

Forum

A New Classical Greek Qualification

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The Intermediate Certificate in Classical Greek (ICCG) is a new qualification being developed primarily for learners of Classical Greek on limited time for whom sitting the full GCSE is unrealistic. It is endorsed by the Classical Association and Classics for All.

The survival of Classical Greek as a subject is under threat in all schools, and we think that it is important not only to halt this decline, but in the longer term to reverse it. At GCSE, entries fell from 1,618 in 2015 to 1,149 in 2019, a decline of nearly 29%. In 2019, these 1,149 entries came from 201 centres (1,001 from 171 independent schools and 148 from 30 state schools, of which only 8 were non-selective). Of these 201 centres, a small number will have contributed a substantial percentage of all the candidates. This is also reflected in a dramatic drop in A-level Greek entries in the last two years, from 246 in 2018 to 188 in 2020¹.

Although there is a bigger picture here, with the need to seek changes in these traditional qualifications in the next round of exam reform to make them more accessible, we need to ensure as wide a foothold as possible for entry-level Classical Greek in schools to enable the survival of the higher-level qualifications. This foothold must exist in schools if there are to be pupils and teachers able to pursue and teach the subject to higher levels, and to drum up interest and demand for these higher levels.

Currently there is no externally marked entry-level qualification available for schools to offer as an end-target for their pupils to work towards. The contrast with Latin is pertinent: Latin students are offered the OCR Entry Level, the WJEC Level 1 certificate, and an Eduqas GCSE which is seen by many as more accessible than the OCR GCSE.

We think that it is essential to develop a plan to ensure that the teaching of Classical Greek does not become the preserve of the university sector, a handful of elite independent schools and a few specialist summer schools. Although the statistics show that Classical Greek is doing better in the independent sector than the state sector, the large majority of takers are confined to a tiny minority of schools. Many independent schools also struggle with teaching Classical Greek on very reduced timetables/off-timetable, and often without Classical Greek specialist teachers. In state schools, especially the non-selective sector, the current bar is very high, particularly where there may not be a subject specialist. It is

essential for them that there should be an accessible qualification, with free access to supporting resources, as we plan for the ICCG.

Survey results

Results from the preliminary survey conducted in November 2020 suggest there is a desire for such a qualification across all sectors. There were 302 responses in total, 24% from state school teachers, 61% from independent school teachers and 22% from others (private tutors, university lecturers, independent learners, etc.).

85% of respondents felt that a language course based on Taylor's *Greek to GCSE Book 1* was an achievable target with 30–50 hours of teaching time. There was a strong majority (73%) wanting an examination taken in a centre within a fixed window. Thus, the pilot examination (and the current proposal for future exams) will be sent to centres to be taken during a set week in June, but the centres can decide at what point in the week the students sit the exam. This avoids clashes with external exams, helps non-UK centres and will obviously make it easier for the schools in many other ways. The examination will still be sat in formal exam conditions and marked and moderated externally with John Taylor as the chief examiner. There was also a very strong majority of respondents who were happy for the examination to be purely linguistic (82%). However, even without civilisation/history topics featured in the exam, it will be desirable for teachers to include these in their courses, as time allows, and we plan to develop resources for this through further on-line resources, based around further reading passages.

We have now embarked upon a pilot with 19 schools (9 maintained and 10 independent). Current numbers suggest that total numbers of candidates sitting the pilot examination in June 2023 could reach nearly 200 across these schools. 75% of the pilot schools are teaching Greek off-timetable, which reinforces the need for such a qualification. Most schools will be using this instead of the GCSE (which was never going to be a realistic target for them) although some are using it to encourage pupils to continue with Greek after the first year of teaching. The first examination will be held in June 2024 and results will be graded Distinction, Merit, or Pass; there will be no fixed quota for each level.

We keep in regular contact with the pilot schools and will run CPD events throughout the year. The first CPD event took place in September with Stuart Macaulay delivering a session on approaches to vocabulary learning. The January CPD will focus on the examination and exam marking.

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Information, specification, sample examination paper and mark scheme as well as teaching resources are available for all (not just pilot schools) on our website. We would love to hear from other teachers with resources to share or ideas/requests for new resources.

There has been wide support from UK universities, and the qualification has been recognised by the Classics faculties of the University of Cambridge, Durham University, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Exeter, King's College London, the University of Manchester, Newcastle University, the University of Nottingham, the Open University, the University of Oxford, University College London, and the University of Warwick.

We are now looking ahead to 2022–2023 and beyond when the plan is to open the qualification out to all learners. We will be

holding a (virtual) information session in January. More details will be sent to our mailing list soon.

For more information, the specification, sample examination paper and teaching resources see our website www.intermediategreekcert.com

Follow/talk to us on social media - @Intermed_Greek on twitter and our Facebook group - and email us on intermediategreekcert@gmail.com to join our mailing list and ask any questions.

Note

¹ The statistics are reported from OCR at the Classical Association Teaching Board meetings in 2019 and 2020.