



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	RMPS
Level(s)	Advanced Higher

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

Presentations remained stable, which suggests that, after several years where numbers increased, the subject has reached its capacity at this level. Medical Ethics continues to be the overwhelmingly popular option; the number of centres studying Religious Experience continues to decline. A significant minority of candidates were presented as 'crash course' candidates. Pass rates would indicate that this was not a disadvantage, and that a crash course in Advanced Higher RMPS is a realistic option for candidates whose language skills are strong.

Markers were impressed by the cohort this year and considered that almost all candidates had been presented at the appropriate level. Centres are to be congratulated on their sound judgement in this area.

Areas in which candidates performed well

On the whole, candidates performed well in all areas. Essay structure was consistently good, and the messages given out about maintaining relevance and reference to questions in answers has clearly been taken on board by centres.

Areas which candidates found demanding

No particular areas of note were identified.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Ensure that topics chosen from the dissertation titles list are relevant to the titles.
- ◆ With only two years left of the Advanced Higher in its current format the list of titles will not change.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	268
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	248
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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 100				
A	43.5%	43.5%	108	70
B	23.4%	66.9%	58	60
C	24.2%	91.1%	60	50
D	3.2%	94.4%	8	45
No award	5.6%	100.0%	14	-

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.