



Guide for analysing scripts for Module A of the CLAS Diplomas

The level of information in this guide is suitable for Foundation level, it also serves as a guide for Intermediate level but slightly more detailed comments are recommended. Note that at Foundation level you can only analyse and use either foundational hand OR italic, this guide is a model as to method and has purposely not chosen a foundational hand or italic model! If you analyse uncial at Intermediate level please use a different uncial model!

Guidance is in brackets.

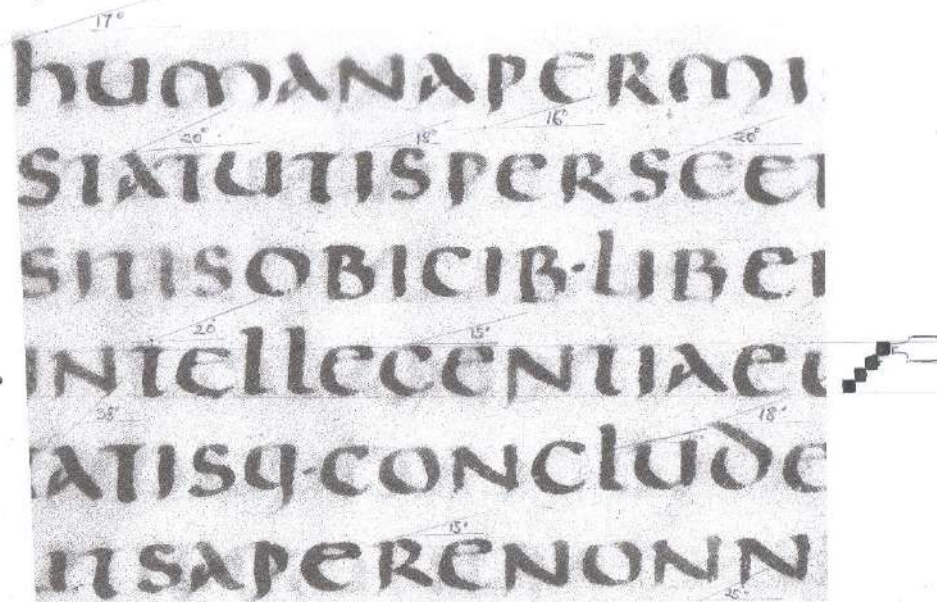
(Select a clear model of the script you wish to analyse where letterforms can clearly be seen in detail or make an enlargement for analysis. Stan Knight's Historical Scripts' book gives a selection of suitable examples, with enlargements.

Analysis of historical uncial: (see note above)

(Briefly introduce the example, with date, location, scribe if known, and a general description of the script).

Majuscule Scripts

Latin Uncials B7



This uncial example was written in Italy in the 5th or 6th century, it is a simple, clear uncial with very even letter spacing, and written with 'natural' ie slanted pen angle.

- 1) Pen angle: (To deduce pen angle measure about 10 examples from different letters, where you can clearly see the direction in which the nib was held, often clearest at stem beginnings, drawing a straight line with a ruler in the direction the nib was held , and drawing in addition, a horizontal line and measuring the angle between these two lines with a protractor and noting it on the photocopy in pencil as demonstrated). Work out the average pen angle for the script from these examples and note the answer. IF you think the pen angle is intentionally different for certain letters, do not include these when working out the average, but comment about these in the answer).

The average pen angle for this uncial script from the examples measured is 17 degrees. Note the angle appears somewhat steeper for verticals of 'N' to prevent them appearing too thick.

- 2) Letter weight: (To deduce letter weight find the thickest stroke on the historical model photocopy enlargement– the thickest stroke is at right angles to the pen angle , place dry nibs on the thickest stroke til you find a nib size which looks a good match. Next rule a double line on a spare piece of cartridge paper the SAME height as the letter bodies in the historical example and write an 'l' and another simple letter eg 'C' and see if the letter you have written looks the same weight/thickness of strokes as the historical letter, if it doesn't you will need to repeat the process with thinner or thicker nibs til you have found the right size to match the model! When you have found the right size nib, rule a double line into the margin of the historical photocopy model, ink up and measure the height of the historical letter bodies in nibwidths. Hold the nib edge vertical to do this, making a nibwidths 'ladder' as demonstrated. The number of nibwidths is the letter weight)

The letter weight for this script is 4 nibwidths. (Note ink might spread on the photocopy, so for this try gouache which is less likely to bleed).

- 3) 'O' form: (Look at several 'O's on the historical example to deduce which is the best/intended form as a basis for the rest of the script, it may help

to also look at other related shapes in order to decide which is the most suitable 'O'. Describe the 'O' form).

On average, the 'O' form in this uncial is circular, though some are slightly wider, also certain letters particularly the 'm's and 'e's are also fuller than a circle.

4,5,6) Number of strokes per letter, their order and direction: (Make a general observation about these aspects, and then direct the marker to see your practical alphabets on A4 cartridge sheets attached).

Though this is a flowing uncial, letters are unjoined and pen lifts are frequent, stroke number, order and direction are shown on attached written sheets.

7) Writing speed: (State whether you think the script was written slowly, moderately or quickly and give as much evidence as possible). This uncial appears to have been written with a moderate speed, letters are unjoined so it is not a quick cursive script, but it is very evenly spaced and appears written with ease, these factors together with the very small size at which it was written suggest considerable fluency and not a slow or laboured script.

8) Serif types: (There may be different serif types to observe on any particular script, eg. sometimes different ones on descenders than on letter body/ ascender beginnings and letter body endings). Serifs on this script are brief and rounded at the beginning of uprights to letter bodies and ascenders.

9) Ascenders/descenders: (State height/length of ascenders/descenders in nibwidths and if there is any variations on different letters). Ascenders and descenders are short on this script, being approximately 2 nibwidths. Descender finishes eg on 'P R F' end in a fine stroke pulled to the left, as do the uprights of 'N' -though these descenders are shorter.

10) Arch shape and structure: (Describe these features, including level at which arch leaves the stem). The 'M' in this uncial shows arch structure clearly, the right arch springing from just below the the top of the central stem in a generous vertical movement producing a slight thickness as it leaves the stem, this is reflected upside-down in the base of 'U'. 'B P R' bowls spring from a similar level, though without the generous arch, and the R has a rather straight diagonal shoulder rather than the rounder form of the other related letters.

11) Letter slope: (If the script slopes forwards, rule a straight line down through an ascender or stem and then rule a vertical line next to it and measure the angle of slope with a protractor from the vertical). This uncial is basically an upright script with a hint of forward slope due to the writing rhythm.

12) Letter, word and line spacing: (State whether the letter spacing is close, wide or in between, and relate the space between uprights of 2 adjacent letters to an 'n' width ie the 'ni' or 'NI' distance is closer/the same/ wider than an 'N' width. For word spacing, again relate this to an 'N' (or 'O') width, is it similar, closer or wider? For line spacing measure this in letter body heights, it is usually some multiple of the letter body height, as manuscripts were often very lengthy, and this made for greater ease of measuring and ruling up). The letter spacing in this script is very even and generous, with approximately half an 'N' width between uprights of adjacent letters. There isn't any word spacing, a dot between some words indicated in this instance an abbreviation of the preceding word. The line spacing (interlinear space) is one letter body height, which is adequate, as ascenders and descenders are short.

13) Other observations: (Comment on any other points of particular note). The 'G' tail is very thin probably made by a quick movement on a quill corner. Some 'E' forms are open though most are enclosed.

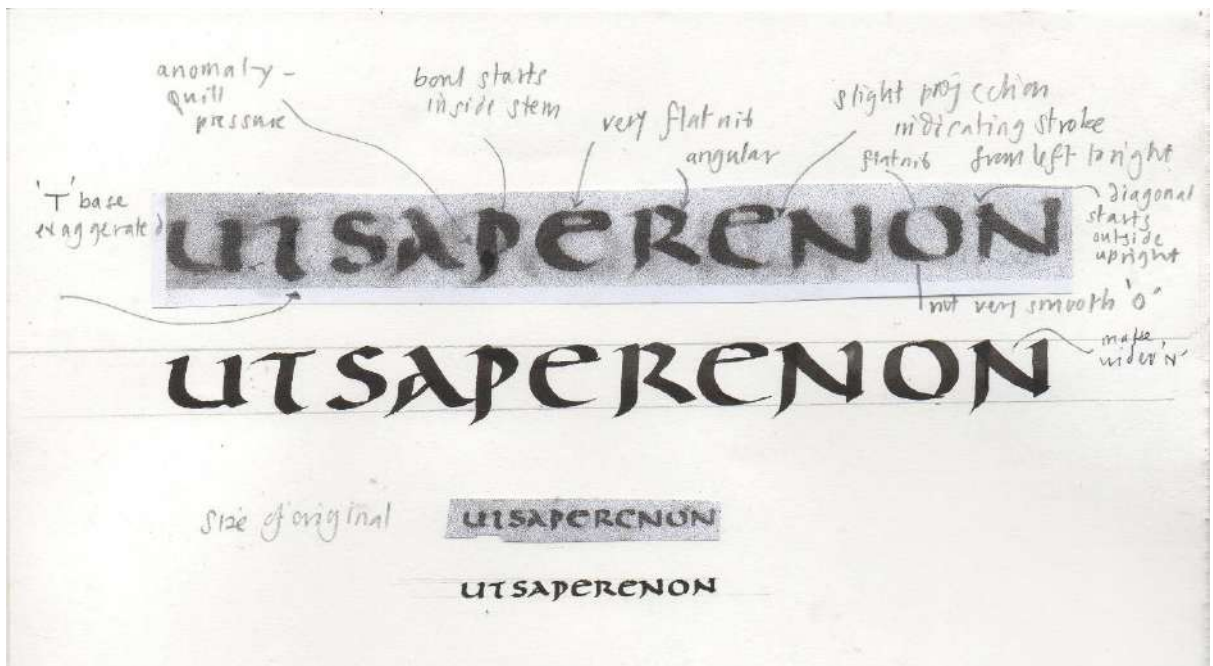
Practical work for analysis.

On A4 cartridge:

1) Copy the historical letters in alphabetical order either an alphabet with one of each letter-, leaving enough space between letters to put pencil stroke order and direction arrows round once you have written a satisfactory alphabet, (after having practised them!!!), or, as demonstrated, cut and paste a good example of each historical letter in alphabetical order, from a photocopy enlargement, leaving a generous space besides each for your own written copies of each letter. Ensure the pencil lines ruled to contain letter bodies are the exact height of each letter so you match the exact weight of each letter – as they may vary somewhat in size! Copy each letter several times by the side of the model looking at size and shape of interior space of letters as well as the form. You can make pencil annotations to point out any discrepancies if you want to. Round one example of each letter put

numbered pencil arrows to indicate number of strokes per letter, their order and direction.

- 2) If you need to adapt any forms for contemporary use, or amend features to make the alphabet better related, write another alphabet on a second sheet of A4 cartridge paper, also supplying any letters not in the original language. If the stroke order in the contemporary script differs from the historical stroke order, then insert the numbered pencil arrows.
- 3) On a third sheet of A4 cartridge copy 2 or 3 words at the enlarged size from the historical example, this needs to be copied accurately, so it is not necessary to try and copy more than this! Try and select words with well-spaced letters! Then copy 2 or 3 words actual size. If you are using examples from Stan Knight's 'Historical Scripts' book, recommended! The phrase shown bottom right on the right-hand pages are actual size.



Letter practice copying historical letters

[copy each letter
several times]

A A

B B

C C

D D

E E

E E

F F

G G

H H

I I

L L

M M

N N

O O

P P

This analysis example compiled by Gaynor Goffe FCLAS
Remember, this is for illustrative purposes and you should select a different
historical model for your own entry.