THE 2012 COLLEGE GREEK EXAM

In March 2012, 473 students from 50 colleges and universities took the fourth annual College Greek Exam (CGE), a national exam for students of ancient Greek, typically given in their second semester of a college sequence. This paper gives an analysis of the results of the 2012 CGE as well as a comparison to similar results on previous exams.

DEVELOPMENT AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE COLLEGE GREEK EXAM

The origins of the CGE arose from the desire to institute a separate national exam for students of ancient Greek, parallel to the National Greek Exam (NGE) for high school students. The CGE generally follows the format of exams such as the NGE and the NLE but has a syllabus, vocabulary lists and expectations geared specifically for students at the college level. Given the great diversity of pedagogical approaches and order of presentation of grammatical material found in Greek textbooks, the CGE does not follow any one textbook. Rather than adhere to a particular approach, presentation, textbook or type of textbook, the syllabus for the CGE bases the inclusion of grammatical material and vocabulary on frequency. Through computer searches, it is now possible to quantify the forms and vocabulary that students are most likely to encounter in reading ancient Greek texts.

OVERALL STATISTICS

The table below presents the overall statistics of the first four College Greek Exams (2009-12) plus the 2008 pilot exam. The exam consists of 40 multiple-choice questions divided into two parts. The first 30 questions are grammar questions, while the last ten ask students about a passage. The number of students and institutions taking the exam is given first. The high score (out of 40) follows (the number of students with this score is given in parentheses). The last two rows give the overall average and median scores. The overall average then is broken down into the average score for the first 30 grammatical questions and the average score for the last ten questions on the passage. The last row gives the average for the comprehension questions on the passage with the number of comprehension questions in parentheses.

	2008 Pilot	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of students	78	311	239	370	473
No. of institutions	10	35	24	33	50
High Score	36 (3)	38 (5)	40 (2)	39 (1)	40(1)
Overall Avg.	58%	62.06%	65.76%	56.7%	54.15%
Median	55.6	62.55	65	57.5	52.5
Avg. Q 1-30	57.78%	62.91%	65.5%	56.56%	52.12%
Avg. Q 31-40	58.46%	59.54%	66.57%	57.17%	60.25%
Avg. Compr. Q.	64.74(2)	59.55 (4)	62.3 (1)	57.6 (4)	75 (4)

In the short history of the CGE, the largest number of students from the most number of institutions took the exam this year. As can be seen, this year's overall average and median dropped about a couple of percentage points from the scores in 2011. In 2012, there were no questions in which students scored in the 90 percentile range, while students scored in the 80 percentile range in only three questions; there were five questions in which the students scoreD in the 70% range and 8 in the 60%

range. The rest of the questions fell under 60%. This distribution is about the same as that on the 2011 exam. But what is significant is that there was about a 8 percent difference between the avg. on the Q 1-30 vs. the avg. on the Q 31-40 (second and third columns from the bottom). In previous years this difference had been minimal (less than one percentage point in 2011). Students on the 2012 exam seemed to do well on comprehending the passage but did not seem to have as firm a grasp of Greek grammar.

FORMAT AND ANALYSIS OF THE 2011 COLEGE GREEK EXAM

The exam consisted of 40 multiple-choice questions divided into two parts. The first part consisted of 30 grammar questions. The majority of questions asked students to identify isolated grammatical forms (e.g. give the dative plural of βασιλεύς). There were also questions asking students to transform isolated grammatical forms (e.g. give the plural form of contract verb ἐφίλει). The last ten questions of the exam analyzed a short Greek passage based on Plutarch's *On the Education of Children*. Here the students identified grammatical forms in context and answered comprehension questions.

Since there is a difference between the average for Q 1-30 and that for Q 31-40, I discuss each section separately. Furthermore since I will not be able to cover every question on the exam, I shall concentrate on the ones in which the students did well and poorly.

For the first part of the exam the students did well in seeing that οὐδένα comes from οὐδείς (Q 28 = 86.5%). On Q 23 the students were asked "Where did the Spartans fight a famous battle with answers in Greek. Here 76.3% chose Thermopylae over Mycene, Marathon and Thebes. For Q 27, 76.1% of the students correctly translated τὸ τοῦ ἐκείνου τοῦ ἵππου σώματος εἶδος καλόν to "The appearance of that horse's body is beautiful." This is the only 'best translation" question from Greek to English on the exam. A conscious effort had been made to reduce the number of such questions since the 2010 where there were ten such questions, because it was thought that it was easier for students to translate from English to Greek than vice versa. This is probably one of the factors in the drop in scores after 2010 (65.76%(2010) to 56.7% (2011) = fourth row of the chart). Finally 74.2% of the students recognized πεφιληκέναι as the perfect infinitive. Since the inception of the exam, instructors have expressed some concern about including perfect forms on the exam, since textbooks do not always introduce the perfects by the time of the exam. Here the students seemed to have done fairly well.

Where students had difficulties often fell into the same areas in which students on past exams had problems. Q 3 had the lowest score (11.4%), where students were asked to match the correct 2nd decl. adj. with a 3rd decl. noun φύσεως. The majority of students seem to recognize φύσεως as genitive, but opted for masculine rather than the fem. form. πονηρῶς served as a significant distractor; students here seem to be matching up endings. Another case where students had difficulties with 3rd declension nouns is in question 30 where only 15.2% saw that εἴδη was the correct noun to complete the sentence. As noted students have had difficulties with matching up articles and adjectives with nouns in a different declension since the inception of the exam, as in Q 3. In the report for the 2011 exam, I had written: "Students would do well to learn the third declension nouns on the syllabus more thoroughly. They would see that nouns with ε–stems form the largest category of third declension nouns in the syllabus. Also they would know that nouns of the πόλις–type on the syllabus are all feminine."

Another area in which students have had difficulties has been in recognizing the aorist imperative. In Q 4 students were asked" Which of the following gives the command "Laugh." Only 34.2% gave the correct answer γέλασον.

Finally 35.9% of the students recognized the tense of τίθησι as present (Q 12). The aorist at 36.2% was the most significant distractor although τίθησι did not have an augment. In past exams students were asked about aorist forms (e.g. ἔδωκε and ἔθηκε) with scores ranging in the 40s and 30s. This is the first time that we have asked about the present. Just as the perfect, μι- verbs have been a concern for instructors, since most textbooks only introduce them toward the end of the book. But given the frequency of –μι verbs in Greeks texts, it may be wise (not only for taking the CGE) to teach them earlier in the course. At LSU we have moved the teaching of –μι verbs to the beginning of course, not only for the sake of the exam, but more so because students thereby are better prepared to sight read a greater variety of texts, which we use to supplement the textbook.

Now we may turn to the second part of the exam. On average the students did better here than on Pt. I. They did especially well on the four comprehension questions (Q 33, 34, 36 and 40) averaged 75%. Q 33 is where the students had the highest score. Students also did well (80.3%) in recognizing παισίν as a dative plural. The article τοῖς also helps here. However students had more difficulties explaining the grammar. For Q 32 only 13.1% of the students (the second lowest score overall) recognized πόνους as the antecedent of the relative pronoun οἷς. Also in Q 37, 31.3% saw that ὑπερβάλλουσι was a dative participle. Understandably most students (57.5%) took it as a 3rd sg. present. This is one of the trickier questions. Thus, overall in the second part of the exam, the students seem to grasp the meaning of the passage but had found questions about grammar more challenging.

Such a statement could be made about the exam in general. Students scored better by about eight percentage points on the second part (on the passage) than the first part (grammatical questions). Even in Part One, when students were asked to translate the Greek sentence of Q 27 into English, 76.1% chose the correct answer. Thus overall students on the 2012 exam seemed to do well on comprehending the passage but did not seem to ηαωεas firm a grasp of Greek grammar. This may not be a surprising conclusion, except for the fact that on all previous exams the scores for Parts One and Two have been fairly close. We will have to see whether this trend continues in the future years.

Let me close with a few considerations raised in last year's report on the 2011 Exam (now available online in *Teaching Classical Languages*. In the conclusion of that report I offered some speculations on why the overall average had dropped from the 2010 exam (65.76%) to the 2011 exam (56.7%). One consideration was the best translation questions, as mentioned above, especially those which ask students to translate from Greek to English. For the 2011 and 2012 we have kept the number of such questions to one; this does seem to affect how well students did on the exam. On the other hand, I also speculated that the difficulty of the passage on the 2011 exam may have been a factor in the decline of scores. Clearly the 2012 students did not find the passage this year as challenging as the students last year. Finally one additional factor in the decline in scores from 2010 to 2011 may have been the increase in the number of students taking the 2011 exam. Over a hundred more students took the 2011 exam than the 2010 exam. Such an increase may account for some levelling in scores. For 2012 we added another 100 students. Since the scores have not dropped significantly between 2011 and 2012, we have to ask ourselves whether we are reaching a point where the scores will be bottom out? We will have to watch this on future exams.