



Course Report 2016

Subject	RMPS
Level	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Summary of the Course assessment

Component 1: Question Paper

During the academic year presenting centres had expressed serious reservations about the structure and published marking instructions for the question paper. Considerable credit has to be given to the marking team for their contribution and support in this complex task. The marks were distributed as follows in the light of the discussions:

Knowledge and Understanding 10 marks

Analysis 10 marks

Evaluation 10 marks

Component 2: Project - Dissertation

Similar concerns were raised about the structure and published marking instructions for the dissertation. In preparing for marking the dissertation the marking team unanimously agreed that an alternative approach had to be taken where neither advantage nor disadvantage accrued for candidates. Considerable credit has to be given to the marking team for their contribution and support in this complex task. The marks were distributed as follows in the light of the discussions:

Research and Presentation 8 marks

Knowledge and Understanding 8 marks

Analysis 12 marks

Evaluation 12 marks

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question Paper

There was considerable evidence that candidates had been well-prepared to write essays and only a small number of candidates produced answers that were well short of Advanced Higher level quality as far as length goes. Many candidates found the presentation of relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge and understanding information straightforward and often performed satisfactorily in this in both sections tackled.

The question paper was considered to be fair although considerable concern had been expressed during the academic year about the structure of the exam and indeed the course content and structure. Both of these issues have been resolved in the revised arrangements.

Component 2: Project - Dissertation

The quality of dissertation was exceptionally good. Very few candidates did not achieve the dissertation. This was the result of well chosen topics for investigation. Admirable restraint and common sense was in evidence as most candidates opted for issues drawn from the course content. Those that went beyond course content were, on the whole, very able candidates and capable of such an undertaking which they had to complete themselves.

Bibliographies were varied and whilst there was evidence of class notes being used it was equally clear that many candidates had gone beyond this and sought their own sources.

Knowledge and understanding and analysis was strong again with many candidates scoring high marks here which then gave them opportunity, even with lower quality evaluation, to score in excess of 24/40. The evaluation was the weakest skill but it was clear that most candidates had a good understanding of what was required even although they did not do enough of it in adequate depth.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question Paper

The questions were considered fair and the question paper complied with the course assessment specification, however the structure of the exam aroused concerns across a significant number of presenting centres. There was infrequent confusion on the part of candidates as to which question they were answering and at times a few candidates seemed to change their essay from one to another. This should be resolved in future as a result of modifications to the Course Assessment Specification. Evaluation was the overall issue across all sections but the problems were masked somewhat by the very good knowledge and understanding and analysis which made it appear that candidates had performed in all areas very well when in fact, it was very often the case that they had performed very well in two of the three skills being assessed.

Component 2: Project - Dissertation

It was evident that candidates found the explanation of the dissertation process a frustrating task. Most candidates completed this either as a separate part at the beginning of the dissertation or explicitly and implicitly throughout the dissertation. Under the published marking instructions, it would have been quite possible to be awarded as many marks for a few lines on this as it was an entire page on it. The potential problems raised by this approach were overcome through the revised marking instructions and no candidate was disadvantaged or advantaged by the change.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question Paper

There is some uncertainty about the best use of sources. There are various ways to do this and the excellent advice below provided by one centre to its candidates could well be a very useful tool for candidates to use in their assignment and in the question paper. Thanks are due to the centre for sharing this information.

How to Use Sources in RMPS

Example 1:

- KU** In the book of Exodus in the Bible it says “If there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth...” (Chapter 21)
- A** I think this means that if a person kills another person then they should lose their life as a result. This suggests that the Bible thinks death is a fair punishment for murder and that it supports capital punishment.
- E** I find this a very strict viewpoint and I don’t think it is necessarily fair. If someone kills someone by accident or in self-defence then I don’t think they should be killed but should be punished in some other way.

Example 2:

- KU** Pope Francis was recently quoted in The Independent newspaper as saying that evolution and the Big Bang are real and God is not ‘a magician with a magic wand’.
- A** I find this is a very interesting viewpoint because it goes against what most people think Christians believe. Most Christians actually don’t take the creation stories in Genesis as being literally true. Those who do – Creationists – are in the minority.
- E** I think Pope Francis’s opinion is very useful because it shows that you can be a religious person who believes in God but also accept the findings of modern science. If the leader of the biggest Church in the world can move with the times then perhaps religion will become more popular in countries (like Britain) where it is on the decline.

Example 3:

- KU** I found a quote from the Buddha on the BBC Religion website where he said: “An action, even if it brings benefit to oneself, cannot be considered a good action if it causes physical and mental pain to another being.” The website also said that the Buddha did not actually say anything about capital punishment.
- A** I think Buddhists could use this passage to come to a view on whether capital punishment is morally acceptable. What the Buddha is saying is that an action

cannot be good if it brings pain to another being – and capital punishment is a painful way to die. The BBC documentary 'How to kill a human' showed that all methods of capital punishment can be inhumane and cause agony to the victim.

- E** I think this viewpoint is very convincing because I don't think it is right to try and make yourself feel better by hurting someone else. This would make us just as bad as the criminal who committed a violent crime in the first place. On the other hand, Utilitarians might disagree with the Buddha because if killing a murderer brought happiness to most people then that would make it a good action because it would follow the Greatest Happiness Principle.

Component 2: Project - Dissertation

Evaluation

Over the past few years the need for a clearer understanding of evaluation has become increasingly apparent. One approach that might help emphasise the difference in skills could be by having clear definitions expressed at the level of candidates:

Knowledge and Understanding= know that

e.g. know that religious people consider life to be sacred

Analysis= know why

e.g. explain that religious people believe that life is sacred because humanity is God's special creation and God is sovereign over life and death.

Evaluation= judge the 'that' and the 'why'

e.g. *judging the Knowledge-* religious people are making assumptions that life is always sacred and not considering the possibility that life loses its sanctity at some point because the beauty is removed from it as a result of extreme suffering

e.g. *judging the Analysis-* humanity is not necessarily God's special creation; we have nominated ourselves as his special creation to allow us to exploit other creatures and protect ourselves. The belief that God is sovereign over life and death is a claim that is difficult to prove and to justify. If God is sovereign over life and death it leaves religious people with the problem of why some individuals die an agonising death and others a peaceful death seemingly on a whim of God.

These examples are not from the writing of candidates. The examples are to show how an evaluation exercise could be done with candidates demonstrating their knowledge and understanding and then being asked to do different things with it. After this, demonstrating the analysis and again, doing different things with it.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	0
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Number of resulted entries in 2016	212
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	33.0%	33.0%	70	70
B	25.9%	59.0%	55	60
C	22.6%	81.6%	48	50
D	9.0%	90.6%	19	45
No award	9.4%	-	20	0

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.