

Research Article

Forum

ELEX and EGEX: Euroclassica Certificates in Latin and Greek

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Abstract

One of the initiatives of Euroclassica (the federation of European associations of Classics teachers) is to set a yearly test for Latin and Greek: European Latin Exam (ELEX) and European Greek Exam (EGEX). They are both available at beginners' level (*Vestibulum*) and intermediate level (*Ianua*). Schools can set and correct them in their own time and award Euroclassica certificates as appropriate. The tests are available in English, French and German, but individual associations and schools are free to translate them into their own languages. Candidates are advised to take the tests at any age when they are ready; there is no charge. This article outlines the procedure and gives examples of the texts and questions set. The example questions are given in more than one language to illustrate the European nature of the enterprise, with an extra taste of how far ELEX and EGEX can spread in the example of questions in the Macedonian language from North Macedonia. Schools should contact their national association for more local information. Yearly results, past papers and more information are published in the Euroclassica newsletter available on the website: <https://www.euroclassica.eu/portale/euroclassica.html>

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Euroclassica is the Federation of European Classics Teachers organisations. Each country has an association of teachers of classical subjects and most of these are members. It holds an annual meeting (recently in Jena 2023, Frascati 2024, Sofia 2025) and promotes the study of Classics through its website, publications and meetings. It also offers Elex (European Latin Examination) and Egex (European Greek Examination). These are available at two levels: *Vestibulum* for beginners and *Ianua* for intermediate learners. They are set by Euroclassica, but are internally administered and assessed. There is no charge.

A working group from different countries writes the tests each year in the three main European languages (English, French and German) with final checks made by native speakers. The tests are sent to the representatives of each member association for the beginning of the school year, and they are then distributed to individual schools for them to set the test at an appropriate moment. The period available is from September to the following January, which allows schools to use them as examinations set at the beginning of the new term in January. Schools or local associations are able to translate the questions into the language of education of their pupils but often leave the questions in at least two languages. The schools then assess the results and then have the opportunity to present a Euroclassica certificate (Gold, Silver or Bronze) to successful candidates, which they may do at an assembly or ceremony. Euroclassica requests that results are reported each year for an overall survey of each country and of

Europe as whole. Candidates feel that they are participating in a common European exercise with other pupils of their own age doing the same text but through a different language.

The European Curriculum for Classical Languages (ECCL) has adapted the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (ECFR) into the following eight sections:

- Nutricula
- Vestibulum
- Ianua
- Palatium
- Thesaurus
- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate Masters
- Doctorate

Elex and Egex are offered at the second and third levels. The *Nutricula* level for primary schools remains an ambition and the higher levels *Palatium* – *Doctorate* are covered by state examinations and universities. The *Vestibulum* test is seen as an entry level exercise for beginners. Perhaps the candidates will be in the first few years of secondary school and will have taken one or two years of Latin or Greek, depending on time allocation. Owing to the many differences of practice in the different countries it is not possible to define exactly when it should be taken. It is designed to be like a driving test: you take it when you are ready depending on how much preparation you have been able to put in. The text will be based on a myth or a story; there is a statement of aims and a required vocabulary list available on the website; and there will be

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questions on comprehension of the text, on grammar and on heritage and background. *Ianua* is seen as an intermediate examination to be taken after two or three years of Latin or Greek with a full timetable allocation. Again, the intention is that it should be taken when the candidate is ready.

This is the text of the Latin *Vestibulum* for 2018:

Tantalus Iovis filius erat. Iuppiter ad deorum epulum in Olympo Tantalum saepe invitabat et consilia sua ei dicebat. Tantalus vero deorum arcana ad homines tradidit. Itaque dei Tantalum puniverunt: in Inferis in aqua stare et semper sitire debet. Ubi aquam bibere vult, aqua recedit. Poma etiam super caput eius pendent. Si vero poma carpere vult, rami recedunt. Item magnum saxum super caput eius pendet et ob eam causam Tantalus semper timet, quia saxum cadere potest.

Any vocabulary not on the required list will be given, in more than one language (in the example above, these words are in bold font). Questions will be in multiple-choice format.

This is an example of a comprehension question:

What did Jupiter often do?	Qu'est-ce que Jupiter avait l'habitude de faire?
a. to give some gifts to Tantalus	donner des cadeaux à Tantale
b. to share the gods' meal with Tantalus	partager le repas des dieux avec Tantale
c. to ignore Tantalus	d'ignorer Tantale
d. to give him a nickname	de lui donner un surnom

Questions like this will be followed by more traditional grammatical questions:

deorum (1): which case is this?	deorum (1) à quel cas est ce mot ?
a. nominative	nominatif
b. genitive	génitif
c. dative	datif
d. accusative	accusatif

Finally, there will be some questions on heritage and culture:

Who is the Roman God of the Underworld?	Quel est le dieu romain des Enfers ?
a. Pluto	Pluton
b. Jupiter	Jupiter
c. Neptune	Neptune
d. Vulcan	Vulcain

Similarly, for the *Vestibulum* Greek test, there will be a text based on a myth with questions. Here is the text for 2018:

Κίρκη

Ὁ Ὀδυσσεὺς τοῖς Φαίαιξιν ἔπος λέγει.
Μόνον μίαν ἰατρὴν εἶχονεν καὶ αὐτὴν τῇ νήσῳ Αἰαίᾳ προσίσχονεν.
Ἐνταῦθα ᾤκει Κίρκη, θυγάτηρ Ἥλιου καὶ Πέρσης, Αἰήτου δὲ ἀδελφή.

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Ἡ δὲ Κίρκη ἔμπειρος ἦν φαρμάκων.
Ὁ ἐμοῦ φίλος ὁ Εὐρύλοχος καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἐταῖροι, εἰκοσιδύω τὸν ἀριθμὸν, ἔβησαν πρὸς Κίρκην.
Ἡ δὲ Κίρκη πρῶτον ἐκάλεσε τοὺς ἐταῖρους χωρὶς Εὐρυλόχου καὶ αὐτοῖς δεῖπνον παρέσχεν· τυρόν, μέλι καὶ οἶνον.
Οἱ μὲν ἐταῖροι τὸ δεῖπνον ἤσθιον, ἡ δὲ Κίρκη αὐτῶν ῥάβδῳ ἐφήψεν.
Ἡ δὲ Κίρκη τοὺς ἐταῖρους θηρία ἐποίησεν· τοὺς μὲν λύκους, τοὺς δὲ ὄνους, τοὺς δὲ λέοντας.
Ἀλλ' ὅτε ὁ Εὐρύλοχος τὰ γενόμενα εἶδεν, ἔβην πρὸς ἐμέ.
“Εγὼ δὲ ἔλαβον μῶλον παρὰ Ἑρμοῦ καὶ ἄθικτος ἐγενόμην τῷ φαρμάκῳ.
Οὕτως τῆς Κίρκης ἐκράτουν.”

To illustrate how far this project extends and what a range it covers, here is the first part of a text for comprehension and translation and an example of a question for the candidates in North Macedonia:

РАЗРУШВАЊЕТО НА ТРОЈА

Nox erat atque tempus ubi somnus hominibus aegris incipit. Omnes in urbe Troia dormiebant. Nam fessi erant quod pridie in bello Graecos superaverant . . .

Which Greek goddess was regarded as the equivalent to the Roman goddess Venus?

Koja grčka božica se smetala za jednaka na rimskata Venepa?

a.	Αφροδίτα
b.	Αρτεμιδα
c.	Ατίνα
d.	Χερα

Examples of past papers can be found on the Euroclassica website as well as further information including vocabulary lists and a statement of expected knowledge. Local representatives will have more information on taking the Elex and Egex in their own country including translations into other languages, and ways of reporting results.

Participating teachers report that this project is a good way of promoting the ancient languages in their schools, and of fostering an awareness of the European dimension of studying Latin or Greek. In a real way, it makes learners realise that there are many other young people learning the same thing as them in different circumstances, languages, and cultures and that they share a common purpose in their studies.