

Our ref: TS/RMPS

27 November 2006

To: SQA Coordinator (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 to RMPS Staff

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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 2006

The Principal Assessor and Senior Moderator reports for Diet 2006 can now be found on the SQA web-site – www.sqa.org.uk. These include:

PA report Intermediate 1
PA report Intermediate 2
PA report Higher
PA report Advanced Higher
Senior Moderator report National Qualification Units

As this was the first year of the revised Courses, it would be advisable for teachers to digest the information contained in the PA Reports. Materials will shortly be posted on the Understanding Standards website which will allow teachers to more fully understand the standards of assessment as they are applied by the Exam Team.

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:

We have recently updated the *Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Evidence Requirements* document and this is now available on our website. A hard-copy is being issued to every centre. In particular, the document

clarifies subject specific requirement as well as guidance on the general principles for generating Estimates and submitting Appeals.

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
- Principal Assessor 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 (www.sqa.org.uk).

The most commonly found problems in evidence submitted for appeals this year were:

- ◆ Wrong or incomplete marking schemes.
- ◆ Evidence did not cover the complete Course.
- ◆ Prelim questions were drawn from too few sources
- ◆ The KU/AE balance clearly laid out in the Course Assessment Specifications and the Specimen Question Paper was not adhered to.

Centres should note that the above problems will disadvantage candidates and staff are encouraged to read the Principal Assessor Reports.

The document *Estimates and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Evidence* (BA0992, October 2006) referred to above clarifies what evidence is required when submitting an appeal for question paper based Courses and states:

An integrated prelim which covers a minimum of two Units of the Course plus supporting evidence, such as a high scoring NAB, for the third Unit would support an Appeal for a Grade C (and possibly a B), but not for a Grade A.

For an Appeal for a Grade A, the most convincing evidence would replicate the standard format, duration and security of SQA's question paper.

Marking Instructions

The finalised marking instructions for Course assessments at each level are posted on the RMPS web page.

Revised RMPS Courses

A number of centres decided to remain with the Old Courses for Diet 2006 but all centres are reminded that only the revised Courses are available from Session 2006/07. The results for the revised Courses in Diet 2006 were somewhat disappointing. The change in the structure of the question paper was intended to make the exam more accessible to all candidates but it did not appear to have this effect – despite the fact that evidence sent in from centres submitting appeals seemed to indicate that candidates were coping well with this revised

structure. There was in many cases quite a discrepancy between pupil performance in prelims and their performance in the final exam.

Please note that as from 2007 the duration of the Higher RMPS exam will be as follows:

- Paper 1 – 1 hour 45 minutes
- Paper 2 – 55 minutes

This is a slight difference from Diet 2006 and gives candidates 5 minutes more for Paper 2 but 5 minutes less for Paper 1.

Assessment Panel

The RMPS Assessment Panel continues to meet twice a year 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.

SQA has received a request from the Assessment Panel for an Understanding Standards seminar to be held to enable teachers to have a clearer understanding of what is required to achieve a pass in the Course Assessment. In response we intend to run a seminar in late February. Further information will be sent to SQA coordinators and posted on the SQA website early in the New Year.

Medical Ethics

I have received a number of queries asking for clarification of the following: in the Appendix of the Unit Specification for *Morality in the Modern World* (Higher and Intermediate 2) under the Genetic Engineering topic in the Medical Ethics section it states “Three types of human genetic engineering”. The three types are: therapeutic, experimental and reproductive. Not all texts on this topic make these distinctions.

Becoming a marker

Each year the number of entries for RMPS Courses is increasing. If you are interested in becoming a marker in RMPS, an application form can be downloaded from SQA’s website (www.sqa.org.uk). Alternatively, please contact us on 0131-561 6825 and we will send a form to you. To become a Marker, we normally ask that you have taught the Course for at least three years, preferably within the past three years. 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