



# An Appropriate Stepping Stone? A case study into student and teacher perceptions of the value of the WJEC Level 1 Certificate in Latin

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## Introduction

During my second placement on the PGCE in Latin with Classics, the Head of Classics explained the curriculum plan for Latin, and the use of the WJEC Level 1 Certificate in Latin which she had implemented for the students in Year 9. She was keen for the students to receive recognition for their effort in Latin and yet concerned that the pressure of an additional external exam might detract from the students' enjoyment of the subject. I was unaware of the possibility for external exams outside of GCSE and A Level and I was fascinated by what role the certificate might play for the students as they progressed through their education.

The school is a girls' grammar school of approximately 1000 students, with a co-educational cohort at Key Stage 5. National statistics show that the students achieve 92% A\*-C including English and Maths at GCSE in comparison to the national average of 53.8%. Latin is offered to all students from Year 8, with five classes, taught in mixed-ability tutor set groupings, for two one-hour lessons per fortnightly cycle. At the end of Year 8, these classes are mixed and split, with two classes (a total of 59 students in the academic year 2015–2016) selected to continue with Latin. The remaining students either begin Spanish lessons or Classical Civilisation for literacy. This selection is based on

observations and achievement in Year 8, with students able to opt out if they would prefer to study Spanish, and also opt in if they have not been selected in the first instance but have a desire to learn Latin.

It is a fact that the students at the school have all passed the 11-plus exam, and those selected to continue with Latin are chosen for their abilities, enthusiasm and effort. However, in my observations I saw some students worrying out loud at what I considered to be straightforward grammar which they claimed they did not understand, and others seemed to be demotivated by their lack of knowledge of vocabulary.

These observations led me to question three separate issues: firstly, whether the Level 1 Certificate might be putting the students under pressure to achieve good results unnecessarily; secondly, whether the increase in language focus might dissuade students, who were otherwise strongly interested in the historical background material, from continuing the subject to GCSE; and finally, whether the examination was an appropriate tool for use with the Year 9 cohort, since it is intended as a Key Stage 4 assessment suitable for Years 10 and 11.

A number of factors could help to answer these questions. They include: selective education, single-sex education, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the impact of exam- and school-related stress and summative assessment

practices. I shall first demonstrate how each of these factors plays a role in the preparation of this Year 9 class for the Level 1 certificate.

Next I will consider the intended purpose of the Level 1 certificate, and whether this meets both teacher and student perceptions, using interviews with teachers and students to support this discussion.

Finally, I will draw conclusions from the information gathered and demonstrate what are, at least in my school, the students' and teacher's perceptions of the value of the WJEC Level 1 Certificate in Latin.

## What factors might influence student perception?

As discussed above, the influence of a number of factors must be considered in discussion of the value of the Level 1 certificate. Firstly I will consider the role of selective education and single sex education, as these are concerns that apply directly to my school. I will then consider learning motivation in students and how both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation has roles to play in this particular learning environment. Further, reviews of the impact of exam- and school-related stress will be discussed, as well as the principles of summative assessment and how this is reflected in the classroom. Finally I

will consider the somewhat thorny issue of ‘teaching to the test’, particularly in relation to how it changes the attitudes both of teachers and learners.

## Selective education

Selective education was introduced in the 1944 Education Reform Act, and movement to abolish this system was begun by the governments of the 1960s and 1970s. However, a number of geographical areas retained the system, and still stream students into selective grammar schools and secondary moderns based on their performance in a set of exams sat at the beginning of the final year of primary school. These ‘11+’ exams are intended to assess students’ abilities in verbal and non-verbal reasoning and mathematics and a pass rate is set by the school admissions authority to decide which students can access the grammar school system.

At this point, in the final year of primary school, the parents’ perception of the value of their child’s education as a whole is paramount. Aspirational parents in areas offering selective education will encourage their child to pass the 11+, where parents who might hold negative perceptions, either of the value of schooling as a whole, or of the specific school which their child might attend, might choose not to put their child in for the 11+. These parental choices carry through to be reflected in the students’ backgrounds at grammar schools: the parents have made a conscious decision to put their child in for the 11+, demonstrating their perception of the value of education; and I believe that these perceptions can be seen, in general terms, in the attitudes of the students themselves.

## Single-sex schooling

The introduction of single-sex schooling adds to this already strong perception of the value of education. Malacova (2007) found that girls in single-sex grammar schools seem to make better progress than those at co-educational grammar schools.

Allan (2010) also suggests that ‘over the last decade it is young women who have come to be widely understood as the bearers of educational qualifications’ (Allan, 2010, p.39). This belief has been widely spread in the press (for example: The Daily Telegraph, 2015, and The Independent, 2010). These data, presented to the public as incontrovertible fact by the media, have an impact on students’ expectations of themselves. Allan argues that students feel a pressure to work on ‘creating the perfectly groomed, governed, balanced and successful self’ (Allan, 2010, p.45) which suggests that students do not consider academic success to be the only expectation placed upon them, a subject to which I shall return below.

## Motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic

Since both selective education and single-sex schools carry their own expectations for academic achievement, both students and parents can reasonably be considered to value the education available at a single-sex grammar school quite highly. There are, however, further factors that can influence academic success, to which I now turn my attention. Motivation in learning has been discussed in detail by Chambers (1999). Essentially, intrinsic motivation is the determination to learn for learning’s sake, for pleasure without reward. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is the determination to learn in order to receive something in return. Walker Tileston is critical of this learning type:

Extrinsic motivation is a product of the behaviourist point of view, which says that we can manipulate behaviour by providing rewards or punishments. (Walker Tileston, 2010, p.8)

By its nature, the Level 1 Certificate could be characterised as a form of extrinsic motivation. When considering education prior to GCSE, clear evidence of formal examples of extrinsic motivation in education is limited: with the exception of the

results of the Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs and the 11-plus exams, the only extrinsic rewards available until the age of 16 are those generated by schools or teachers, such as end-of-year reports, or the use of sticker systems, such as that used at my school, or individual department or teacher recognition awards such as certificates for long-term effort or achievement, or even sweets for shorter term work. Hoath, when considering student motivation in Latin, suggests that an ideal classroom would be one in which students are entirely intrinsically motivated. (Hoath, 2016, p.7) but I believe that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation should not be considered to be mutually exclusive, nor that extrinsic motivation is necessarily a negative factor. However, the current use of formative and summative assessment in classrooms challenges the possibility of this idyll. Whilst students can be considered to be intrinsically motivated, the use of both summative and formative assessment creates mileposts in learning, where motivation is pushed to be extrinsic. Hoath continues:

Exams are a necessity for the summative assessment of qualifications and perhaps this has caused students always to expect a palpable achievement after putting effort in to anything. (Hoath, 2016, p.9)

Chambers agrees that extrinsic motivation plays an important part in the language-learning classroom, and goes so far as to suggest that the need for extrinsic motivation seems to be unavoidable as our current educational climate requires gratification for effort (Chambers, 1999, p.151). When considering perceptions of the value of learning, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation should be considered. However, in the case of an external examination certificate, which is the reward for learning, extrinsic motivation will be the determining factor. Goetz *et al.* (2006) offer a clear rationale for this:

Good grades may be highly valued by a student who is intrinsically motivated to achieve, and may also be of considerable importance to another student who is motivated

by extrinsic goals such as how this grade will help to eventually get a good job. (Goetz et al., 2006, p.291)

## Exam stress and expectations of success

However, student motivation should not be the only factor in this discussion. Whilst students can be seen to be motivated by the hope of an external reward, the pressure that this expectation can exert on them is a counteractive feature. Examination and school stress, and its effect on both students and learning, are discussed by both Allan (2010) and Finch *et al.* (2010), each in different contexts. Allan considers the role of stress in a selective single-sex independent primary school, where Finch *et al.* offer the comparison of two selective single-sex state school sixth forms.

Allan (2010) offers a review of the discourses of success and how academic qualifications play only a small part in the school's aims of creating a well-rounded individual. For these pupils, being seen to be trying their best was considered most important, and excellence should be achieved in all areas, academic and extra-curricular alike. Whilst her academically strong pupils were keen to learn, the fear of failure was restrictive and their school's expectation of persistent effort gave the students little relief:

The conflict between the school's official and unofficial discourses of success left the girls confused about how they should actually achieve at school and terrified of failure. The overt emphasis on effort meant that success was experienced by girls as boundless, as something that could always be improved upon because they could always try harder. (Allan, 2010, p.51)

Finch *et al.* (2010), looking at the final years of selective secondary education in their study, find a very similar situation. Whilst the students accepted that pressure in small doses can work as a motivator, it is worryingly reported that:

Respondents appeared to link stress with negative self-perception; a number reported feeling disappointed in self, worthless, incapable or stupid, whilst others commented on loss of identity, feelings of apathy or a wish to give up. (Finch et al., 2010, p.321)

The impact of this pressure induced by school, and particularly by exams, can manifest itself in a number of ways, including physical symptoms of illness and loss of self-esteem. It is reflected not just in the studies mentioned here, but also in those referred to previously (Goetz, 2006; Allan, 2010). Whilst it may not necessarily be the case that pupils at selective all-girl schools suffer exam-related stress significantly more than any other type of school, the weight of the expectation of success upon individual students, whether of their own making, or that of peers, family or teachers, can be seen to be having an impact on the lives and learning of these students.

## Summative and formative assessment

If it is recognised that exam pressure can have significant impacts on student well-being, then why is assessment such a frequently used tool in schools? Black (1998) sets out the historical background of testing and summarises assessments in England into five systems: selective education admissions assessment; national assessments (SATs); GCSEs and A Levels; vocational qualifications; and formative assessment practices in schools (Black, 1998, p.16ff). Whilst formative assessment can be formal in delivery, such as spelling tests taken silently in class, it can also be informal and so has the potential to be seen as non-threatening for pupils. Summative assessment, however, is formal and has long carried with it the perception of large school halls filled with rows of desks and nervous students. Students are able to consider the results of summative assessment as reward, yet the process for gaining this reward is one that few find motivational. Further, the awareness that external exam grades (such as SATs and GCSEs) are used for accountability judgements of schools and league tables puts students

into a further position of feeling the need to perform for the benefit of the school, as Finch *et al.* found:

“*Pupil A*: [School A] encourages you to work hard, aim high, shoot off...  
*Pupil B*: Get good results for [School A], get them in their League tables and cheerio. That's the impression I get” (Focus Group Year 13) (Finch *et al.*, 2010, p.324)

If this impression is universal then it can only be detrimental to the learning process and the intended purpose of summative assessment. For selective schools and those with competitive admissions processes, the importance of the league tables for recruitment and retention cannot be overstated, and pupils who feel their achievements are considered of greater value to their school rather than themselves as individuals may be demotivated as a result.

It is undeniable that selective school pupils experience exam pressure and stress doubly in Year 6 sitting the 11+ exams at the start, and Key Stage 2 SATs at the end of their final year in primary school. These students could be argued to be better equipped for summative assessment and external exams as they continue through secondary school, and yet the expectation upon them to continue to exhibit high levels of achievement is clear. Allan discusses this expectation and the students' feelings of pressure:

The girls' talk seemed to signal a belief that their success was only recognisable once it had been tested and measured in a quantifiable manner. (Allan, 2010, p.46)

These students recognise the value of their summative assessment as being something tangible. A definite grade is a definite result, which suggests that for these students external exams were more reliable as a measure of their ability than internal or formative assessments.

## A mixed message?

This leads us to the question of the perceived value of schooling by



students: at primary school all subjects are compulsory, with summative assessment only at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. At the start of secondary schooling, all subjects continue to be compulsory to the end of Key Stage 3, with some variance between schools as to the duration of the key stage (two or three years) and the requirements for the study of languages (where students can choose one subject over another). Moving up to Key Stage 4 and the GCSE curriculum, the students are given a very mixed message: subjects are no longer compulsory, and can be chosen by the students themselves, leaving other subjects considered less interesting or less valuable behind, without any summative result to demonstrate their ability or learning in these subjects.

In contrast to this general devaluation of subjects dropped at the end of Key Stage 3, my school enters Latin students at the end of Year 9 for the WJEC Level 1 Certificate in Latin. A point of note is that this certificate is the only externally-validated qualification offered prior to GCSE at the school. Some schools use the *Cambridge Latin Course* graded tests for this purpose, as discussed by Story (2003, p.87). Graded tests allow schools to assess pupils' progress in smaller sections than end of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5, particularly when Latin is taught outside the curriculum. The increase in the entries for the Level 1 Certificate could suggest that this is a growing trend: there were 745 entries in 2015 against 651 in 2013 (A. Clague, personal communication, April 2016). So why is it that at the same time as we are trying to encourage students to learn a range of subjects, we can devalue their learning by giving them the opportunity to stop?

Further to this, timetable weighting sends further confusing messages to our students. Chambers (1999), in discussing the value of foreign language learning (predominantly German), quotes one student as suggesting: 'We have more lessons in science than in anything else, so I suppose it must be the most useful' (Chambers, 1999, p.160). If the value of a subject is determined by how much lesson time has been allocated, then by Chambers' standards Latin is not valued in many UK schools.

## Teaching to the test

Having considered the impact of exam stress and the perceived role and value of summative assessment, the final issue to be addressed in this discussion is that of teaching to the test. Hoath joins many in being critical of this practice, describing it as 'a dramatic form of extrinsic motivation which destroys the hope of "teaching for understanding"; the preferable intrinsic method' (Hoath, 2016, p.7). The concept of teaching to the test, and what renders it so unacceptable, is the suggestion that broader learning is sacrificed to ensure that examination specification requirements are covered thoroughly prior to the examinations in an attempt to guarantee acceptable results. This is a concern for the Head of Classics in my school, as the focus in Year 8 Latin lessons is one of general learning, both of language and background history/civilisation. However in the transition to Year 9 this background is lost in order to focus on the language and grammar aspects required by the WJEC examination specification. Yet there is a counter-argument which must be considered: if students place more value on external examinations, then does their perception of that value depend on meeting the specification requirements? As a result, where teachers worry that teaching to the test restricts learning, do students feel that it validates it? As Finch *et al.* (2010) suggest:

Pupils indicated that they conceptualise learning as utilitarian – the acquisition of a finite, fixed body of knowledge in order to support successful examination performance. (Finch *et al.*, 2010, p.321)

In the context of our discussion, Year 9 Latin learning in my school is focused on language, grammar and vocabulary as a result of working towards the Level 1 certificate. For Latin lessons, this cannot be considered to be a bad thing if the students are happy and motivated in their learning. Success in achieving understanding of the structure of the language can work as a scaffold for later Latin learning, for example at GCSE. It might be argued that teaching to the test

at this stage is not necessarily bad practice, since the exam specification requires a solid foundation in the basics of the Latin language. This can be compared to the experience of teaching to the test at GCSE or A Level, where students might be encouraged to memorise swathes of Latin in translation in readiness for the exam instead of learning the set text vocabulary and features in the original language. If the specification meets with general expectation in terms of Latin learning, then can it be accepted that teaching to the test in this case is acceptable?

## An appropriate stepping-stone?

In light of the research reported above, I decided to consider more directly the perception of value, both with students and teachers, of the Level 1 Certificate. Firstly I will investigate the academic value of the certificate based on the rationale for the qualification against learner experience. Then I will discuss the personal value of the certificate for students and teachers in terms of whether there is an impact on teaching and learning quality and style. Finally I will ask whether this impact can be justified as appropriate by virtue of what achieving the certificate means to the students themselves.

As the research question reflects on opinions and experience, the approach that offers the best result is a case study. This allows for consideration of a variety of sources of qualitative evidence alongside concrete figures and results. As Gillham (2000) states: 'Facts' do not speak for themselves – someone has to speak for them (Gillham, 2000, p. 20). As a case study of one class in one school will offer an opinion into the feelings of a very small group, the influencing factors on individuals' experiences are likely to be very similar. This must be taken into account when drawing final conclusions.

## Research methodology

As well as notes during observations of lessons and also of responses during lessons I have taught with my Year 9 class, I chose to use the questionnaire approach, completed in lesson time

during an administration session in preparation for the summer exams, as this ensured a high response rate and allowed me to offer anonymity of response if the students had felt they would prefer this. The word choice of the questions was very specific as a result of my own experience of the class: a number of students had already expressed anxiety about their ability to pass the papers, and I did not want to fuel these concerns by asking leading questions. Munn and Drever (2004, p.9) highlight an important limitation to this type of research: superficial information. Recognising the potential for superficiality from the use of a student questionnaire alone, I used the questionnaire answers, alongside individual academic results and their GCSE options, to select a small focus group which was then interviewed to elicit their opinions and perceptions of the certificate. As discussed by Gillham, ‘the overwhelming strength of the face-to-face interview is the ‘richness’ of the communication that is possible’ (Gillham, 2000, p.62). This contrasts with the superficial, strictly directed, questioning of the questionnaires completed, allowing general questions and further discussion of topics that arise both from the questionnaire results as well as during the interview itself.

An amount of quantitative evidence has also been sourced for this case study: Exam entries and results for the previous academic years alongside the take-up for GCSE Latin; statistics have also been sourced from WJEC to provide a comparison against my school’s results.

The timing for this case study had the potential to exert an influence over the outcome. The Year 9 students had been doing Latin since the start of Year 8 and had, by the time of my research (January), settled into their new class groupings and started to focus on language and grammar. As discussed above, my initial lesson observations revealed them to be a very high-attaining group, but quick to self-doubt, and the emphasis they were putting on the importance of the certificate was notable. Over the course of the term, my role developed from straight observation to teaching the class, and continued with a strong emphasis on language and grammar to ensure the students met the

linguistic requirements of the certificate. My time spent in observation in the early lessons was split between observing the class as a whole and working with small groups (between three and six) to assess individuals’ attitudes both to the subject and to school in more general terms, as well as their understanding and knowledge.

The GCSE options process began at the start of February, which enabled the options and reserve choice data to be included in the case study. Further, Year 9 parents evening took place just before half-term which allowed me to discuss with both students and parents their own impressions of Latin, the value of the certificate, and the students’ enjoyment of the subject.

By the start of March, I was teaching all of the lessons for my class and felt that we had established a good relationship built on trust and respect. It was important to me, in part from my own experience in education and also from the research that I had completed into the impact of exam stress and learner motivation, to have built this relationship with the class prior to moving into detailed questionnaires and interviews so they were comfortable and open in their responses to me.

After the initial questionnaire, I continued to teach and observe the group. In lesson time and homework we moved from working just from the *Cambridge Latin Course* textbook to spending small amounts of time looking at Level 1 past papers. In the following six weeks, the students completed two comprehension papers and one translation and were achieving excellent results. In the final comprehension, there was no mark below a B in the class, 22 A\*s across the class of 30, and an average mark of 85%. Believing that the students’ most significant factor in their performance was their confidence, I felt that on handing these results back, this was the appropriate time to conduct the focus group interview.

We conducted the interview during Friday study period, a whole-school session where form groups use the last lesson of the week to work in their form rooms on their classwork or homework. This meant that none of the girls were missing lesson time and were able to speak freely without

concern for time. The group consisted of six girls, of mixed ability in terms of result and also in terms of their responses to the questionnaire. The final selection point was their GCSE options: two have chosen to continue, two have listed Latin as their reserve option (to be used if their options are unavailable) and two have chosen not to continue. This allowed a variance in terms of their attitude for the long term towards the value of the subject as a whole.

## The stated rationale for the certificate

The first source of information, then, in a discussion of the perception of the value of the Level 1 Certificate, is the stated rationale from WJEC. The rationale sets out the intention to offer a qualification that fits within a reduced timetable, or off timetable entirely. WJEC also states ‘The specification aims to provide accreditation at Level 1 as a course of study in its own right and as a stepping-stone to Level 2’ (WJEC, 2016, p. 7). It is this intention which I am seeking to address: whether the certificate serves as an appropriate stepping-stone, not just to Level 2 but further study of Latin at GCSE and beyond, but whether working to achieve the certificate restricts students’ learning as a result of teaching to the test.

## The questionnaire responses

The student questionnaire addressed the following questions:

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- 1 Number the Latin activities below in order of how much you like them: (1 is the most, 5 is the least):  
Language & Grammar  
Translation  
Comprehension  
Background and History  
English and other language derivations
  - 2 What does passing the Level 1 certificate mean to you?
  - 3 Has taking the Level 1 certificate affected your GCSE choices?
  - 4 Are you planning on taking GCSE Latin?
  - 5 Why?
-

**Table 1** | Students' preferred activities in Latin (1 most preferred, 5 least)

Topic	Average score for the class (28)	Average score for students opting to continue to GCSE Latin (12)
Language & Grammar	3.2	2.9
Translation	2.7	2
Comprehension	2.9	2.8
Background and History	2.8	2.7
English and other language derivations	3	3.7

**Table 2** | Students' stated value of the certificate

What does passing the certificate mean to you?	Class respondents (28)	GCSE-continuing respondents (12)
Careers	19	6
Confidence	10	6
Pride	13	3

### Question 1: Number the Latin activities below in order of how much you like them.

Question 1 was intended to assess whether students were motivated by learning language or civilisation topics, and also to illustrate preferences for straight translation or comprehension work. Discussions with the Head of Classics demonstrate that she has concerns that the students would prefer a broader scheme of work than just the language, and potentially could be put off studying Latin beyond Year 9 by the language-heavy curriculum. However, the average scores for each of the topics show the students' preference is more evenly spread:

These responses suggest that the teacher concern over the restriction of teaching to the test and focus on the language may well be unfounded. For the class as a whole (28 respondents), as well as for the group continuing to GCSE (total of 12 which includes those keeping Latin as a reserve option), translation was rated as the activity the students liked the most, by almost one full grade on the scale in the GCSE-continuing group. Language and grammar was the least liked of the activities for the class as whole, but was rated much higher in the group continuing to GCSE. This would suggest those opting for GCSE are more comfortable with the language requirements set by the examination, as can be fairly expected.

### Question 2: What does passing the Level 1 certificate mean to you?

Question 2 was a free response, offering students the opportunity to use their own words. Whilst there was a wide variety of response, these can be

categorised into three groups: positive impact for CVs, university applications and future careers; gaining confidence in their own ability; pride and pleasure in being successful. Table 2 shows that the class as a whole place a high value on what the certificate can do for them in the long term, where proportionately the GCSE-continuing group appreciate more highly the certificate's ability to validate their own learning and efforts.

### Question 3: Has taking the Level 1 certificate affected your GCSE choices?

#### Question 4: Are you planning on taking GCSE Latin?

Responses to question 3 and 4 were mixed – 13 stated the certificate had influenced their GCSE options, where 15 said it had not, but there was no clear correlation between influence and decision to continue.

#### Question 5: Why did you make your decision about Latin GCSE?

Question five also invited a free response, and again the majority of responses for the students opting not to continue to GCSE (16) fit into at least one of three distinct categories: I already have a qualification, so I don't need to do the GCSE (8); there wasn't enough space in my options to do Latin as well as other subjects I would prefer/need to take (7); and I find Latin too difficult (5).

Student comments offer a number of viewpoints to illustrate their feelings about the certificate and the subject as a whole. The first three students are numbered in their reference as they were in the interview group, to allow us to

revisit their opinions after six weeks further preparation for the exam:

"It means that I know I'm good enough and will give me confidence for GCSE." (Year 9 pupil 1, questionnaire response)

This student illustrates the value to her own self-esteem of achieving the certificate.

"I enjoyed Latin a lot and I understood quite a lot, so this influenced my options. Even doing the exam, I still want to do Latin." (Year 9 pupil 4, questionnaire response)

This student demonstrates the exam pressure concern, but suggests the pressure has not reduced her enjoyment of the subject.

"If I pass I will be happy that I know I have understood Latin even if I didn't find it very enjoyable." (Year 9 pupil 19, questionnaire response)

This student shows that the challenge of the subject is good, despite her own lack of enjoyment. For her the certificate will bring pride rather than confidence.

"It will give me a confidence boost and I will be happy and proud, it will make me stand out. I will feel as though my time has been well spent." (Year 9 pupil questionnaire response)

"It means a lot because I genuinely enjoy Latin. It makes me happy because I'll have done something which shows how much I've learnt." (Year 9 pupil questionnaire response)

Topic preference (1 most liked, 5 least liked)

Student No.	Language and Grammar	Translation	Comprehension	Background and History	English derivations
1	4	3	1	2	5
2	3	1	2	5	4
3	3	1	2	5	4
4	2	3	2	1	2
5	1	2	5	4	3
6	1	3	4	2	5
7	1	2	3	4	4
8	5	2	3	1	4
9	3	1	4	2	5
10	5	2	3	4	1
11	5	2	3	1	4
12	2	2	2	1	3
13	5	4	3	1	2
14	5	3	2	1	4
15	5	4	3	1	2
16	1	3	2	5	4
17	3	2	4	5	1
18	5	2	3	1	4
19	5	4	3	2	1
20	2	3	4	5	1
21	2	3	5	4	1
22	2	4	1	5	3
23	2	1	5	4	3
24	4	3	5	1	2
25	4	5	2	1	3
26	2	4	1	5	3
27	3	4	2	1	5
28	5	2	3	4	1

Student No.	What does it mean to you?	Has the certificate affected GCSE choices?	Are you planning on taking GCSE Latin?
1	It means that I know I'm good enough and will give me confidence for GCSE.	No	Yes
2	It will give me a confidence boost for doing Latin for GCSE.	No	Yes
3	It means that I know that I am capable of Latin and it opens up other career options.	Yes	Yes
4	It means a lot to me as it means I have more job choices in my future. For my dream job I will need Latin so having this certificate will help me in getting my dream job.	No	Yes
5	I can get a taste of GCSE Latin by passing the level 1 certificate.	Yes	Yes
6	I can get a taste of GCSE Latin and it will increase my confidence in Latin which will help me in the future. = It also means I have a certificate for learning Latin.	Yes	Yes
7	It will give me confidence to know I can do something others can't.	Yes	Yes
8	It shows that I have achieved learning Latin for two years which many people have not had the chance to do.	No	Yes
9	I like the idea of keeping a "dying" language alive. I'm interested in history, it makes me feel connected to the past.	Yes	Yes
10	I really want to pass the exam because I think it will help in the future and also I have tried my best so if I do well it will show how hard I worked and how much I enjoyed it.	No	Yes
11	It will be useful to have a qualification and I enjoy Latin.	No	Yes
12	It would look good on my CV.	No	Yes
13	It is important to me as it will add something to my CVs and future applications.	Yes	No
14	It will be nice to see a certificate and I will feel proud if I pass. It could also help me to get a job when I'm older which gives me confidence.	Yes	No
15	It means that I will already have a qualification going into GCSE. It is also not an extremely common qualification so it could set me apart.	Yes	No
16	It will give me a confidence boost and I will be happy and proud, it will make me stand out. I will feel as though my time has been well spent.	Yes	No
17	It means that I have completed a complicated subject and I am able to have it on my CV, which is a good qualification.	Yes	No
18	It boosts my confidence and makes me feel like I have achieved something that other people haven't.	Yes	No

(Continued)



Student No.	What does it mean to you?	Has the certificate affected GCSE choices?	Are you planning on taking GCSE Latin?
19	If I pass I will be happy that I know I have understood Latin even if I didn't find it very enjoyable.	No	No
20	It means that I have been confident enough and thoughtful enough to pass the Latin test and that I have taken a good test and would look good on my CV.	No	No
21	It shows that I have achieved learning Latin.	No	No
22	It gives me qualification choices.	No	No
23	It means a lot because I genuinely enjoy Latin. It makes me happy because I'll have done something which shows how much I've learnt.	Yes	No
24	It shows I can stick to something even when I find it difficult and want to give up.	No	No
25	It means that I can say on my CV that I have passed a Latin course.	No	No
26	It is an extra qualification and could give me different options in life.	No	No
27	I think that it would be a good thing to put on my CV, and will help give me an edge over others when I try to get a job.	No	No
28	I really want to pass the exam because I think it is a good skill and will benefit me in the future and will help my understand other languages.	Yes	No

Student No.	Why?
1	Latin is essential to my future career and it aids my love of English, History and Drama.
2	I want to be a doctor, so it's an excuse to take part in one of my favourite languages!
3	I love Latin very much and it would be very helpful in my career choices.
4	This certificate does help with my future but even before this I was planning on taking [Latin] for GCSE.
5	I enjoy learning Latin even though I find it difficult sometimes, all I need is someone to go through it again with me.
6	I enjoy Latin and Latin lessons and I think it will help me when I go to university and beyond.
7	I put it as my reserve due to my talk with my teachers. I also enjoy Latin very much.
8	I really enjoy the background and history and it is interesting to learn new words which English words have been derived from.
9	It's my reserve - I couldn't decide so I'm leaving it up to fate!
10	I enjoyed Latin a lot and I understood quite a lot, so this influenced my options. Even doing the exam, I still want to do Latin.
11	I enjoy it and feel it may be useful for my career choices.
12	I enjoy learning vocab and the history as I find it very interesting.
13	If I get the certificate it would show I had Latin skill even without a GCSE, leaving me an extra option/chance to take another subject.
14	It has affected my GCSE choices because I thought I would complete the exam and not continue. I'm not taking it for GCSE because I'm not very good at it and I feel the certificate will be enough.
15	Because I already have a qualification in the subject, then I don't need to take it at GCSE, even though it's a further qualification.
16	As I will already have a Latin certificate, it will help me as I am taking two other languages and it will be helpful.
17	Because I'll already have the certificate which means that's enough of a qualification
18	I am not taking it as I have the Level 1 Certificate and I feel other GCSEs would help me achieve the career I want in the future.
19	Because I don't have much interest in it.
20	Because I have chosen my GCSEs confidently and I think these two exams will be enough for a good first impression (for jobs etc.) on my CV.
21	I find the grammar quite difficult, I don't understand some of the grammar and find it challenging.
22	I am not planning on having a career in which Latin would be useful.
23	I would have really liked to, but I didn't have enough options to choose it.
24	Because I find some sections quite hard and I don't want to do something that I may struggle a lot on.
25	I feel that I struggle with translation and language and grammar which is a main point in learning Latin.
26	I don't plan on using Latin in any careers I might pursue.
27	Because I had other choices and I didn't think I really needed it because I would already have a qualification in it from the WJEC certificate.
28	Because there are some other subjects I feel passionately about and I feel taking the exam will give me good knowledge and so I don't think I need to take it at GCSE.

These last two students were not in the interview group, and neither is going to continue to GCSE, yet their positive comments are reflective of the group as a whole. Despite the concerns by the Head of Classics, and the literature discussed above, which suggests these students will suffer from unnecessary exam pressure, or not enjoy their lessons as they are being taught to the test, the general consensus for the class responding was very positive.

A summary of all the questionnaire responses is shown in the tables above.

## Interview group

The interview group was asked whether they would each be happy to return to discuss their experiences of Latin and the preparation for the certificate. The

students took part willingly, although two seemed to be a little nervous in case they were considered to give a wrong answer.

### Interview Question 1: Why are you doing the certificate? What is it worth to you?

This question was intended to encourage the students to define their own value perception of the certificate. It is difficult to be sure whether the students have



formulated these responses themselves or whether they are repeating what they have been told by teachers or parents, but as their own spontaneous responses, they must be considered their own opinion. Responses to this covered those already mentioned in the questionnaire, specifically pride, pleasure and confidence, but also added another very specific value:

Teacher: Do you think the certificate is worth more than just the grades that a teacher would give you, like your end-of-year report grades?

Pupil 19: It makes a bigger difference, like when you're older. (Year 9 focus group interview)

The implication of this statement is that there is a more definite value to a certificate than experience on its own, certainly in the long term, and potentially that externally-marked exams are considered more reliable evidence of learning than school internal assessments.

#### **Interview Question 2: Do you enjoy Latin lessons?**

This question was intended to clarify whether they felt their learning experience had changed as a result of the teaching to the test element of the classes, something highlighted by the Head of Classics as a concern. The answer across the group was 100% positive and could even be considered to refute the suggestion that teaching to the test was detrimental to their learning as the students believe their homework is 'dedicated towards our tests' (Year 9 focus group interview), so is potentially better justified. On discovering that they would return to the background topics on completion of the exams, only one student commented that they were pleased, which could be considered another indicator that the students themselves are happy with the more language-dominated scheme of work from which they are learning.

#### **Interview Question 3: Why have you decided to continue, or not?**

This question was intended to address whether the suggestion that the Level 1 certificate serves as a stepping-stone is accurate. The two students who have opted to continue are both intending to go into Law and so stated their beliefs that Latin would benefit them:

"It shows what kind of schools I've been to, it shows I've been to a good school and so it basically gives me more options with my future, and it basically helps me a lot more than if I didn't have it." (Year 9 focus group interview)

The two who have put Latin as their reserve suggested they enjoy the subject but were unsure as to whether they needed it, with one stating 'because I liked it ... you get half a GCSE anyway so at least I have that to put on my resume'. (Year 9 focus group interview). The two choosing not to continue stated other subjects were more important to their future. There is no suggestion in any of the responses that the certificate played a role in the decision to continue, only a justification not to continue in one case.

#### **Interview Question 4: How do those around you feel about Latin and the certificate?**

This question was intended to take into consideration peer pressure and family influence. These students particularly will have had strong parental influence in their choice of secondary school, by virtue of having decided to enter the students for the 11-plus in primary school. I was interested to see if this parental influence continued to affect their own perceptions. The students who had chosen to continue to GCSE in particular suggested good levels of support around them from parents and friends. Those not continuing did not feel they had anything further to add to these responses.

As part of this discussion, I asked whether the students were competitive with each other, and the response was 'yes' across the whole group. This competitive nature seemed to cause concern for one student in particular: 'I've got a really clever person [next to me] and I'm just thinking that I'm not as good as her so how am I going to do the test ... it knocks your confidence because they've got the questions done really, really quickly.' (Year 9 focus group interview).

#### **Interview Question 5: How are you feeling about the exam now? Has your feeling changed as the year has progressed?**

This question was intended to address the 'appropriateness' of the certificate by

encouraging the students to reflect on their own impressions of exam pressure, and whether they have become more confident as the requirements of the specification are met, or rather more concerned as the examination days get closer. All six students expressed some form of nervousness: 'worried'; 'scared'; 'it's so daunting' (Year 9 focus group interview), yet were surprised that each other felt the same. The whole group nodded agreement to the statement 'There's always something that tells me that I'm not capable to do Latin.' (Year 9 focus group interview). This supports the theories put forward above on expectations to achieve success and resulting lack of self-confidence.

## **Student perception over time**

Revisiting the three student responses from the original questionnaire in the light of their comments in the focus group interview yields some progress in their attitudes.

Pupil 1 stated in the questionnaire that she would gain confidence by achieving the certificate, and six weeks later admitted to concerns over her own ability. She was quick to reassure other students that they need not be concerned, but six weeks after her initial response was still expressing concern in her own ability. This suggests that confidence and exam pressure have a role to play in student success, although this may not reflect the students' actual academic achievement. She did also state that the concern she felt served as a motivator, 'I'm going to work really hard to try and get it because I don't want to turn up and just waste my time' (Year 9 pupil 1 focus group interview). This student illustrates the value to her own self-esteem of achieving the certificate, and that, in terms of appropriateness, the certificate could be considered successful.

Pupil 4 in the questionnaire stated that 'Even doing the exam, I still want to do Latin' (Year 9 pupil 4, questionnaire response) which suggests exam pressure might in fact stop her from continuing to GCSE, rendering the stepping stone obsolete. Both in lessons and in the interview, this student was the least confident in her own ability, comparing herself frequently with others. However, she

was also the most positive about the subject expressing enjoyment and interest in Latin.

Pupil 19 in the questionnaire stated that she did not enjoy Latin, but by the time of the interview she had changed her mind to say 'It's also made me think, I like Latin better, like made me know that it's not too hard' (Year 9 pupil 19 focus group interview). Her change of heart can be attributed to the effort she had put in to learning the defined vocabulary list for the certificate, and the better understanding of the subject as she was no longer looking words up to understand the text. This can be considered to demonstrate that 'teaching to the test' can actually have a positive impact on learning.

## Increasing uptake and long term impressions

The Head of Classics' decision to introduce the certificate as a measure to either award students who will not continue to GCSE with an external result or to motivate those interested in Latin appears to be succeeding. Those not continuing see positive benefits in a number of different aspects, and the school has seen an increase in uptake for GCSE since the introduction of the certificate (eight students sat the GCSE each in 2014 and 2015, the last cohort not to have taken the certificate, with currently 11 in year 11, 18 in year 10, and 18 opting to start in September 2017). In September 2017, the school will offer Latin A Level for the first time, which potentially demonstrates the strength of the stepping stone as this is the first Level 1 Certificate cohort to reach KS5.

It is further worth noting that no student has declined to take the exam. Many of the parents at the Year 9 parents evening were positive that the certificate offers an opportunity to prepare for the full GCSE exams which is not possible by school internal assessments.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be suggested that the Level 1 Certificate appears to be an appropriate stepping stone. Whilst extrinsic motivation can be criticised for removing the ability to learn for pleasure,

the students interviewed have demonstrated that they continue to enjoy the subject, and some have increased their enjoyment over the study of the course. Exam pressure, whilst experienced by the students, does not seem to have had a negative impact on the students, and in some cases serves as extra motivation. Further, student response seems to have demonstrated that the concern of the Head of Classics over 'teaching to the test' is not considered detrimental to their learning experience, and in fact in some instances it has enhanced it as students consider the certificate a more valid judgement of their ability than school assessment alone.

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## Appendix 1 — WJEC Latin Level 1 Certificate in Latin Language (9510/02) Specification

### 1.2 Rationale

This specification has been designed to encourage the acquisition and development of a range of skills related to the study of Latin and language and, where desired, Roman civilisation.

This specification recognises that those teaching and learning Latin represent a broad spectrum. For some, an understanding of the Latin language is not complete without an understanding of the culture and civilisation of the Romans themselves. Others prefer to

focus on the linguistic aspects of the subject. The specification therefore aims to allow Centres and candidates as far as possible to design courses which most appropriately suit their needs and interests.

Furthermore, this specification takes into account recent developments in the teaching and learning of Latin. In particular it recognises both that the amount of time available for Latin on school timetables is not what it once was and that there has been a significant rise in the number of schools and colleges offering Latin, often outside the formal curriculum. The specification aims to provide accreditation at Level 1 as a course of study in its own right and as a stepping-stone to Level 2.

## Appendix 2 — Transcript of Year 9 Focus Group Interview

**LM:** Right, er... so question number 1 is why are you doing the certificate? What actually is it worth to you?

**P19:** It's the Level 1 Latin certificate so it says you've done two years of Latin so when you apply for jobs you have a certificate to say you've done two years of Latin

**LM:** Right, anything else?

**P9:** Well, doesn't it mean half a GCSE?

**LM:** Yes

**P9:** Well, basically, I mean, as long as you have half the GCSE you kind of do have qualifications to do something that requires Latin, so that's pretty cool.

**P4:** I think it kind of proves that we can do it, well it does to me, that I am capable of doing Latin.

**LM:** Do you think the certificate is worth more than just the grades that a teacher would give you, like your end-of-year report grades?

**P19:** It makes a bigger difference, like when you're older.

**P4:** Yeah, it's more towards the future, to be honest.

**P19:** and makes us more different from other people.

**P4:** shows you're educated.

**LM:** OK. Do you enjoy Latin lessons? Do you enjoy them as much now as you

did as much now as you did in Year 8, for example?

**P7:** I hated Year 8! Because there was more homework in Year 8 - too much homework in Year 8.

**P9:** I enjoy them more now.

**P4:** At least the homework we have now is more dedicated towards our tests so ...

**LM:** Do you mean homework across the board or just in Latin?

**P9:** In Latin because we got loads and loads of homework in Year 8, like too much homework in Year 8.

(P22 & P1 are shaking their heads)

**LM:** Were you in a different class?

**P1:** Um ... yeah. Um ... no, I much prefer it now because there are people who actually want to do Latin because in Year 8 it's mixed and it was quite difficult to find people that care.

**P9:** Yeah, now we understand it more, because in Year 8 we were just like learning everything and we had to remember it all but now we kind of get it so we can enjoy it a bit more.

**LM:** Do you miss all of the history stuff, you know, the back of the stage where you do about the theatre or the gladiators for example?

**P22:** Ish ...

**P19:** Yeah, in a way because the history says basically where it came from and that was interesting.

**P7:** There was a big part of the exam in Year 8 that was about the history, wasn't there? In the forum?

**Others:** Yeah.

**LM:** My understanding is once the exam is out of the way, then for the rest of the summer term we'll be going back over the history of the stages that you've done ...

**P7:** Yay!

**LM:** and we'll go through it then. Um ... Have you decided to carry on with Latin next year, if you have, why? If you haven't, why not? Can we go along the line, to make it a bit easier for me?

**P22:** No, because I don't feel I need it, and there's more, other subjects that I think I need more.

**P1:** Um, hopefully I will be doing it next year, if they let me, it's important for the career I want to lead but also it puts

everything I like together so the English, the history, and the drama when we learn about the background.

**LM:** What do you want to do for a career?

**P1:** A barrister

**P4:** Erm, hopefully I'm doing it as well, and I wanted to do it for the same reasons, because, I wanted to go into Law and stuff and it would help if I had my Latin there because then it shows what kind of schools I've been to, it shows I've been to a good school and so it basically gives me more options with my future, and it basically helps me a lot more than if I didn't have it.

**LM:** OK

**P19:** I haven't decided to go on with it because there are other subjects that I feel could benefit me more when I'm older.

**P7:** Erm, I'm not carrying on with it, it is my reserve choice, but, um, yeah, I'm not carrying on with it just because, I liked, I don't know. It's not that I liked other subjects better, I just, I don't know, sometimes I just get on with subjects easier than Latin.

**P9:** Yeah, I have mine as my reserve as well. Basically I liked it, but I kind of, I mean, you get half a GCSE anyway so at least I have that to put on my resume.

**LM:** That makes sense. ... Alright, how competitive are you with the other people in your class ...

(the group begins to cringe, and giggle)

**LM:** when it comes to results and tests and whiteboards and things?

**P4:** Quite competitive but it doesn't really help when I've got someone who's really, really good at Latin sat next to me. (more giggling)

**LM:** Do any of you have any sisters or family who have done this already?

**All:** No

**LM:** I'm fascinated to see whether anyone who has someone in the family who's already done it actually compares themselves to them.

**P4:** I know some friends who've done Latin for GCSE and they've got no problem with it, in fact they said just do it!

**P9 (and P7):** Both of our mums did Latin.



**P7:** Mine did it at Spalding High School.

**P9:** Mine did too!

**LM:** Alright, and what do they think about you doing Latin?

**P7:** She's ok with it.

**P9:** Well, she wasn't actually that into it, I don't think. She said, yeah, but I think it's just because she liked my art teacher so she thought I should do art.

**LM:** So she was trying to influence your GCSE options based on the teachers she liked?

**P9:** Well, she liked the art teacher...

**LM:** Oh, so not the teacher that she had at her school, but the teacher that you've got?

**P9:** Well, that's just what my mum said. I'm sorry, I don't know what I'm saying!

**LM:** Anybody else, what do your families think?

**P1:** I think they support it as well, because it's a really good subject to have, for university but also in terms of law, they're very supportive of me doing law so ...

**LM:** So, no one's family is going 'what???'

**P4:** My dad half is, half isn't because he's saying it's a dead language, which it kind of is but then he says it shows you're educated and that you are like, being from a better school than, well, there are some that are worse, and so, no offence to those who were at worse schools but it just shows that you've been really well educated.

**LM:** Right, last question, how do you feel about taking the exam now?

**P7:** so scared!

**LM:** and how much has it changed since I first saw you in January? I think our first lesson in January I came away going 'they're going to have a nervous breakdown before they actually get to the exam' ...

**P19:** It's so daunting knowing that it's coming ever closer, and I'm nervous because it could mean a lot.

**P4:** I've got a question ... if I do it for GCSE and I do a level 2 paper, would the level 1 still be useful?

**LM:** If you carry on here, what you do is go straight into the GCSE so you wouldn't do the Level 2 paper, you'd do the GCSE paper instead, and the GCSE outweighs the certificate you've got before.

**P4:** OK, that's good, because then it means it won't be so scary because it means I've got my most important points that I can get.

**LM:** (to P22): you're very quiet!

**P22:** I am worried, because it's an exam, but I don't feel it's going to affect me like other people who are going to take Latin, it won't affect me as much as it will them. I'm bothered, but I'm not.

**LM:** So you're not panicking?

**P22:** No!

**LM:** That's a good place to be.

**P1:** It's in the back of my head that it is coming closer, erm, but there's always something that tells me that I'm not capable to do Latin so, and it always worries me when I do Latin.

(the rest of the group are nodding agreement)

**LM:** Does that sound familiar with anybody else? Do you have a voice in your head that says you can't do it?

**P9:** Yeah!

**P1:** It's not that I can't do it, it's just that sometimes I worry that I'm not as good, so I don't know, but I'm going to work really hard to try and get it because I don't want to turn up and just waste my time.

**P4:** That's the thing, I've got a really clever person and I'm just thinking that I'm not as good as her so how am I going to do the test ... it knocks your confidence because they've got the questions done really really quickly and it's like how could you do that? Is it a case of I'm not as clever as you or something?

**P1:** But then it just depends how quickly people get on with things. It's like it doesn't matter how quickly you do it as long as it's accurate. You've got loads of time in the exam.

**P4:** She is really accurate, you know who I'm talking about!

**LM:** Alright, you guys, feelings about exams?

**P9:** I'm quite worried because a lot of it, like, involves remembering words, because you just have to translate and you're supposed to know the words and what it means, so if I don't know that then it doesn't really matter about the grammar if you don't know what it means.

**LM:** You've done the work on memrise, though, haven't you? You are one of the ones that has done all of it.

**P9:** Did I? I can't remember, that's the thing.

**LM:** Have a look. If you can crack the vocab then that's the most complicated bit of it. The grammar is confusing but it follows rules, and once you understand the rule then anything is possible, it's just the number of words, which is why we'd done half before Easter and half after Easter. Could you notice a difference once you'd done some work on memrise, when you looked at a piece of Latin beforehand and then when you'd actually done some time on it, how much quicker you could get through it and how few minutes you have to spend looking words up?

**P1:** I definitely did because I was forever looking in the back, like vocab was my worst thing. It was like the other day when I looked at the translation I kind of went 'I know what this means!' It's like I can pick out words and I was quite (mimes happy face)...

**LM (to P19):** I've seen you've speeded up in class, and I don't know whether that's memrise or quite what it was, but suddenly ...

**P19:** Yeah, I think memrise has helped, like, so much, because it's also made me think, I *like* Latin better, like made me know that it's not too hard, I just need to know the words and the endings, really.

**P4:** I must admit with Latin, I do quite enjoy it, because when you look at the words, you can see it coming in to our modern-day language and so it's quite interesting to see how our language actually came about and where it came from. It's quite interesting to be honest and it's quite enjoyable.