



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	RMPS
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

The number of candidates presented for Intermediate 2 remained steady, with 74.3% of candidates achieving an A–C pass. The majority of S4 and S5 candidates performed well, with S6 candidates generally achieving poorer grades. Interestingly, the vast majority of S3 candidates presented for the exam performed exceptionally well.

Once again Central Marking 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. Although we are nearing the end of these exams, if you are not already involved in exam procedures, this is certainly one of the best, and most useful, professional development activities in which you can participate.

Buddhism was by far the most popular option chosen in Section 1, followed by Christianity and Judaism. Again no candidates attempted Sikhism. Medical Ethics was the most popular option in Section 2, followed by Crime and Punishment, with Existence of God the more popular choice in Section 4.

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. Judging by evidence submitted for Absentee Candidates and Appeals, the majority of 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 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 generally felt that most candidates performed well and were presented at the appropriate level. There was evidence that some centres have made good use of past papers and Marking instructions published on the SQA website when preparing candidates for the exam. This is good practice and good use of a free resource.

Markers stated that in Section 1, responses to Judaism were usually well written, with many candidates achieving high marks. In Section 2 markers stated that some centres gave consistently good responses to Crime and Punishment and Medical Ethics — in particular questions 1f), 4c) and 4f). Some candidates made good use of quotes in answers and gave very detailed answers that showed evidence of very good learning and teaching. An increasing number of candidates appear to be better prepared for answering the AE questions.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Although markers had noted a general improvement in candidate responses to AE questions, many candidates are still failing to give a specific viewpoint in AE responses giving instead a generic religious or secular view and placing themselves at a disadvantage as these questions are usually worth 6 or 8 marks. This is particularly noticeable in Section 2 Morality in the Modern World.

Some candidates (usually 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 of the mandatory content 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.

Many of the issues raised below have resulted from candidates failing to read the question properly. While it is understandable that they are in a stressful situation during the exam, it is important that the importance of taking time to read the questions properly is made clear to them.

Section 1

- ◆ **Buddhism** Qa) a number of candidates only described the four sights rather than showing how they influenced Siddhartha.
- ◆ Qf) some candidates focused on Kamma itself rather than believing in Kamma.
- ◆ **Christianity** Qd) many candidates described the crucifixion rather than instead of explaining how the death of Jesus is understood by Christians.
- ◆ Qf) although the question was carefully worded some candidates misinterpreted 'service' as Sunday worship.
- ◆ **Hinduism** all responses to Hinduism were poor, suggesting that this had not been taught well. Even candidates who answered well in the other two sections appeared not to recognise basic concepts within Hinduism.
- ◆ **Judaism** Qf) candidates tended to discuss issues for the boy going through the ceremony rather than for the Jewish people.

Section 2

- ◆ **Crime and Punishment** Qd), **Gender** Qd) and **War and Peace** Qd) candidates tended to display a lack of knowledge of UN involvement in these issues.
- ◆ **Gender** Qe) many responses failed to identify issues in the Developing World.

Section 4

- ◆ **Christianity: Belief and Science** Qc) a significant number of candidates described the origin of human beings, when the question asked about the origin of the universe.
- ◆ Qd) some candidates referred to Genesis 3 rather than Genesis 1.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

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. It will also benefit candidates if they can accurately link individuals to their viewpoints eg Singer, Warnock, Hume 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.

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 external 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 and teaching them how to 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 Higher course.

SQA representatives again raised concerns this year over the number of 'No Awards' for candidates, as this suggests that these pupils are being presented at the wrong level and would have fared better if presented for Intermediate 1. A small number of centres estimated candidates to receive a 'No Award', showing they knowingly presented candidates at an inappropriate level. Although some centres may not like the idea of presenting senior pupils for Intermediate 1 courses, and although there may be pressure on teachers to present pupils at level 5 rather than level 4, it is surely better that they are given the opportunity to achieve at this level than knowingly allowed to fail at Intermediate 2.

**Statistical information: update on Courses
Intermediate 2**

Number of resulted entries in 2012	1242
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	1178
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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 90				
A	29.7%	29.7%	350	63
B	14.2%	43.9%	167	54
C	18.1%	62.0%	213	45
D	6.6%	68.6%	78	40
No award	31.4%	100.0%	370	-

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.