



Internal Assessment Report: Religious Studies

Sector Panel or SSC: Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

Standard Grade

Element/coursework verified

Pupil investigation of an issue related to belief or morality.

General comments

Overall, verifiers were pleased with the good standard of most of the investigations sampled as part of the verification. Although the range of topics did not seem as wide as in previous years, there were still many interesting topics addressed by the candidates. Areas of study varied from issues of morality, such as capital punishment, war and abortion, to issues of belief about God and religious practices. A return to some of the traditional topics from previous years was evident, and this will be addressed later in the report.

It is obvious that candidates are still enjoying the freedom they get when investigating a topic of their choice. However, the verifiers believe that teachers still need to guide some candidates more clearly in the final selection of their chosen issue.

As in previous years, a small number of investigations did not deal clearly enough with the actual issues and tended to be descriptive rather than investigative works — this is disappointing, as verifiers have raised this point before. This was especially obvious when candidates were investigating an issue of belief. In the samples verified, some candidates had merely stated what the religious belief was, rather than investigating different views about it and the various ways that the belief affected different people in the 21st century. The verifiers believe that teachers need to address this at the start of the proposed investigation. Early reference to the Arrangements document's instructions for the investigation should ensure that candidates are aware of the importance of stressing the actual issues involved in the topic, as opposed to just recording facts about it.

Verifiers also expressed concern that some centres were still sending in very little evidence to support their estimated grades for the sections of candidates' work dealing with planning and conducting the investigation. This is an area that all centres should look at before they send in their verification samples, as verifiers will not be able to support the centre's estimate and this could affect the candidate's final grade.

The issues of abortion and capital punishment were contained in several of the samples that were verified. The verification team were concerned about this, as these tended to be descriptive reports that focused on the images that candidates had managed to get from the internet. Again we would remind centres that if candidates are investigating an issue that arises from Course content, then teachers should ensure that these investigations are sufficiently different from what has been taught to enable proper assessment of candidates' personal planning and conducting of the investigation.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development

We again encourage centres to refer to the Standard Grade Arrangements, and also suggest that candidates are shown the Grade Related Criteria that refer to the investigation part of the Standard Grade Course. An understanding of these criteria should help candidates make decisions about the amount of work they have still to do to achieve a particular grade, and should also help the teacher support the candidate during their investigation. (Please refer to page 33 of the Arrangements document for further information.)

Records of work appear to vary depending on the centres, so at times it is difficult to agree with a centre's estimate of what grade a candidate has achieved. Although we always strive to make a decision that does not disadvantage candidates, some centres must put more effort into producing clear evidence of candidates' planning (please see pages 24 and 33 of the Arrangements document for further information). As the verifiers have mentioned before, many centres have useful pro formas that are used throughout the investigation, and these are very helpful for candidates.

Some centres were sometimes too generous with their grades, and had incorrectly applied the grading scheme. Although these problems were not widespread, the verifiers believe it would be good practice for any centre to get another centre to cross mark candidate investigations. As well as helping staff to be more confident about the grading system, it would also serve as good continuing professional development.

The verifiers encouraged centres to check the completed Internal Assessment Flyleaves, SGER00s and other documentation accompanying submissions, and also to make sure that candidate submissions follow the correct order of the submission process, as this helps the verification process.

Centres should continue their good practice of encouraging candidates to express their ideas in their own words rather than 'lifting' from sources. Any sources should be recognised.

Finally, the verifiers would like to commend all centres and candidates for their hard work in the 2009 Religious Studies investigations.