'The unseens are very difficult. The grade boundaries are quite low but the difficulty of the pieces is off-putting and formidable. Better to have slightly less hard pieces or offer more vocab and help, and have higher grade boundaries.'*

*'Changes to the assessment – particularly an element of coursework might help where they could explore the work of an author.'*

*'The requirements of the literature paper can often make for a stultifying classroom experience for the students. They come in loving ancient literature but suddenly realise that they effectively have to memorise the translation of the set text. I think the literature paper should be redesigned so that it requires less rote memorisation.'*

*'To take away the 50% weighting requirement for language; also take out the 10 mark translation from the comprehension, and the compulsory translations from the literature papers. We seem to be testing translation over and above anything else.'*

*'A change in the weighting away from 50:50 language/literature to favour more literature.'*

#### Reintroducing AS Level:

*'Less of a jump from GCSE to A Level. AS as an option at our school.'*

*'The reduction from 4 subjects to 3 has had a very negative impact, and the loss of AS has made it a harder sell. There is*

*also the perception that it is a much more difficult A Level. I would welcome, at a minimum, a Defined Vocabulary List for A Level Latin so that students are at least aware of what they should know.'*

For Greek, only 16% said the current situation is fine. As well as advocacy, 50% would like changes to assessment, 46% more routes for accreditation and 41% changes to the curriculum. Possibilities mentioned included:

#### More accessible curriculum:

*'The jump in difficulty from GCSE to A level is very significant. The language paper is quite simply too difficult for all but the most gifted students. [...] Those setting the curriculum need to be realistic about what most students can achieve.'*

*'As with Latin, so with Greek. For both subjects, actually, our pupils routinely complain that they have far more work in Latin/Greek than their other A2s (whether Maths, Science, Humanities, or MFL), so that might also be something to be looked at – are these A2s actually parallel.'*

*'More flexibility of texts to ensure texts that are interesting to all.'*

*'More time on exam or fewer questions.'*

### **Recommendations for Latin and Greek**

The survey gives a strong mandate for change.

While there are many suggestions from teachers, a number of themes emerge which are worth further engagement with stakeholders, such as examination bodies and classics organisations.

Teachers feel that advocacy and promotional resources will be very beneficial for making the case for recruitment at all key stages. These need to appeal to students, parents and senior leadership teams. Advocacy might comprise different things (campaigns, raising public awareness, advertising, promotional literature). It should note that the study of Latin and Greek is not just a linguistic one, but encompasses elements of civilisation and literature.

Many teachers work ceaselessly within schools to recruit students. Many offer classical languages outside the curriculum,

especially Greek. Often curriculum time allocated to other subjects is not allocated to classical languages. This impacts on the deliverability of large content specifications, especially when set texts, for example, change frequently. The introduction of the new Intermediate Certificate in Classical Greek indicates a route which used to be available under the now-defunct half-GCSEs. Future official examination accreditation should reflect that many students and teachers do not all have ideal circumstances under which to work and should therefore seek to provide different levels of accreditation where possible.

The frequency of change of set text literature needs to be looked at, as well as the length of texts and their suitability for interest for study by students at each GCSE and A level.

Latin and Greek at GCSE and A level are currently matched against each other, despite having their own differences in expression and grammatical complexity (Greek having Active, Middle and Passive voices, for example). Similarly, set text literature varies in difficulty across the languages, and within languages (Homeric and Attic Greek, for example). For the sake of comparability, the ways in which the grammar content and the set text literature is measured (by the number of lines studied, for example) should be reconsidered by the examination boards.

For GCSE and A level, question types could be more varied. The content could be reduced (such as 1 set text rather than 2 or more). At A level a defined vocabulary list would encourage students to feel they can achieve because they know what they need to know.

Course books need revision, especially for Greek.

### Classical Civilisation/Ancient History at Key Stage 3

At Key Stage 4 (GCSE), Classical Civilisation and Ancient History are two discrete subject offerings. Not all schools have provision of these subjects in terms that might fit the GCSE specifications. Accordingly, when we asked respondents about Classical Civilisation/Ancient History at Key Stage 3, we were allowing a flexible interpretation of the subject area to mean anything that was not defined as teaching the languages Latin and Greek, but could include history, material culture and literature of the Greek or Roman world.

37% of the surveyed schools offered Classical Civilisation/Ancient History at Key Stage 3 (N = 310). Of these schools, 61% of

independent schools offered it. The length of courses at this Key Stage varied, with 25% offering a course which lasted less than a year, 42% offering a one-year course, 13% a two-year, and 20% a three-year (N = 110). In half the schools Classical Civilisation/Ancient History was compulsory in Year 7, but this dropped to about a third in Year 9, where it was often offered as an optional subject and available to anyone. Timetabled lesson provision seems to be very varied. Some schools do not offer Classical Civilisation/Ancient History at Key Stage 3; but some 51% of respondents reported that it was compulsory for all students in Year 7. This tended to decline over the Key Stage. The number of students taking Classical Civilisation/Ancient History varied considerably, probably according to the size of the school cohort and depending if it was offered to all or to a select group or as an optional subject (Figure 16). What information can be drawn from this, however, is that some cohorts of Latin students at Years 7, 8 and 9 are very large and must need a great deal of staffing capacity.

Schools tended to provide 1–2 hours per week for Classical Civilisation/Ancient History at Key Stage 3 (52% of schools in Year 7, 47% in Year 8 and 60% in Year 9). It seems likely that Classical Civilisation/Ancient History in Year 9 is as high as it is due to the common practice of some students being guided into non-linguistic classics courses after compulsory Latin in Years 7 and 8.

### Classical Civilisation/Ancient History at Key Stage 3 – trends

Teachers were asked about the trend for their school’s teaching of Classical Civilisation/Ancient History over the last three years (Figure 17). For these schools, the percentage of responses which report that the demand for teaching Classical Civilisation/Ancient History has for most stayed the same (48%) or increased (27%) (N = 108).

### Causes of an increase in Classical Civilisation/Ancient History teaching at Key Stage 3

Teachers were asked, if there had been a change, what had caused it.

Some schools were improving provision by offering opportunity to all through Latin clubs or twilight classes. Others had developed classics courses to offer alongside traditional Latin or Greek, which had been attractive to students. In other cases, it was as an alternative to Latin: several teachers noted that students who found Latin too challenging were still attracted to the study of the ancient world:

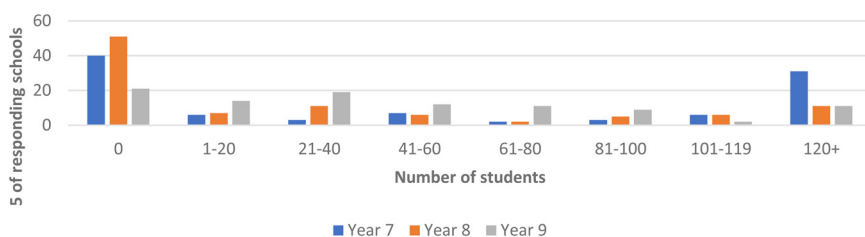


Figure 16. Number of students studying Classical Civilisation/Ancient History each year at key Stage 3.

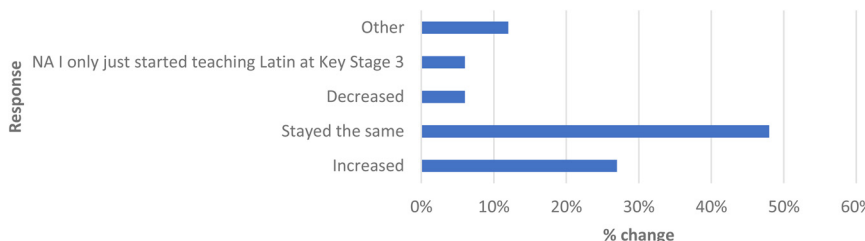


Figure 17. Trends in Classical Civilisation/Ancient History teaching at Key Stage 3.

*'Class Civ is taught to those who join the school at Y9 with no Latin, or to those who struggle with other subjects and have therefore dropped Latin earlier. As we have weaker cohorts, we are seeing an increasing number of pupils needing Class Civ over Latin.'*

*'We started a KS3 classics program for classes that have historically had no appreciation for the Latin language.'*

*'Intake changing a little, e.g. more Asian pupils who do not have Latin, and we do not have the staffing to offer them a beginners Latin set.'*

**Causes of a decrease in Classical Civilisation/Ancient History teaching at Key Stage 3**

Covid was mentioned by several teachers as a cause for numbers dropping. Teachers noted:

*'Covid restricted teaching as the priority was to deliver and catch up with English lessons and English teachers deliver the Classical Civilisation.'*

*'Lock down meant that it was harder to promote a subject that for options that is not taught in KS3.'*

However, teachers showed less anxiety about enrolments for Classical Civilisation/Ancient History at Key Stage 3 than they had for Latin or Greek.

**Suggestions for increasing the teaching of Classical Civilisation/Ancient History at Key Stage 3**

We asked what teachers thought was needed to increase or maintain their school's teaching of Classical Civilisation/Ancient History at Key Stage 3 (Figure 18). Response categories were provided as prompts. The response categories were:

- CPD, e.g. for specialist and non-specialist teachers.
- Changes to the curriculum, e.g. clearer, more focused, a minimum timetable recommendation.
- Resources e.g. schemes of work, lesson plans, course materials.

- Fairer accreditation e.g. more manageable expectations, replacement for previous exams, accreditation to be recognised by universities.
- Advocacy/profile-raising e.g. with SLT, parents, public bodies.
- Nothing, current situation is fine.
- Other.

Respondents could choose as many of the response categories as they liked.

Teachers were then provided with a free-response question for what they thought could be done to increase or maintain their school's teaching of Classical Civilisation/Ancient History at Key Stage 3.

The most common need is for advocacy (50%), followed by better resources (37%). Generally, however, there was satisfaction with what was offered (N = 103). Possibilities for improvements include:

*'Advocacy to explain that it is an academic subject.'*

*'CPD to teach at KS3 and KS4.'*

*'More interactive resources and materials dealing with cross curricular issues e.g., race slavery, gender, imperialism, art, engineering, Maths/geometry, MFL, Drama, RS.'*

*'[...]a more useful set of nationally recognised resources might be useful!'*

**Classical Civilisation at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)**

30% of the surveyed schools offered Classical Civilisation at Key Stage 4 (N = 215). It was much more likely that a school offered a two-year traditional GCSE (90%) than a three-year one (N = 86). When it is offered, the number of students taking Classical Civilisation varied (Figure 19), but with most classes containing between 11 and 30 students. Around 12% of schools had total enrolments of more than 30, which implies two or more classes for GCSE. 2% noted more than 60 students, implying more than two classes. Time allocation tended to be between 2 and 3 hours per week (67%), but with some schools allocating between 1 and 2

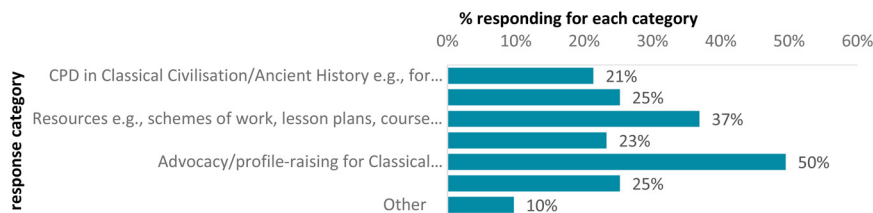


Figure 18. What do you need to increase of maintain your school's take up of Classical Civilisation/Ancient History at Key Stage 3?

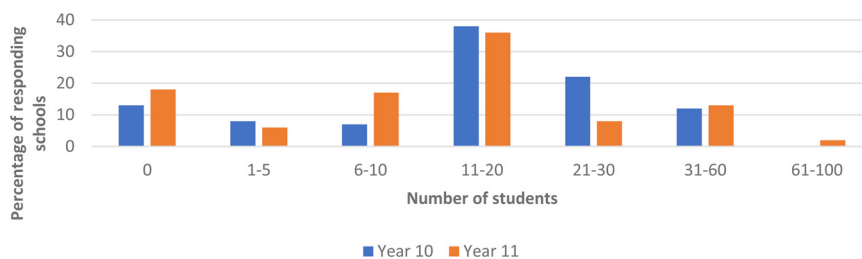


Figure 19. Number of students studying Classical Civilisation at Key Stage 4.

hours (12%). Around 40% of the teachers (N=87) reported that between one tenth and one quarter of the year group had chosen Classical Civilisation, which suggests that where it is offered, it is a popular GCSE.

**Ancient History at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)**

10% of the surveyed schools offered Ancient History at Key Stage 4 (N=298). It was much more likely that a school offered a two-year traditional GCSE (82%) than a three-year one (N=62). When it is offered, the number of students taking Ancient History is low, with only an average of 10% reporting classes above 20 students in Years 10 and 11, this probably equating to one class at GCSE. Most schools offered 2–3 hours of lessons each week in Years 10 and 11.

A comparison of the two subjects suggests that Classical Civilisation is more often offered to students than Ancient History. Figure 20 suggests that the majority of schools do not offer the subject at all at Key Stage 4 (perhaps because it may be seen as ‘in competition’ with Modern History), but that where it is offered, enrolments make viable sets.

**Classical Civilisation and Ancient History at Key Stage 4 (GCSE) – trends**

Teachers were asked about the trend for their school’s teaching of Classical Civilisation and Ancient History over the last three years (Figure 21). For these schools, more teachers reported that the number of students for Classical Civilisation had increased than said it had decreased (N=87): 37% reported an increase against 13% a decrease, with 30% saying that there had been no difference. For Ancient History too there had been changes, with 22% noting an increase, 8% a decrease and 46% no change (N=50).

**Causes of an increase in Classical Civilisation and Ancient History teaching at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)**

Teachers reported a number of reasons why they thought that student numbers had increased. In many cases this was due to structural changes within the school, such as the introduction of the subjects on the curriculum where they were not previously available and particular setting arrangements against other subjects.

As an alternative to Latin, Classical Civilisation seems to be attractive to students, and some teachers go out of their way to introduce some of the topics to be studied lower down in the school (such as diversity, historical background). The role of the teacher as an advocate for the subject is remarked upon; finding ways to tell students about a course that has not otherwise been offered at Key Stage 3 means going out and telling students about it wherever possible. Several teachers mentioned that the subjects seem to be more accessible to students, and teachers themselves feel sufficiently confident to teach them. For Ancient History in particular, its presence on the EBacc qualification is said to be an attraction to senior leadership to promote the subject to students.

**Causes of a decrease in Classical Civilisation and Ancient History teaching at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)**

For schools where there has been a decline, teachers thought that factors included: insufficient timetable allocation to do the subject justice, teachers lacking the skills to deliver the specifications in ways which engaged the students; and a reduction in the number of options for schools to focus on EBacc essentials, such as English and Maths.

**Suggestions for increasing the teaching of Classical Civilisation and Ancient History at Key Stage 4 (GCSE)**

We asked what teachers thought was needed to increase or maintain their school’s teaching of Classical Civilisation/Ancient History at GCSE (Figures 22 and 23). Response categories were provided as prompts. The response categories were:

- CPD, e.g. for specialist and non-specialist teachers.
- Changes to the curriculum/exams to make it/them less onerous e.g. a reduction in the number of literature texts studied.
- More accreditation options e.g. a half GCSE qualification.
- Advocacy/profile-raising e.g. with SLT, parents, public bodies.
- Nothing, current situation is fine.
- Other.

Respondents could choose as many of the response categories as they liked.

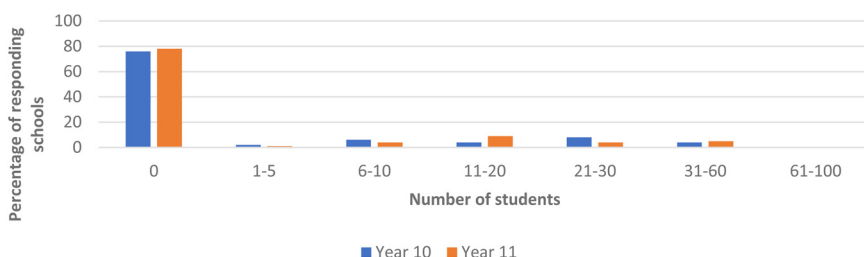


Figure 20. Number of students studying Ancient History at Key Stage 4.

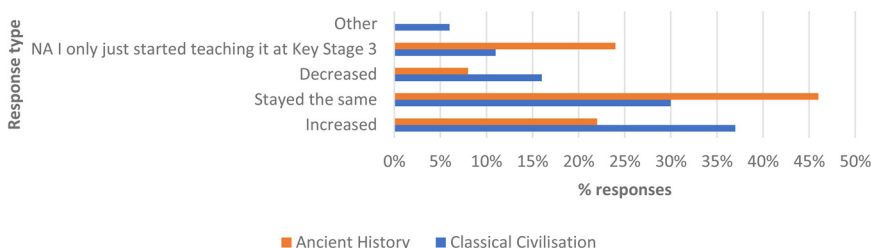


Figure 21. Trends in Classical Civilisation and Ancient History teaching at Key Stage 4.

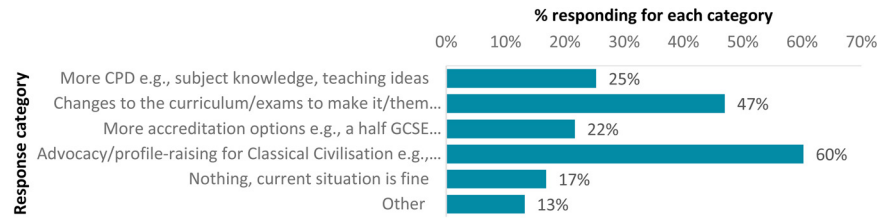


Figure 22. What do you need to increase or maintain your school's take up of Classical Civilisation at GCSE?

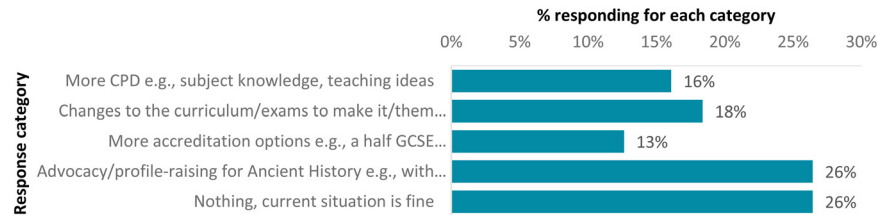


Figure 23. What do you need to increase or maintain your school's take up of Ancient History at GCSE?

Teachers were then provided with a free-response question for what they thought could be done to increase or maintain their school's teaching of Classical Civilisation and Ancient History at GCSE.

For Classical Civilisation, only 17% of teachers said the current situation is fine. The most important change is advocacy, but again all the other changes have support, especially changes to the curriculum. Possibilities mentioned included:

#### Simplification of the GCSE Classical Civilisation specifications:

*'GCSE course content is massive – definitely needs decreasing.'*

*'Class Civ GCSE is too big. Far too much detail for memorisation in the religion course. The festival section is nuts. The war and warfare texts could be better integrated with art historical images for some relief. The Virgil textbook chapter doesn't cover the whole of Virgil section. How about making some interactive workbooks for the kids?'*

*'The content is far too onerous and hard for KS4 students: too challenging!!'*

*'A more realistic GCSE course – there is too much to cover in the time given and develop skills needed. Emphasis should be more on skills than factual knowledge. Course is trying to do too much.'*

*'Reduce the ludicrous comparison questions in Myth and Religion. Reduce overall content of GCSE slightly to allow easier coverage of whole course.'*

*'It still seems harder to get good grades in GCSE CC than some other subjects.'*

#### Wider appreciation of the value of Classical Civilisation relative to other subjects:

*'Classics [Classical Civilisation] has to be included in the EBacc and we need to get rid of the male pale and stale*

*stigma – we are trying (I have a Diversity IN Classics display board) but it's hard.'*

#### Better resources:

*'High quality resource list (books; websites etc with specific links to the curriculum) to enable someone with limited time to create quality first teaching resources to enthuse students.'*

*'There is far too much content in the GCSE. The textbooks are not very classroom friendly so we could do with much better teaching resources.'*

For Ancient History, as well as advocacy, teachers would like changes to the curriculum and options. Possibilities mentioned include:

#### Simplifying the curriculum:

*'There are too many sources to study and LEARN. Providing blank copies of the sources in the exam would still encourage high-level analysis and evaluation without detracting from understanding how to approach source material.'*

*'It is massively content-heavy – that should be reduced.'*

*'Simplifying the course so it is of a similar standard to modern GCSE History.'*

*'The exam is ridiculous in its expectations/timings – as is borne out by the national marks for pupils taking the GCSE (back when we had these figures). Asking pupils to read + comprehend a source, and then answer sensibly with sufficient evidence from that and their own knowledge, in a structured argument is a massive ask within 10 minutes.'*

#### Classical Civilisation at Key Stage 5 (A level)

51% of the surveyed schools offered Classical Civilisation at Key Stage 5 (N=152). Class sizes varied, with around 50% reporting class sizes between 1–10, 13% 11–15 and around 20% more than 15 (N=152) (Figure 24). Most schools (72%) tended to provide 3–5 hours per week for Classical Civilisation at Key Stage 5 (N=152).

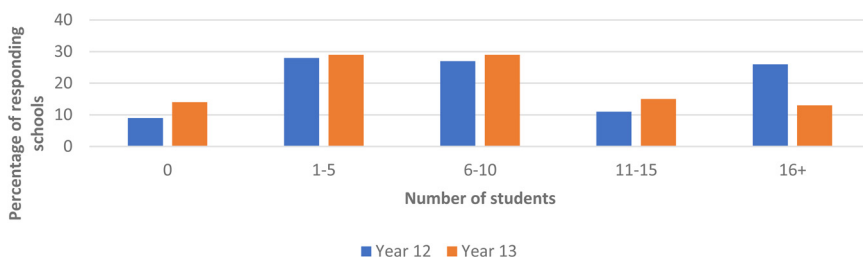


Figure 24. Number of students studying Classical Civilisation each year at Key Stage 5.

Around 8% of schools offered fewer than 3 hours and around 20% offered more than 6.

### Ancient History at Key Stage 5 (A level)

12% of the surveyed schools offered Ancient History at Key Stage 5 (N = 252). The number of students taking Ancient History was fairly evenly distributed (Figure 25). Similar to Classical Civilisation, students were provided with around 3–5 hours per week. While Ancient History is not as widely offered as Classical Civilisation, it seems that class sizes make both courses economically viable in schools. Numbers were larger than for Latin or Ancient Greek at Key Stage 5.

### Classical Civilisation and Ancient History at Key Stage 5 (A level) – trends

Teachers were asked about the trend for their school’s teaching of Classical Civilisation and Ancient History over the last three years (Figure 26). For both subjects, more teachers said that teaching had increased than it had decreased, with most saying that provision was stable.

Teachers were asked, if there had been a change, what had caused it. Their responses are given below.

### Causes of an increase in Classical Civilisation and Ancient History teaching at Key Stage 5 (A level)

In some cases, as with the case with Latin and Ancient Greek, an upsurge at GCSE created a larger pool from which students could

continue with A level. But teachers also put an increase down to an increase in publicity, but through their own efforts and through those of their students’ word of mouth and the subjects’ reputations:

*‘Perhaps due to encouragement when they were in Y11. Some have never done Classics before but heard from fellow teachers/ their peers.’*

*‘We changed topics in our A level provision. Having dropped ‘Democracy and the Athenians’ and replaced it with ‘Greek Religion’, we saw numbers increase considerably.’*

*‘It seems a higher intake across the board affected the numbers. Effort put in at open evenings and the introduction of Ancient History as an A Level has opened the discussion about Classics and what it is. Often students start on Ancient History and move across to Classics when they understand the difference.’*

*‘Lots of marketing, external speakers, enrichment, a good recruitment assembly and open evenings.’*

*‘Following a trip to Greece when the students were in Year 10.’*

*‘Increased efforts to recruit and promote the subject lower down the school.’*

*‘We get a lot through word of mouth but we are very active on social media as well.’*

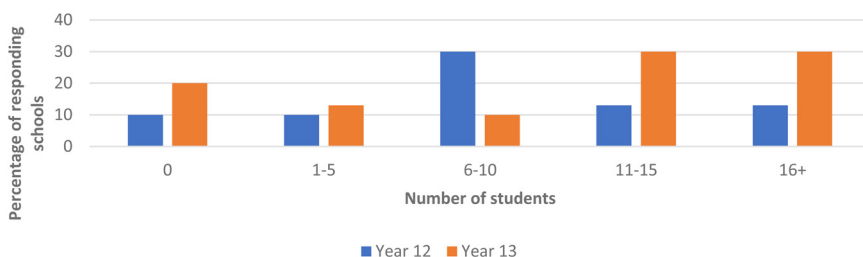


Figure 25. Number of students studying Ancient History each year at Key Stage 5.

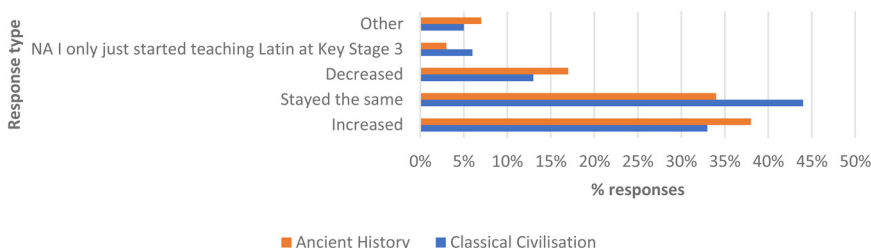


Figure 26. Trends in Classical Civilisation and Ancient History teaching at Key Stage 5.

*'The syllabus is inviting and the students talk about it. Students who liked studying the ancient world in Year 9 Latin but didn't do Latin GCSE and have now returned to Classics in Sixth Form.'*

*'Bandwagon effect is powerful: if a couple of students choose it, others will follow. Recent leavers were successful/high profile.'*

### **Causes of a decrease in Classical Civilisation and Ancient History teaching at Key Stage 5 (A level)**

A decline in numbers was put down to the difficulties of the Covid-19 lockdown and attracting students to the course. By far the biggest effect, however, had been the withdrawal of the AS as a qualifying module for the A level examinations.

### **Suggestions for increasing the teaching of Classical Civilisation and Ancient History at Key Stage 5 (A level)**

We asked what teachers thought was needed to increase or maintain their school's teaching of Classical Civilisation and Ancient History at A level (Figures 27 and 28). Response categories were provided as prompts. The response categories were:

- More CPD.
- Changes to the curriculum e.g. to make it more relevant to those who won't be studying it at university, less emphasis in exams on testing knowledge.
- Changes to assessment e.g. inclusion of coursework, narrower specification, fewer and more equivalent set texts.
- More routes for accreditation options e.g. a replacement for AS level.
- Advocacy/profile-raising e.g. with SLT, parents, public bodies.
- Nothing, current situation is fine.
- Other.

Respondents could choose as many of the response categories as they liked.

Teachers were then provided with a free-response question for what they thought could be done to increase or maintain their school's teaching of Classical Civilisation and Ancient History A level.

For both subjects, after better advocacy, teachers strongly made the case for changes in the curricula and the assessment specifications:

More appealing exams:

For Classical Civilisation:

*'The reading list is immense and not all schools and parents can afford to go buy all the extra books.'*

*'Changes to the specification – solely focusing on Greek/Roman history does put some students off, and it is quite narrow. For diversity, other states would be beneficial.' 'The grading of A level papers can be a cause for concern as it is highly unpredictable.'*

*'Assessment criteria have always been a bit woolly and could do with having less vague terms like perceptive which you can't teach. Scholarship needs to go or be used properly in coursework.'*

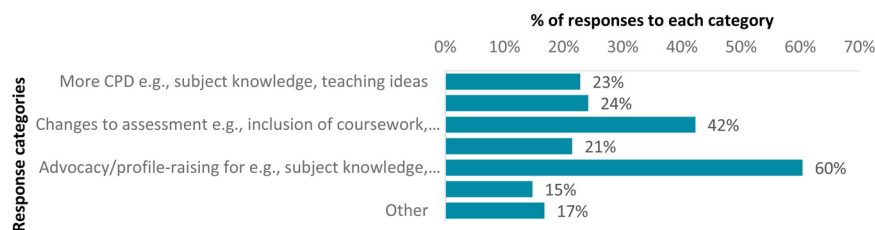
*'Getting rid of scholars' comments section of 30 mark essay, idiotic. Would prefer them to read more primary sources than dated opinions I don't have time or inclination to teach.'*

For Ancient History:

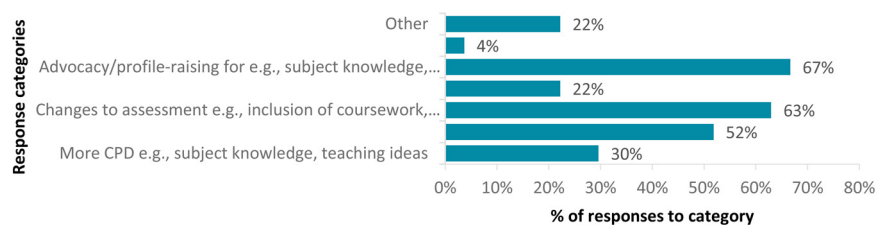
*'Our initial take-up is often strong but dwindles as students recognise more clearly the demands of the AS Level course, leaving only a hard-core of enthusiasts to continue.'*

*'Reduction of amount of prescribed sources, more choice on exam paper.'*

*'Bloated specification is ridiculous and relentless focus on source in essay questions is at odds with the teaching in Modern History. Huge contrast in source skills required when compared to A-level in Modern History. A-level Ancient History has become considerably less accessible to learners than other Humanities offers.'*



**Figure 27.** What do you need to increase or maintain your school's take up of Classical Civilisation at Key Stage 5?



**Figure 28.** What do you need to increase or maintain your school's take up of Ancient History at Key Stage 5?

*'The curriculum again asks far too much – both of teachers + pupils. [...] Teachers are supposed to be able to find easily extractable secondary-opinion paragraphs for the 20-marker; I've read several of the recommended books and have yet to come across a suitable passage.'*

*'The current specification is not fit for purpose. Whoever wrote this and whoever then approved it cannot have consulted the majority of teachers. It is shocking in its failure to grasp what an A Level should be.'*

*'The content in terms of sources has been overloaded and appears rushed.'*

Value of Classical Civilisation:

*'Lots of people don't know what Classical Civilisation is and what type of careers it can lead too.'*

*'[...] pupils and families see A Levels as training rather than education. With that template they see STEM + Economics and Business Studies as appropriate training for their future jobs. That is a hard perception to shift.'*

*'There really is a perception that Class Civ isn't a serious A-Level, even amongst our SLT, who should be familiar with it. More work still to do on image.'*

## Recommendations

The survey shows a strong mandate for change in the curricula and the examination specifications at both GCSE and A level. Examinations are considered to be overloaded with material, poorly resourced, and without recognition of the time constraints of school life. The assessments themselves are not felt to be comparable with those of other subjects taught.

Many of the recommendations which have been suggested for Latin and Ancient Greek seem to apply to Classical Civilisation and Ancient History. These include a need for greater advocacy and promotional resources for making the case for recruitment, especially at Key Stages 4 and 5. These need to appeal to students, parents and senior leadership teams. In the case of Key Stage 5 subjects, advocacy has to reach outside the school boundaries, as many sixth form colleges have to attract economically viable numbers to survive from students who often have never experienced Classics before they begin their studies.

The absence of GCSE Classical Civilisation from the EBacc, but the inclusion of Ancient History, is an oddity sometimes deleterious to its inclusion on a school curriculum. While Ancient History appears to have some recognition among students, the value of Classical Civilisation is less well understood, and it is only through powerful advocacy by teachers themselves that students are often attracted to the subject.

Several teachers commented on how much the impact of STEM subjects had had on student uptake of humanities across the board. But there are opportunities to incorporate STEM-like studies in both Classical Civilisation and Ancient History, if examination specifications were more open-minded. The current specifications at both GCSE and A level are considered to be too extensive and complex, with insufficient time for students to answer the different question types. A slimmed-down specification seems to be desired, with the examination boards asked to reconsider the scholarship-style questions at A level.

As for Latin and Ancient Greek, course books and resources need to be revised and more geared to students today.

## Thanks

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The views are not necessarily those of the evaluator. One of the principles of evaluation is that reporting of findings should be separated from the evaluator's conclusions.

The views are not necessarily consistent between respondents or even in the same respondent. Respondents often contradict themselves and representing this complexity is part of presenting a nuanced evaluation.

The interviewees' voices are important. I use quotes from interviewees to illustrate not just the responses to the questions but also the background to the responses, for example the mechanisms (how a particular outcome was created), importance (why an activity or outcome matters to the respondent), the emotions attached to the response, and the language used by the respondent (including their use of metaphor).

I analyse open questions using content analysis, which involves identifying themes and patterns. These themes are, of course, my own rather than the respondents'. Quotes are given to illustrate individual themes, but many have wider relevance beyond the specific place I have listed them. I do not include every comment as an example in my analysis tables. I have sent over the individual level data so you can see all the comments and their context.

The overall picture is affected by the level and pattern of responses. The overall response rate is relatively high. However, it is possible that some views are not reflected in the survey. The evaluator treats non-response neutrally, by assuming nothing is known. In practice, we know that respondents often miss out questions to avoid negative responses (saying that they didn't have a particular outcome). To clarify the status of the data, response rates (N numbers) are given in the heading for each chart.

Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd  
Evaluators

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See CUCD Bulletin 2019–2020 statistics (2021), especially tables G2 and G3. A more recent presentation in 2023 by OCR at the Classical Association Teaching Board provided the following enrolment figures for each subject at each examination level for 2023 (OCR exams, unless otherwise noted):

- Latin GCSE: 8,559 (includes WJEC/Eduqas and OCR exams)
- Latin A level: 985



- Greek GCSE: 995
- Greek A level: 174
- Classical Civilisation GCSE: 4,540
- Classical Civilisation A level: 3,984
- Ancient History GCSE: 1,249

2 Classics for All – Olympus Challenge: <https://classicsforall.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Olympus%20Challenge%20DIY%20guide%20complete.pdf>.

3 Intermediate Certificate in Classical Greek: <https://intermediategreekcert.com/>.

4 Evidence drawn from social media posts from affinity groups for classical subjects, such as those on Facebook and Twitter/X.

## References

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