

Our ref: TS/RMPS

16 October 2008

To: SQA Co-ordinator (secondary schools, FE colleges)
Directors of Education
SCIS
Customer Account Managers

**For the attention of all staff responsible for the
delivery of Religious Studies and
Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies**

Action by Recipient
Response required
✓ Note and pass on
Note — update/information only

Contact: Tom Stannage at Glasgow
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E-mail: tom.stannage@sqa.org.uk

Dear Colleague

National Qualifications in Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for National Qualifications in Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies.

Diet 2008

The External Assessment and Internal Assessment reports for diet 2008, formerly known as Principal Assessor and Senior Verifier reports, will be posted on SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk) by the end of October. These include:

- ◆ External Assessment report Intermediate 1
- ◆ External Assessment report Intermediate 2
- ◆ External Assessment report Higher
- ◆ External Assessment report Advanced Higher
- ◆ External Assessment report Standard Grade
- ◆ Internal Assessment report National Qualification Units

Appeals

The procedures for stage 1 and 2 Appeals were completed during September and October. Colleagues are requested to follow the guidance set out in the following documents prior to submitting Appeals:

- ◆ *The Appeals Process: a guide for centres* (AA0690/3, June 2002)
- ◆ *Estimates and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Generating Evidence* (BA0992, June 2007)

When generating Estimates and compiling evidence for Absentee consideration and Appeals, you should also refer to:

- ◆ Course Arrangements documents, which include Course Grade Descriptions
- ◆ Course Assessment Specifications
- ◆ SQA question papers, including specimen question papers
- ◆ SQA marking instructions
- ◆ External Assessment reports, which include information on Grade Boundaries
- ◆ exemplification materials
- ◆ any other relevant information (eg Course Reports, subject update letters)

These materials, and more, are also available on the subject pages of our website.

The most commonly found problems in evidence submitted for Appeals this year were related to the fact that it did not adequately cover the whole Course. These were:

- ◆ the KU/AE balance clearly laid out in the Course Assessment Specifications and the specimen question paper was not adhered to
- ◆ questions lifted *en bloc* from one section or more of the past papers or specimen question paper
- ◆ security of prelim papers compromised by using the same prelim as the previous year
- ◆ using the specimen question paper, a past paper or a past commercially produced paper in its entirety
- ◆ prelim questions were drawn from too few sources
- ◆ where NABs were used the KU/AE balance was not adjusted or questions were not adapted

Centres should note that the above problems will disadvantage candidates and staff are encouraged to read the External Assessment reports and the other documents referred to above.

The document *Estimates and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Gathering Evidence* (BA0992, June 2007) referred to above clarifies what evidence is required when submitting an Appeal for question paper based Courses.

Marking instructions

The question papers and finalised marking instructions for Course assessments at each level are posted on the NQ RMPS page of SQA's website.

RMPS Courses

Results at all levels in 2008 were extremely pleasing and teachers are to be congratulated on preparing their candidates so well for the examinations. This is particularly pleasing at Intermediate 1. There were less examples this year of candidates attempting every question in either the morality or world religion sections. There is, however, the continuing issue of candidates confusing questions related to the 'origin of life' and 'origin of the universe'.

Advanced Higher Dissertations

Titles for the Advanced Higher Dissertation should be submitted electronically to SQA by 1 November. The forms are found on the NQ RMPS page of the secure area of SQA's website. The Principal Assessor reviews each title and will contact the centre should any title raise concerns.

Minor review — launch seminars

As announced in the autumn 2007 update letter a minor review has been launched and this is now nearing completion. A letter giving some detail of the changes was distributed to all schools and colleges in August. This has also been posted on the RMPS page of SQA's website. The following series of launch seminars have been scheduled to inform staff of the changes:

- ◆ Dundee: Tuesday 11 November 2008 — Hilton Dundee
- ◆ Inverness: Wednesday 12 November 2008 — Palace Hotel
- ◆ Edinburgh: Tuesday 18 November 2008 — Thistle Hotel
- ◆ Glasgow: Wednesday 19 November 2008 — Crowne Plaza Hotel

Teachers should call Martin Winters on 0845 213 5505 or e-mail at **martin.winters@sqa.org.uk** to book a place at the seminar of their choice. An agenda and directions to the venues will be sent to delegates once attendance has been confirmed. The afternoon session will look at the detail of the review of Advanced Higher (see below). This means that staff who do not offer at this level will not be required to stay for the whole day.

Materials relevant to these seminars will be posted on our website prior to the events. The revised Courses will be implemented in August 2009 with the first diet in 2010.

Advanced Higher

The Advanced Higher Course, which has not changed since 1999, has also been undergoing a review. The Qualifications Design Team has completed the review and while there are a number of changes, none could be said to be major. The Personal Research Unit and the Dissertation have remained untouched as has the content of the Religious Experience Unit although the Unit specification is now more detailed. In the Philosophy of Religion Unit the section on the moral argument for the existence of God has been deleted and a section on atheism has replaced it. The Bioethics Unit has been renamed Medical Ethics and while the sections will have the same headings, the content has some minor changes. The Unit specifications now have an appendix which lists in detail the content that must be covered and which may be sampled in the external assessment. There will also be some changes to the structure of the external assessment.

Implementation will be in August 2009 with the first diet in 2010.

Higher examination 2009

There will be an amendment to the structure of the Higher exam in 2009. Apart from question 2 in the World Religion paper there will be no question that has a KU/AE split, ie all questions will be either KU or AE. In general there will be, for example, a 'describe' question which is then followed up with an analytical or

evaluative question. The change is being made to aid candidates' understanding of what is required in their answer.

In response to feedback from Markers and from centres, specific quotes from sources will not feature in examination questions. Reference will still be made to the sources but in a more general form. There is an appendix to this letter giving more detail on this change.

Please note: there will be no change to the **content** in 2009.

Electronic marks capture

The marking of the Intermediate 1 RMPS question paper will be included in the growing number of papers that use some form of electronic marking in either 2009 or 2010. The paper will be included in the marking from image project. All question papers are scanned and Markers mark the papers from their computers at home. Electronic marking from image combines the advantages of central marking and traditional marking at home. Markers must complete practice papers and qualifications papers before going on to mark their actual allocation. The Principal Assessor is able to track the progress of Markers and is available online at specified times to assist Markers with queries. This form of marking increases the up-front quality assurance and ensures that Markers are adhering to agreed marking standards.

Humanism Units

SQA in partnership with the Scottish Humanist Academy have developed Units at Intermediate 1 and 2. The Units cover the principles of humanism and their approaches to ethical issues. Members of the Academy include a number of RME teachers and they have contributed to this development. Teachers should find the Units an excellent supplement to the current Units which explore moral issues and they can provide the 'view independent of religious belief' that is looked for in the RMPS Courses. They can also be used as free-standing Units. SQA will provide NABs for the Units and the Academy has developed support materials which can be found on their website (www.humanist-academy.co.uk).

The support materials (Teacher and Student Guide) are on the site under the **Schools** and **Library** sections.

Assessment Panel

The RMPS Assessment Panel continues to meet yearly to look at issues arising in the subject. Colleagues are free to feed issues arising in their subject to the Panel either directly through panel members or via SQA officers.

Becoming a Marker

Each year the number of entries for RMPS Courses is increasing. If you are interested in becoming a Marker in RMPS, please e-mail markers@sqa.org.uk or call our Marker Helpline (0131-561 6825) and we will send a form to you. To become a Marker, we normally ask that you are in your third year of teaching the Course. We welcome applications throughout the year and, where a suitable vacancy exists, we may be able to offer an appointment for this year. The RMPS Courses are centrally marked — this entails the Marker marking scripts over one

extended period in the same venue. In a number of subject areas we have had recent examples where the results in centres have improved dramatically after a member of staff joined the marking team. The experience of marking helps to increase the awareness of the demands of Course assessment and is proven to be excellent professional and personal development.

I hope that you find the above information useful. If you would like to discuss any matter in more detail, please do not hesitate to telephone me on 0845 213 5502 or e-mail me at **tom.stannage@sqa.org.uk**

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Stannage". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Tom Stannage
Qualifications Manager
NQ Social Sciences and Care

Higher RMPS — Rationale for 2009 paper

The approach to the setting of the 2009 Higher is different from previous years. It is essentially an attempt to maintain standards, increase consistency and fairness in the exam and assist teachers and pupils in their preparation for the exam.

Aims

- ◆ To increase the consistency in the format of questions across options in Paper 1 and Paper 2
- ◆ To increase parity in the weighting of questions across the options in Paper 1 and Paper 2
- ◆ To enhance the logical sequencing of KU and AE questions to benefit the candidates
- ◆ To introduce greater consistency into essay questions to help teaching and learning of examination techniques
- ◆ To create similar demands on candidates across all topics in both papers
- ◆ To separate KU and AE to reduce potential confusion for candidates and teachers
- ◆ To cover all areas of the Higher course each year to reduce the risk of predictability in the exam
- ◆ To cover all areas of the Higher course each year to maintain the demands of the exam

Paper 1

- ◆ Both issues in each morality topic have questions and will have in the future
- ◆ Questions are ramped by topic, not by numerical value
- ◆ Questions for each topic follow a similar pattern of question in the morality section
- ◆ The marks weighting in each question across the topics is identical
- ◆ An attempt has been made to have the KU questions preceding AE questions that naturally lead the candidate into the AE question
- ◆ Each section finishes off with an AE essay of 8 – 10 marks
- ◆ KU questions in science lead into AE question on the same topic
- ◆ Science finishes off with a 10 mark AE essay

Paper 2

- ◆ All sections follow a similar pattern of questioning
- ◆ Questions are ramped by organising principle not by numerical value
- ◆ All organising principles are covered and will be in the future
- ◆ Questions 1a and 1b are worth 6KU in total with the distribution being determined by the nature of the content of the questions.
- ◆ Question 2 is a 7KU/8AE split to reflect the more significant demands of doing AE of the World Religions
- ◆ Sources have been adapted to have a similar though not exact length
- ◆ No question will be based on a specific phrase from a source.