



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	RMPS
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

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 slight rise in the number of candidates presented for Intermediate 1, with markers stating that their overall impression was that the quality of response from candidates was much better than last year. Generally candidates appeared comfortable with the style and wording of questions in the paper, seeming well prepared and giving good responses to many questions. This impression was borne out by the results with 73.2% of candidates achieving a pass at A–C. The number of candidates receiving a ‘no award’ was lower than 2012, suggesting that candidates are being presented at the correct level. 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 Global Issues.

Central Marking once again proved to be a very positive experience for those involved. The continuous quality assurance ensures standardisation of the marking process and ensures all candidates are treated fairly. Also, the opportunity to work alongside colleagues in a very supportive atmosphere is valued by all who participate in this process. If you are not already involved in exam procedures, this is certainly one of the best, and most useful, professional development activities you can share in.

It is important to note that in 2007 some changes took place to the marking of AE questions. This has been well publicised to all centres by SQA in a number of ways, but judging by evidence submitted for Absentee Candidates and Appeals, many centres have not yet adopted this practice. This is a major concern as candidates are being disadvantaged through no fault of their own. Please encourage your colleagues to read this report and introduce this practice. In 2007 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 relevant KU point in an AE answer and it is then developed into a relevant AE point, this is credited with one additional mark for KU.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Markers stated that all candidates from specific centres performed well, using terminology accurately and providing good responses to questions from all three sections. There was consistent evidence of good learning and teaching. Usually, Section 3 Existence of God causes candidates some difficulty but markers commented that the standard this year appeared much higher than previously. Some candidates also made good use of quotes in answers. Very few candidates had difficulty understanding the rubric of the exam paper.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Although markers noted a general improvement in candidate responses, many candidates are still failing to give a specific viewpoint in AE answers, giving instead a generic religious or secular view and placing themselves at a disadvantage. This is particularly noticeable in Section 2 Morality in the Modern World.

Some candidates (often all candidates from a particular centre) did not seem aware of all of the mandatory content in the units they were attempting. This suggests that the mandatory content may not have been taught thoroughly. It is worth underlining again that it is important that all mandatory content is taught, as candidates can be examined on all aspects in the final exam, and will be disadvantaged if not properly prepared for the external assessment. The course content is clearly laid out in the National Unit Specifications in the Arrangements document, and centres must use the most recent version of this document to ensure that the mandatory content is delivered to all candidates. This is available on the SQA website.

Section 1

- ◆ **Buddhism** Q 2b) a significant number of candidates did not appear to recognise the term 'Right Livelihood'.

Section 2

- ◆ **Gender** Q1c) a number of candidates did not appear to understand the question.
- ◆ **Global Issues** Q2a) some candidates confused 'globalisation' with 'global warming'.
- ◆ **Medical Ethics** Q3e) many candidates did not appear to understand what was meant by 'alternatives to euthanasia' with many wrongly offering 'suicide' as an answer.
- ◆ **Existence of God** Qb) a few candidates confused Genesis 1 and Genesis 3.
- ◆ Qf) many candidates compared Paley's Watch with the human eye instead of comparing it to the universe. The complexity of the human eye was offered as further evidence by Paley.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

As stressed each year in previous reports, it is important that candidates are taught specific viewpoints and can write about the viewpoints they have studied, such as Humanism, Utilitarianism, Feminism etc. Candidates giving generic answers when a specific response is required will only penalise themselves. The marking instructions (and the section in the Arrangements document 'Guidance on the Content and Context for this Unit') published on the SQA website can help to direct centres to some recognised and acceptable viewpoints. While the Marking Instructions do not provide full or conclusive answers to all the exam questions, they can be a useful resource for teachers in preparing their own marking instructions and as a guide to the kind of responses expected from candidates in the exam. This is a free resource that centres should use to their benefit.

In an attempt to encourage the sharing of the standard for marking, those attending the Markers' Meeting were again encouraged to take the photostats away and to use them with the marking instructions (when published on the website) by delivering CPD on marking to other RMPS teachers in their local groups. Please make use of the expertise they have gained at Central Marking.

Centres should also remind candidates of the importance of noting the number of reasons asked for in a question and the number of marks allocated to each reason. Where there is no number of reasons specified, candidates can choose to present several brief reasons or to give fewer extended reasons. Questions beginning 'Give' or 'State' require a brief response — usually a short phrase or one word answer. Questions beginning 'Describe'

require more information, eg identifying an item and then adding a fuller description. Centres should also remind candidates of the time restraints on them in the exam, and teach them how to give sufficient time to providing detailed answers to those questions worth more marks.

Again, as pointed out in previous reports, centres will benefit from spending time helping candidates to develop analytical and evaluative skills. This can be achieved by helping candidates: compare/contrast arguments in an issue; recognise the difference between making a statement and presenting a viewpoint supported with valid reasons; judge the value of an argument and present a valid conclusion. The latter is a skill candidates need to develop if they are to progress on to study the Intermediate 2 course.

**Statistical information: update on Courses
Intermediate 1**

Number of resulted entries in 2012	559
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	581
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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	35.8%	35.8%	208	42
B	16.9%	52.7%	98	36
C	18.9%	71.6%	110	30
D	2.9%	74.5%	17	27
No award	25.5%	100.0%	148	-

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.