



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 1</b>

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. 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 question papers and marking instructions for the Examination.

# Comments on candidate performance

## General comments

There was a significant decrease in the number of candidates presented for Intermediate 1 this year, with about 400 fewer candidates than 2009. Results were fairly consistent with 59.5% of candidates achieving a grade A–C pass. The vast majority of candidates answered questions on Christianity in Section 1, with Medical Ethics, and War and Peace the most popular choices in Section 2.

Once again central marking proved to be a positive experience with all markers expressing appreciation of the support available. The continuous quality assurance ensures standardisation of the marking process and ensures all candidates are marked fairly. If you are not already involved in exam procedures you are invited to apply to become a Marker as this is certainly one of the best, and most useful, professional development activities.

Some changes took place to the marking of the Analysis and Evaluation (AE) questions two years ago. However, judging by evidence submitted for Absentee Candidates and Appeals, some centres have not adopted this practice. It was agreed to acknowledge AE as higher skills and award every AE point two marks. In addition to this, if a candidate made a Knowledge and Understanding (KU) point in an AE answer which is then developed into a relevant AE point, this is credited with one additional mark for KU.

During 2008/09 a minor review took place in RMPS Intermediate 1 with changes to the mandatory content of some Units. These changes were well publicised by SQA in both paper and electronic form with updates sent out to all centres. Yet, it is clear from some candidate responses that some centres are continuing to deliver Courses based on the previous arrangements. If centres do not take heed of these changes, candidates will be disadvantaged. Therefore it is important that local network groups ensure that all staff delivering RMPS Courses in each local authority are aware of the changes to RMPS. Please encourage your colleagues to read this report.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Markers identified some candidates who produced good quality answers across all three sections of the exam paper with a reasonable number of candidates achieving an upper 'A' pass. Markers also identified that generally candidates answered AE questions better than KU questions.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

As with previous years, a significant number of candidates did not appear to understand the rubric of the exam paper answering too many questions or failing to complete the relevant question from each section, penalising themselves.

## Section 1

- ◆ Buddhism: Question 1 (a) — some candidates described the First Noble Truth instead of simply naming it.
- ◆ Christianity: Question 1 (b) — candidates mixed up the different instructions given to humans in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2.

## Section 2

- ◆ Many candidates failed to identify a specific secular or religious viewpoint, giving only generalised responses to questions.
- ◆ Global Issues: Question (e) — many candidates did not seem to understand the term 'inappropriate aid'.
- ◆ Medical Ethics: Question (a) — a surprising number of candidates did not seem able to provide a definition of euthanasia.

## Section 3

- ◆ Question (b) — a significant number of candidates confused the First Cause Argument with the Design Argument.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

With so many candidates continuing to misunderstand the rubric of the exam paper it is important to take time in class to familiarise candidates with the layout, stressing which questions candidates should answer in the final exam. Some centres prepare a full paper for the prelim exam copying it on blue paper, helping candidates to familiarise themselves with it under exam conditions. This is worth doing and may prevent candidates from penalising themselves by spending time answering unnecessary questions during the exam.

It is important that all mandatory content is taught as candidates can be examined on a wide range of content in the final exam and will be disadvantaged if they have not properly prepared for the external assessment. Likewise, it is important that candidates are taught specific viewpoints and can write about the viewpoints they have studied such as Humanism, Utilitarianism, Feminism, etc. Candidates giving generalised answers when a specific response is required will be penalised. The marking instructions published on the SQA website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)) can help to direct centres to some recognised viewpoints.

While Markers have commented that candidates tend to answer AE questions better than KU questions, centres would still benefit from spending time with candidates developing skills that enable them to compare/contrast arguments and recognise the difference between making a statement and presenting a viewpoint supported by valid reasons. Candidates will need to develop these skills if they are to progress to Intermediate 2. Candidates should also be made aware of the importance of noting the number of reasons asked for in a question and the number of marks allocated to each reason. Where there is no number of reasons specified, candidates can choose to present several brief reasons or to give two extended reasons. Questions beginning 'Give, State, Identify' require a brief response, usually a short phrase or one word answer. Questions beginning 'Describe' require more information, eg identifying an item and then giving a fuller description.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	946
Number of resulted entries in 2010	535

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark — 60				
A	22.2%	22.2%	119	42
B	18.1%	40.4%	97	36
C	18.5%	58.9%	99	30
D	7.3%	66.2%	39	27
No award	33.8%	100.0%	181	—

### 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, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.