

## THE 2014 COLLEGE GREEK EXAM

In the Spring of 2014, 294 students from 40 colleges and universities took the sixth annual College Greek Exam (CGE), a national exam for students of ancient Greek, typically given in their second semester of a college sequence. This year for the first time, the CGE was also offered in the fall. This second test was initiated to accommodate Greek programs which have enough students to teach Greek in the spring. And thus these students were taking their second semester in the fall. Twenty-five students from four colleges took this exam. This paper gives an analysis of the results of the 2014 exams (as well as a comparison to similar results on previous exams).

### OVERALL STATISTICS

The table below presents the overall statistics of the first six College Greek Exams (2009-14) plus the 2008 pilot exam. The exam consists of 40 multiple-choice questions divided into two parts. The first part consists of grammar questions, while the second part asks students questions on a passage about a tyrant, who derives no pleasure from his wealth, but is jealous if another tyrant has more. 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 next two rows give the overall average and median scores. The overall average then is broken down into the average score for the first part and the average score for the second part on the passage. From 2008-2013 there were 30 questions for Pt. 1 and 10 for pt. 2. In 2014 for the first time the distribution was changed such that Pt. I consisted of 28 questions, while Pt. II had 12 questions. This distribution places a little more emphasis on testing their grammatical knowledge and comprehension in context. 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	2013
No. of students	78	311	239	370	473	366
No. of institutions	10	35	24	33	50	40
High Score	36(3)	38 (5)	40 (2)	39 (1)	40(1)	37 (3)
Overall Avg.	58%	62.06%	65.76%	56.7%	54.15%	56.35%
Median	55.6	62.55	65	57.5	52.5	55.26
Avg. Q 1-30	57.78%	62.91%	65.5%	56.56%	52.12%	55.76%
Avg. Q 31-40	58.46%	59.54%	66.57%	57.17%	60.25%	58.26%
Avg. Comp. Quest.	64.74% (2)	59.55% (4)	62.3% (1)	57.6% (4)	75% (4)	56.28%(4)

	Spring 2014	Fall 2014
No. of students	294	25
No. of institutions	40	4
High Score	39 (1)	35 (1)
Overall Average	51.1%	53.2%
Median	50	50
Avg. Q 1-28	47.57%	49.71%
Avg. Q 29-40	59.08%	61.33%
Avg. Compr. Q.	58.2% (5)	57.6% (5)

You can see that this year's overall average and median fell a few percentage points from the scores in 2013. These are the lowest overall average and median since the exam began. Also the averages for Q 1-28 and Q 29-40 were a little over 11 percentage points apart. It seems that the students did better answering questions on a passage than the straight grammar questions. This perhaps would not be surprising but I should point out that in general the averages for the two sections of the exam have been very close (less than one percentage point in 2011), except in 2012, where there was an 8% difference. For the spring exam in 2014, there were one question in which students scored in the 90 percentile range but none in the 80 percentile; there were three questions in which the students scored in the 70% range and eight in the 60% range. The rest of the questions fell under 60%. For the fall exam the distribution was as follows: 90% = 0; 80%= 3; 70% = 4; 60% = 13.

### FORMAT AND ANALYSIS OF THE 2014 COLEGE GREEK EXAM

Let us then turn to the analysis of the exam. 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. I shall begin with the high scores. All the low scores come from Pt. 1 of the exam.

The highest score was on Q 4 for both exams, where students were asked to correctly accent ἔθουμάζομεν. 91% in the spring did this correctly, while 88% gave the right answer in the fall. This is comparable to last year's exam where no. 9 asked which verb is correctly accented, 73% saw that ἔπεσες was the right answer. Accent questions on earlier exams have focused on the recessive accent: 2008 (44.87%), 2010 (72.8%); 2011 (81%) and 2012 (55.8% - contract verb). For 2009 an example of a fixed accent was asked for: 32.2%.

In part II, both groups scored well on Q40, a comprehension question about lines 6-8 of the passage: "From the lines 6-8 (ὁ δὲ . . . κατεργάσασθαι) we learn that it is difficult for tyrants to obtain their desires because those things are \_\_\_\_." 70% vs. 88% saw that the question must be completed by "d. difficult and dangerous to obtain."

Students, especially in the fall, did well on Q33, where they were asked about the translation of λυπεῖται. 69% vs. 80% saw that λυπεῖται (line 4) is to be translated by "he is dissatisfied."

The students also did well on Q3 where they were asked to translate the participle ὁρῶν. 78% vs. 68% of the students correctly chose "seeing." The only significant distractor occurred in the fall group, where 28% opted for "I saw," neglecting the fact that there was no augment.

The fall group also did well in identifying the tense and mood of τεθνηκέναι (Q 18). Here 76% of the fall group saw that this was the perfect infinitive, while only 55% of the spring group got this right. The most significant distractor here was the aorist infinitive (33% S; 16%F). 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. The fall group's score here is comparable to the 2012 exam, where 74.2% of the students recognized that πεφίληκέναι was the perfect infinitive.

Now we may turn to the questions on which the students did poorly. The lowest score was for Q 15, where students were asked to choose the form of αὐτός which best completes the sentence πολλοὶ τιμῶσιν τὴν πόλιν καὶ τὸν δῆμον \_\_\_\_\_. Only 17% (S) and 12% (F) saw that αὐτῆς was the correct answer. The students divided rather evenly (20-30%) between the other answers: αὐτοῦς (the people themselves); αὐτῶν (their people); αὐτό (the people itself).

Students also had difficulties in identifying the case and number of τέλους in Q 2. 20% (S) and 16% (F) recognized it as the genitive singular. Not surprisingly most thought it was accusative plural (73% vs. 72%). It should be noted that nouns with -εσ- stems form the largest category of third declension nouns in the syllabus.

For Q16, the translation of the contract verb ἔζων posed problems for students. Here 37% vs. 20% correctly answered: “they were living.” A major distractor was the participle “sitting” (27% vs. 36%). In 2013 the lowest score was for Q 12, where only 15.6% of the students correctly translated ἠρώτων as “I asked.” The majority of students (55.2%) understandably took it as a present participle (asking) or (loving – 19.4%). (In the past questions about contract verbs have asked students to convert a singular verbs into the plural. In 2010 students clearly saw that ζητοῦσι was the plural of ζητεῖ (90%). But when we switched from ε-contracts to α-contracts in 2011, students had more difficulties: 2011: ἐγάλα to ἐγάλων (9.3%). In 2012 we returned to the ε-contract: ἐφίλει to ἐφίλουν (55.6%). Clearly students have more difficulty with α-contracts.)

The next lowest score involved matching an adjective and noun of different declensions. For no. 13, 21% (S) and 32% (F) matched δεινῆς up with the genitive noun πίστεως. For the spring group, a significant distractor was δεινοῦ (44% S; 24% F); here the spring students seemed to know πίστεως was genitive, but got the gender wrong. One should note the πόλις type nouns in the syllabus are feminine. For the fall students, the adverbial form δεινῶς was the significant distractor (44% F; 24 S). Here the students seemed to be matching up endings. I have reported that agreement of adjectives (articles) and nouns of different declensions has been a difficulty that students have had throughout the history of the exam and so will not belabor the point here.

Q 1 also furnished another case of students matching up endings, this time with the adjective and noun in the same declension (μέγας and ἄρχων). Here 22% (S) and 28% (F) of the students chose μέγας. Whereas most of the students (46 vs 44%) chose μέγαλον. These then are the major low scores on the exam.

Let me conclude by offering some considerations on the drop in scores. As mentioned at the beginning of the paper, the overall average is the lowest in the history of the exam, falling about 3-5% from last year. The students seem to have had a more difficult time with the grammar section. Here the average for the first section fell between 6-8% from 2013, whereas the average for the comprehension section remained about the same as the previous years. The analysis above of high scores and low scores seems to confirm this. The lowest scores all come from Pt. 1. The scores hover around the teens and low 20% range; on previous reports the fourth and fifth lowest score usually started to come up into the 30-40% range. For 2014, there are still a few more scores in the 20% range, all from Pt. I. Also, given the past history that I have been able to provide for these low scores, you can see that these questions are variations of questions given on earlier exams. Whereas scores from Pt. 2 come into play for the higher scores. The lowest scores for Pt. 2 are in the 40% range (specifically 41% (S); 40% (F)). While it may not be surprising that students would do better on comprehending a passage than answering straight grammar questions, it is significant that the scores for Pt. I and II have been fairly close until recently. We will have to see whether this trend continues.