HSC examination in Latin Extension – Advice for students

[General information 3](#_Toc77066370)

[How to approach *Section I – Prescribed text* 4](#_Toc77066371)

[Examination specifications 4](#_Toc77066372)

[Translation question 4](#_Toc77066373)

[Criteria for assessing performance 4](#_Toc77066374)

[Preparing for the examination 5](#_Toc77066375)

[During the examination 5](#_Toc77066376)

[Short-answer questions 5](#_Toc77066377)

[Criteria for assessing performance 6](#_Toc77066378)

[Preparing for the examination 6](#_Toc77066379)

[During the examination 6](#_Toc77066380)

[Extended response question 7](#_Toc77066381)

[Criteria for assessing performance 8](#_Toc77066382)

[Preparing for the examination 8](#_Toc77066383)

[During the examination 9](#_Toc77066384)

[How to approach *Section II – Non-prescribed text* 10](#_Toc77066385)

[Examination specifications 10](#_Toc77066386)

[Translation question 10](#_Toc77066387)

[Criteria for assessing performance 10](#_Toc77066388)

[Preparing for the examination 11](#_Toc77066389)

[During the examination 11](#_Toc77066390)

[Additional translation question into English or Latin 12](#_Toc77066391)

## Context

Note: This document provides generic advice only. It is the responsibility of individual teachers to ensure their students are adequately prepared for the Latin Extension HSC examination.

This advice applies to Latin Extension only and is current as at 8 July 2021.

The Latin Extension syllabus document is referenced in this advice – you can access the syllabus at the [NESA website](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/stage-6-learning-areas/stage-6-languages/extension).

# General information

You will have 2 hours (plus 10 minutes reading time) to complete the examination. You may use print dictionaries in the examination.

You will be required to complete 2 sections:

* *Section I – Prescribed text*
* *Section II – Non-prescribed text*.

You should consider the allocation of marks and organise your time accordingly.

Suggested approach:

* *Section I – Prescribed text* is worth 30 marks. Allow about 1 hour for this section.
* *Section II – Non-prescribed text* is worth 20 marks. Allow about 1 hour for this section.

Make sure you allow sufficient time to:

* plan your answers before you commence
* revise your work and check the quality of your responses, ensuring what you say is clear and there are no ambiguities.

To ensure that you are fully prepared for the Extension examination paper, you could ask yourself the following questions:

* Do I have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the prescribed texts?
* Am I able to respond in English to the features of the prescribed texts, for example characterisation, themes, language features, style, context and historical/cultural background?

# How to approach *Section I – Prescribed text*

## Examination specifications

*Section I – Prescribed text* is worth 30 marks and you should allow approximately 1 hour to complete this section, including time to review, edit and improve your responses. It is the first part of the examination and is designed to assess your knowledge of the meaning and content of the prescribed texts, the features of the literary genre you have studied, and the individual styles used by the set authors who were writing in this literary genre.

## Translation question

The translation question is worth 8 marks and relates to Objective 1 of the syllabus.

| Objective | Outcomes |
| --- | --- |
| The student will:   1. read and demonstrate understanding of original Latin texts | The student:  1.1 infers meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases from common patterns of word formation and from context  1.2 demonstrates understanding of the content of Latin texts  1.3 demonstrates understanding of the linguistic features of Latin texts |

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You will be provided with one or two extracts in Latin from the prescribed texts for translation into clear English. The extract(s) will consist of approximately 120 words of prose, or 20 lines of verse.

### Criteria for assessing performance

You are expected to be able to:

* convey the meaning of individual Latin words and phrases accurately into fluent and coherent English
* interpret the relationships between the words and structures of the extract
* provide a translation which is faithful to the meaning, style and theme(s) of the Latin original
* provide a translation which is clear and comprehensible to an English reader.

### Preparing for the examination

The extract(s) in the translation question can come from any part of the prescribed texts, so it’s important you are familiar with the whole prescription, and are able to write a clear and accurate English translation of any part of it.

As part of the course, you would have already produced your own translations of the prescribed texts, with feedback from your teacher and other students. Prepare for the examination by reviewing your own translation. Specific translation preparation may involve randomly selecting and translating extracts from the text (20 lines of verse or approximately 120 words of prose), to see how well you are able to comprehend and translate these into English. This is preferable to memorising pre-prepared English translations of entire chapters or sections.

### During the examination

* Ensure that you have translated all parts of the extract, and go back over your translation carefully to check that you have not missed out any words or phrases in Latin that should have been translated into English.
* Ensure that your English translation is fluent and coherent, and that the word order and structure of your English sentences reflect English usage rather than Latin usage.

## Short-answer questions

Short-answer questions are worth a total of 12 marks, and relate to Objective 2 of the syllabus.

| Objective | Outcomes |
| --- | --- |
| **The student will:**   1. **demonstrate understanding of the historical, social and literary context in which the prescribed Latin text was written** | The student:  2.1 evaluates the ideas, values, attitudes and arguments presented in the prescribed text  2.2 identifies and evaluates the structure of the prescribed text  2.3 identifies and evaluates the literary features of the prescribed text  2.4 discusses significant cultural and historical issues presented in the text  2.5 discusses the relationship between the prescribed extract and the text as a whole |

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You will be provided with a range of questions requiring short answers, based on 2 or 3 extracts from the prescribed text. These extracts will be different from the extract(s) provided in the translation question.

### Criteria for assessing performance

You are expected to be able to:

* identify and explain the use of specific stylistic features and literary terms – listed in 8.7 of the [Stage 6 Latin Continuers Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/stage-6-learning-areas/stage-6-languages/continuers/latin-continuers-syllabus)
* explains the effectiveness of the literary features of the extract, for example structure, characterisation and selection of detail
* demonstrate your knowledge of cultural and/or historical references, for example specific events, religious/mythological allusions and technical terms.

### Preparing for the examination

While studying the prescribed texts, maintain a parallel commentary alongside either the Latin text or your English translation of the text, including explanatory notes for cultural and/or historical references. Make note of all literary/rhetorical features used in the text, and the author’s likely purpose for using these features in each instance.

Refer to expert commentaries on the prescribed texts, which can provide useful historical and literary backgrounds. Your teacher may provide these expert commentaries, or recommend ones which are available free of charge on [Google Books](https://books.google.com/?hl=en) or the [Internet Archive](https://archive.org/).

If the prescribed texts have been set as HSC texts before, you will be able to access questions from [HSC past papers](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/resources/hsc-exam-papers) which can provide excellent practice. Reading the HSC marking feedback for the relevant examination can provide additional information on the characteristics of better responses. Note that although the texts may have been set before, the prescriptions in the texts may have changed, and the structure and specifications of the examination may have been different at that time.

Make sure you’re familiar with NESA’s [glossary of key words](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/hsc/hsc-student-guide/glossary-keywords) in the context of Latin Extension, and so are able to respond appropriately to a range of different question types.

### During the examination

* Ensure your answers are in clear and plain English.
* Check the mark value of each question carefully, as this will guide the length of your response and the detail required.
* Take 2-3 minutes to plan your answers to longer (4-5 marks) commentary questions. Use this time to plan the structure of your answer and to choose the most relevant quotations to include.
* Look back at the question regularly to ensure that you are answering it properly and not becoming sidetracked.
* Mention specific literary/rhetorical techniques only if they are relevant to the question.
* Incorporate quotations from the extracts by using brackets – this avoids the awkward mixing of Latin and English grammar. Alternatively, include the line reference(s) in brackets where relevant, for example ‘Horace uses a symbol of youth and yet incipient maturity (lines 4-5) in order to … ’
* Indicate any quotations clearly, through inverted commas or underlining.
* Use ellipsis when quoting more than a few words from an extract in order to avoid copying long sections of text.
* Use your knowledge of the text in your responses, but confine your quotations to the extracts provided.
* Support an explanation by linking it to relevant and specific examples – quotations are not always necessary.

## Extended response question

The extended response question is worth 10 marks, and relates to Objective 2 of the syllabus.

| Objective | Outcomes |
| --- | --- |
| The student will:   1. demonstrate understanding of the historical, social and literary context in which the prescribed Latin text was written | The student:  2.1 evaluates the ideas, values, attitudes and arguments presented in the prescribed text  2.2 identifies and evaluates the structure of the prescribed text  2.3 identifies and evaluates the literary features of the prescribed text  2.4 discusses significant cultural and historical issues presented in the text  2.5 discusses the relationship between the prescribed extract and the text as a whole |

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You will be provided with a question requiring an extended response, based on one or more extracts from the prescribed texts, with an expected length of response of around 3 pages of an examination writing booklet – approximately 400 words. This extended response may require students to compare and contrast the ways in which the authors express themselves when they are writing in the literary genre being studied.

### Criteria for assessing performance

You are expected to be able to:

* demonstrate your understanding of the particular features of language, structure and tone which are specific to the literary genre being studied
* demonstrate your understanding of the themes of the texts, and how they are reflected in the extract(s) provided
* incorporate both individual literary features and broader elements of style in the extract(s), which are relevant to the question
* evaluate the effectiveness of the literary features of the extract, for example structure, characterisation and selection of detail
* use your knowledge of cultural and/or historical references to evaluate the qualities of the text, for example specific events, religious/mythological allusions and technical terms.

### Preparing for the examination

Much of the preparation required for the extended response question is similar to the preparation for the short-answer questions.

Familiarise yourself with the major themes of the prescribed texts, and the individual author’s approach to that genre. Consider how this approach compares to the approaches used in other prescribed texts in this genre. In addition, be familiar with specific features of the texts which are representative of the set literary genre, and with the type of subject matter which is characteristic of the set literary genre.

If the prescribed texts have been set as HSC texts before, you will be able to access questions from [HSC past papers](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/resources/hsc-exam-papers) which can provide excellent practice. Reading the HSC marking feedback and exemplar scripts on the [ARC site](https://arc2.nesa.nsw.edu.au/view/default/course/15910) for the relevant genre can provide additional information on the characteristics of better responses. Note that although the texts may have been set before, the prescriptions in the texts may have changed, and the structure and specifications of the examination may have been different at that time.

### During the examination

* Take at least 5 minutes to plan your extended response, especially the structure, the quotations from the text which you will use, and any references to other parts of the prescription.
* Structure your extended response carefully, using paragraphs for different aspects of your response.
* Avoid overly long, rehearsed and largely irrelevant introductions and conclusions.
* Look back at the question regularly to ensure that you are engaging with its requirements and not becoming sidetracked.
* Only mention specific literary/rhetorical techniques if they are relevant to the question.
* Support your response with reference to the stimulus extracts(s), either by using line numbers where appropriate or by quoting relevant words or phrases from the Latin.
* For questions with more than one extract, provide a balanced response addressing both extracts.
* For questions requiring you to compare and contrast 2 or more extracts, make a list of specific points of similarity and difference, and address these in detail in your response.
* When referring to parts of the text beyond the extract(s), you do not need to quote relevant parts of the Latin from memory; it is sufficient to paraphrase. If, however, a part of the text which is relevant to your answer appears in the translation question or the short-answer questions, it can be quoted in Latin.

# How to approach *Section II – Non-prescribed text*

## Examination specifications

*Section II – Non-prescribed text* is worth 20 marks and you should allow approximately 1 hour to complete this section, including time to review, edit and improve your responses. It is the second part of the examination and is designed to assess your ability to comprehend, translate and appreciate the relevant literary features of a non-prescribed text in the set genre.

## Translation question

The translation question is worth 15 marks and relates to Objective 3 of the syllabus.

| Objective | Outcomes |
| --- | --- |
| The student will:   1. analyse, comprehend and translate text using linguistic skills | A student:  3.1 analyses, comprehends and translates text not previously studied, using vocabulary and style appropriate to the context |

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You will be provided with 1-2 extract(s) in Latin, not from the prescribed texts, but in the same literary genre as the prescribed texts, for comprehension, translation and analysis. The total length of the extract(s) will be approximately 10 lines of verse or 60 words of prose. One part of the translation question will require you to translate the extract into clear English – this part is worth 10 marks. The other parts of the translation question are worth 5 marks and may require you to analyse aspects of the extract(s) which are related to the style of the individual author, the content, the typical features of the set literary genre, or stylistic features more broadly.

### Criteria for assessing performance

You are expected to be able to:

* demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between English and Latin with regard to language structure
* convey meaning accurately and idiomatically
* demonstrate understanding of the content and style of the genre.

### Preparing for the examination

Practise translating unseen extracts from the prescribed genre under time constraints as much as you can. Provided that they are from the same genre, the best source of these is [HSC past papers](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/resources/hsc-exam-papers) and past trial papers. Reading the HSC marking feedback for the relevant examination can provide additional information on the characteristics of better responses. Note that although the authors and/or genre may have been set before, the structure and specifications of the examination may have been different at that time.

When practising your translations, use your dictionary only when necessary. It is important to develop the skill of inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words from context, Latin cognates or English derivatives.

A good command of Latin vocabulary is especially important for *Section II – Non-prescribed text*. Although there is no longer a set vocabulary list for the Stage 6 Latin Continuers syllabus, you should ensure, as a minimum, that you can provide the meaning of any words which occur more than once in the prescribed texts when you see them in a different context. Although you are able to use a dictionary during the examination, over-reliance on a dictionary will affect your train of thought and delay you.

A thorough command of Latin case, number, tense, voice, mood, grammatical agreement and personal endings is also vital for dealing successfully with the unseen translation section. Ensure you can recognise all the common word endings and their meanings; refer to 8.6 of the [Stage 6 Latin Continuers Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/stage-6-learning-areas/stage-6-languages/continuers/latin-continuers-syllabus).

It is important to be familiar with the particular linguistic and stylistic features of the set literary genre, and it is also important to be familiar with the subject matter and themes which are common in the set literary genre, as many of these may be prominent in unseen extracts as well.

Make sure you’re familiar with NESA’s [glossary of key words](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/hsc/hsc-student-guide/glossary-keywords) used in the context of Latin Extension, and so are able to respond appropriately to a range of different question types.

### During the examination

* Carefully read the introductory statement in English preceding the unseen extract(s) carefully.
* Read through the extract at least once for understanding without attempting to translate it to help you to get some understanding of its content.
* Make a note of unfamiliar words only during your second reading of the extract. Avoid looking them up in the dictionary yet, as context may provide a better indication of the meaning of the word than the first dictionary entry.
* Ensure that you have checked any extra information provided immediately beneath the extract. For example, this could be explanations of proper names, translations of difficult expressions, or clarifications of alternate forms.
* Write your translation on alternate lines.
* Ensure that your translation is in fluent English. If you find that you are unable to express a particular part of the extract clearly in English, this usually indicates that you need to check that portion of the extract again to see whether you have correctly understood the Latin.
* Use the dictionary sparingly. If the first dictionary entry for a word is unlikely in the context, check the other meanings given for the word. Most often, either context, Latin cognates or English derivatives can suggest an appropriate English rendering of an unfamiliar word.
* Look out for words which may point you to common themes of the set literary genre – these can enhance your comprehension of the extract as a whole.
* Pay close attention to word endings and translate them appropriately. Verbs in the present tense may be rendered as past tense in English if this is clearly the intended sense.
* For the parts requiring you to analyse aspects of the extract(s), read the verb in the question carefully and respond accordingly.
* Clearly demonstrate your understanding of:
  + the features listed in 8.7 of the the [Stage 6 Latin Continuers Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/wcm/connect/a40c5614-9913-405a-af16-0ebadc6471d6/latin-continuers-st6-syl-from2015.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=)
  + the typical characteristics of the genre.

## Additional translation question into English or Latin

The additional translation question is worth 5 marks, and relates to Objective 3 of the syllabus.

| Objective | Outcomes |
| --- | --- |
| The student will:   1. analyse, comprehend and translate text using linguistic skills | The student:  3.1 analyses, comprehends and translates text not previously studied, using vocabulary and style appropriate to the context |

In this question, you are provided with a choice:

* option (a) is an additional translation of non-prescribed Latin text of approximately 5 lines of verse or approximately 30 words of prose
* option (b) is a translation of an English prose text of approximately 30 words into Latin.

Regarding option (a), refer to the information and advice given above for the translation part of translation question for advice on preparation for the examination and suggestions to follow during the examination, as well as the assessment criteria.

Regarding option (b), the passage of English text may refer to subject matter which you have encountered in the prescribed texts, so ensure you are thoroughly familiar with this material and have studied prose composition as part of the Latin Extension course. You will be assessed on how accurately you can render English vocabulary into Latin, and how accurately you can manipulate Latin inflections, syntax and idiom to reflect English usage.

*Bene eveniat!*