

Post-16 Curriculum - Classic Civilisation

Subject Curriculum Overview

Subject	Classic Civilisation
Qualification / Specification	A-Level (H408)
Awarding Body	OCR
Level	3
Curriculum Lead	Nick Binfield
Teaching Staff	P.Stott/V.Lowthion
Guided Learning Hours	360
Year(s) Delivered	12 & 13
Last Review Date	June 2026
Next Review Date	June 2027

1. Curriculum Intent

The purpose of Classical Civilisation is to provide an immersive, multidisciplinary study of the literature, material culture, and thought of ancient Greece and Rome. By engaging directly with seminal texts like Homer's *Iliad* and exploring the visual architecture of Augustan propaganda and the physical realities of Greek sanctuaries, students investigate the bedrock of Western culture. The course prompts critical examination of timeless themes: heroism, absolute power, civic duty, religious devotion, and what it means to be human.

The curriculum develops a highly versatile toolkit combining historical, literary, and archaeological methodologies. It serves as a strong academic bridge to Higher Education pathways including Classics, History, Archaeology, Law, Philosophy, Politics, and English Literature. Universities and employers look for candidates who can synthesise highly disparate forms of evidence (textual, material, and epigraphic) to construct a coherent, persuasive argument. This specification trains students to detect political spin, navigate cross-cultural differences, and rigorously challenge interpretations. These analytical and communication skills are highly valued in the civil service, law, journalism, marketing, and the heritage/museum sectors.

Success looks like an independent, analytical thinker who goes beyond treating the ancient world as a collection of static stories. Successful learners confidently handle primary source evidence, evaluate historical contexts, read between the lines of ancient propaganda, and construct sophisticated, beautifully structured analytical essays supported by substantiated judgments.

2. Foundational Knowledge

Area	Essential Knowledge / Skills	Why It Matters
Epic Literary Conventions	Mastery of the Homeric oral tradition, dactylic hexameter, formulaic epithets, epic similes, and structural conventions of macro-narratives.	Allows students to look past plot points and analyze the deliberate aesthetic, narrative, and political choices made by Homer and Virgil.
Material & Visual Culture Analysis	The ability to "read" non-textual evidence including ancient numismatics (coinage layouts), sculpture (iconography and proportions), and temple architectures.	Shifts students away from text-centric dependency, enabling them to reconstruct the physical and visual landscape experienced by ancient populations.
Socio-Political Chronology	Deep structural understanding of the late Roman Republic's collapse, the rise of the Principate, and the geopolitical layout of the Greek <i>polis</i> network.	Contextualises the texts and artifacts; without this, Augustan propaganda loses its political urgency and Greek religious practices look like disconnected myths.
Source Criticism & Historiography	Identifying bias, original audience, political patronage, authorial intent, and the fragments or limitations of archaeological records.	Prevents the uncritical acceptance of ancient writing (e.g., <i>Res Gestae</i>) and trains students to evaluate the reliability of evidence systematically.

3. Powerful Knowledge

Powerful Knowledge Area	Why It Matters	Evidence of Understanding
The Heroic Code (Time, Kleos, Menis and Pietas)	Unpacks how values shifted over centuries - from the individualized, wrathful pursuit of honor in Homer (The Iliad) to the collective, civic, and state duty prioritized by Virgil (The Aeneid)	Students produce essays that analyze characters within their own cultural frameworks rather than through a modern moral lens, explaining why Achilles' anger or Aeneas' choices were logical to their original audiences.
The Mechanics of Political Mythmaking (Augustan Spin)	Demonstrates how Octavian manipulated concepts like <i>Divi Filius</i> (Son of a God), <i>Imperator</i> , and the Saturnian Golden Age to ground an absolute autocracy inside a pseudo-republican façade.	Students run detailed analyses linking physical artifacts (e.g., the Ara Pacis or Prima Porta statue) directly to legislative reforms, military campaigns, and specific pieces of state-sponsored poetry.
Lived Religion vs. Literary Mythology	Distinguishes between the entertaining, flawed gods found in Homeric literature and the functional, highly localized, civic reality of blood sacrifices, libations, and sanctuary consultation.	Students clearly explain how religious infrastructure bound fractured Greek city-states together, using specific archaeological evidence from Delphi, Olympia, and the Athenian Acropolis.
Intellectual Dissidence and Philosophical Critique	Explores how early Pre-Socratic and Socratic thinkers challenged anthropomorphism and state religious paradigms, creating the early foundations for Western logic.	Students write evaluative arguments explaining how philosophical developments co-existed with or undermined civic ritual, referencing texts from figures like Xenophanes or Plato.

4. Curriculum Implementation

Term / Unit	Key Content	Foundational Knowledge	Powerful Knowledge	Assessment Opportunities
Yr 12 - Autumn 1	Nature of the Gods Sites of Worship	Names/family structure/nature of the Olympian Gods. Anthropomorphism The Acropolis Delphi Olympia	How did the Greeks perceive their Gods and what was the relationship between the mortals and immortals (reciprocity)? What role did key sites play in the nature of worship and how do these sites demonstrate the differing aspects of Greek religion?	Examination style short answer questions. Prescribed source evaluation

Yr 12 - Autumn 2	The Iliad Bks 1-8	Narrative of books.	How do the early books establish key themes i.e. the nature of heroism	Extract evaluation (10 marks) examination style questions
Yr 12 - Spring 1	Personal experience of the Divine Priest and Worship	The Eleusinian Mysteries The Healing Cult of Asclepius The Oracle at Dodona The role of the priest The nature of sacrifice	How did individual Greeks interact with the Gods and how were these interactions different from state organised religion? What do these interactions tell us about the nature of Greek religion? What role did priests play within Greek society and why was sacrifice so important?	Prescribed source evaluation. (10 marks) Extended answer questions linked to Prescribed sources (20 marks)
Yr 12 - Spring 2	The Iliad Bks 9-16	Narrative of books.	How is war depicted in the middle section of the text? Does Achilles grow as a person during this phase of the text? How do the Trojans differ from the Achaeans?	Extract evaluation (10 marks) examination style questions. Examination of specific themes within limited range of Books (20 marks)
Yr 12 - Summer 1	Religion and Society Religion and Philosophy	State based religious activities - festivals/sacrifices The role of state officials within the religious landscape. What did different philosophers say about the Greek gods and religion i.e. Xenophanes/Plato	What does the interaction between state and religion tell us about Greek society? Where did control lie in the Greek religious world? What role did families and women play within the Greek religious world? What do these philosophers reveal about the actual nature of belief within the Greek religious world?	Prescribed Source evaluation (110 marks) Essay based questions targeting synoptic aspects of the course across a range of topic areas/comparing topic areas. (30 marks)
Yr 12 - Summer 2	The Iliad Bks 17-24	Narrative of books.		Examination of specific themes within limited range of Books (20 marks) Essay writing skills covering whole text. (30 marks)
Yr 13 - Autumn 1	Divi Filius Imperator 'Augustus'	Narrative of Roman history C1st/C2nd BCE The rise of Octavian to the position of Emperor How did Octavian use symbols to support his rise to power?	Why was Octavian able to defeat Mark Anthony? How important were symbols in securing Augustus' position as Emperor?	Prescribed Source evaluation (10 marks) Examination of key themes linked to Prescribed sources (20 marks)
Yr 13 - Autumn 2	The Aeneid Bks 1-6	Narrative of books.		Extract evaluation (10 marks) examination style questions

				Examination of specific themes within limited range of Books (20 marks)
Yr 13 - Spring 1	Culture Hero Pater Patriae Later Representations	What policies did Augustus introduce into BCE Rome? How was Augustus portrayed as Pater Patriae? How did Augustus use symbols and architecture to cement his legacy?	How did Augustus establish Imperial rule and how effective was this? How effectively did Augustus establish his legacy?	Prescribed Source evaluation (110 marks) Essay based questions targeting synoptic aspects of the course across a range of topic areas/comparing topic areas. (30 marks)
Yr 13 - Spring 2	The Aeneid Bks 7-12	Narrative of books.	What does the text tell us about the nature of fate and how this was viewed within the Ancient Greek world? How far has Achilles developed as a man during the context of the text?	Comparative 10 mark questions using Extracts from Iliad and Aeneid. (10 marks) Examination of specific themes within limited range of Books (20 marks) Essay writing skills covering the whole text. (30 marks)

5. Assessment Strategy

Assessment Type	Purpose	Frequency
Diagnostic	Flags initial reading levels, essay structural skills, and baseline historical knowledge or misconceptions about Greece and Rome at the start of Years 12 and 13.	Administered in September of Year 12 (baseline writing and analysis task) - reviewed within the context of on-going tasks.
Formative	Pinpoints how well students are mastering source analysis, source commentary writing, retention of details, and building sharp analytical arguments.	Bi-weekly formal exam-style short/medium questions (10 and 20-markers).
Summative	Tests full-unit mastery, sets working grades, and builds the physical endurance required for the final external OCR examinations.	End of every appropriate topic block; formal mock examination windows in Year 12 (Summer) and Year 13 (Winter and Spring).

Synoptic	Evaluates a student's ability to pull connections across different periods, cultures, and mediums, specifically targeting Component 11 Section C (Homer vs. Virgil).	Formally integrated into Year 13 essay assignments starting in Term 1, and heavily emphasized throughout the final pre-exam mock series.
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