



External Assessment Report 2009

Subject	RMPS
Level	Intermediate 2

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 rise in the number of candidates presented for Intermediate 1 this year. 20 new centres presented candidates giving a total of 53 centres offering RMPS Intermediate 1. Results are slightly poorer than last year with 62.3% of candidates achieving a pass with grades A-C. The vast majority of candidates answered questions on Christianity in Section 1 with Medical Ethics the most popular choice in Section 2, followed by War and Peace and Gender.

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 treated fairly. Teachers who are not already involved in exam procedures are encouraged to apply to become a marker as this is certainly one of the best, and most useful, professional development activities.

Centres are reminded that some changes took place in the marking of AE questions last year. It was agreed to acknowledge analysis and evaluation as higher skills and award every AE point **two** marks. In addition to this, if a candidate made a KU point in an AE answer which is then developed into a relevant AE point this is credited with **one** additional mark for KU.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Markers identified some candidates who produced good quality answers across all three sections of the exam paper, however, candidates tended to perform better in the World Religions Unit than in other sections. Generally candidates answered AE questions better than KU questions.

Areas which candidates found demanding

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 One

Buddhism: generally many candidates struggled to answer the questions giving the impression that candidates lacked basic knowledge of the course content. For example, Q 2(d) many candidates did not recognise the phrase 'right livelihood'.

Christianity: Q 2 (c) a number of candidates referred to the resurrection instead of the death of Jesus.

Section Two

Few candidates managed to identify a viewpoint independent of religious belief with some even offering religious viewpoints for these answers or simply stating "It thinks..." or "They believe..." but then giving a very general response that could not be identified as a specific viewpoint.

Gender: Q (d) most candidates failed to describe economic equality.

International Issues: Q (d) & Q (f) a number of candidates did not appear to understand the term globalisation.

Medical Ethics: a significant number of candidates appeared confused regarding what an embryo actually is and when experiments take place. They seemed to picture experiments taking place on a developing foetus rather than on a pre-embryo in the first fourteen days of its existence.

Q (b) a number of candidates did not read the question properly and failed to give a response supporting the use of embryos in research.

Section Three

Q (c) Many candidates struggled to answer this question.

Q (d) a number of candidates confused the Design Argument with the First Cause Argument.

Q (e) the majority of candidates offered scientific objections to the Design Argument instead of a traditional objection such as natural disasters or evidence of poor design.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

With so many candidates misunderstanding the rubric of the exam paper it is worth taking time in class to familiarise them 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.

Markers were concerned that many candidates did not appear to know the basic content of Units. It is essential that candidates are prepared to answer every question within their chosen areas of study and have a good understanding of all the factual content of the Course. A wide range of content can be sampled in the external exam and candidates should be prepared for this. The mandatory Course content is clearly laid out in the National Unit Specifications in the Arrangements Document and centres should use this to ensure that the specified content is delivered to all candidates.

As pointed out each year, it is important that candidates are taught to identify the language used in exam questions recognising terms such as ‘viewpoint independent of religious belief’ and the kind of response required. The changes to language in the Arrangements Document e.g. ‘secular’ viewpoints instead of ‘independent of religious belief’ may help with this. It is also important that candidates write about specific viewpoints they have studied such as Humanism, Utilitarianism, Feminism etc. It will also benefit candidates if they are taught to name some of the viewpoints e.g. Singer, Warnock, Hume etc. Candidates giving generalised answers when a specific response is required will only penalise themselves. The marking instructions published on the SQA website (www.sqa.org.uk) can help to direct centres to some recognised viewpoints.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	852
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	946
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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 - 60				
A	32.3%	32.3%	306	42
B	15.1%	47.5%	143	36
C	14.8%	62.3%	140	30
D	5.7%	68.0%	54	27
No award	32.0%	100.0%	303	-

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.