



External Assessment Report 2012

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

There was a slight rise in the number of candidates presented for Intermediate 2, with 63% of candidates achieving an A–C pass.

Buddhism was the most popular option chosen in Section 1 followed by Christianity with about half as many again attempting Judaism. No candidates attempted Sikhism. Medical Ethics was the most popular option in Section 2, followed by Crime and Punishment. Candidates were fairly evenly divided between Section 3 (Existence of God), and Section 4 (Christianity: Science and Belief).

In 2007 some changes took place to the marking of AE questions. Analysis and evaluation would be acknowledged as higher skills and every AE point would be awarded two marks. In addition to this, if a candidate made a KU point in an AE answer that is then developed into a relevant AE point, this would be credited with one additional mark for KU. This was well-publicised by SQA and all centres were informed but, judging by evidence submitted for absentee candidates and appeals, the majority of centres have not yet adopted this practice. This is a serious concern because candidates are being disadvantaged through no fault of their own. Please encourage your colleagues to read this report and introduce this practice.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Markers generally felt that most candidates were performing well and 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 said that responses to Judaism were usually well written, with many candidates achieving high marks. 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 candidates' 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 six or eight marks.

Some candidates (sometimes all candidates from a 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 Appendix of each National Unit Specification 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. The Arrangements document is available on the SQA website.

Section 1

Buddhism Q (d) a number of candidates only wrote about Theravada or Mahayana beliefs, failing to analyse them or distinguish between the different views as requested.

Christianity Q (d) few candidates understood the term 'spirituality', giving the impression that this had not been covered in class.

Islam Q (e) candidates tended to describe the Day of Judgement rather than Muslim belief about resurrection.

Section 2

Gender Q (e) the majority of candidates missed this question out or gave a wrong answer, suggesting that this part of the mandatory content had not been taught at all.

Medical Ethics Q (a) a significant number of candidates gave wrong information in their answers to this question. It is important that teachers ensure accurate information is delivered in lessons. The confusion regarding the meaning of Genetic Selection suggests some centres appear to be delivering courses based on outdated arrangements. 'Genetic Selection' applies to procedures carried out in the womb (pre-natal screening) or outside the womb (pre-implantation genetic diagnosis or pre-implantation tissue typing). It involves selecting the most appropriate embryo for the purpose required — not to changing the attributes of those embryos. It is not the creation of 'designer babies' to prevent or help cure a family illness. Therefore it does not refer to any form of genetic engineering such as germline therapy (altering the genes of an embryo by adding/removing genes). At the time of writing, this type of procedure is still illegal in the UK. Social sex selection and any other forms of feature selection are also illegal in the UK. Genetic selection must be prescribed for medical purposes and individual licences obtained from HFEA. Information about genetic selection in the UK can be obtained from www.hfea.gov.uk

War and Peace Q (c) a number of candidates gave pacifism as a secular viewpoint, but this was not accepted as a valid response to this question as many religious people are also pacifists. Pacifism can only be accepted as a secular viewpoint if it is presented as a clear expression of an identified non-religious viewpoint such as Humanism or Utilitarianism.

War and peace Q (d) this was poorly answered by many candidates who described the Geneva Convention of 1925 rather than the UN Charter as requested.

Section 3

Existence of God Q (e) a significant number of candidates gave general responses about the problem of evil and suffering, rather than specific responses about suffering in nature.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

As stressed 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 not be able to access maximum marks. The marking instructions (and the section in the Arrangements document 'Guidance on the Content and Context for this Unit'), which are published on the SQA website, can help to direct centres to some recognised and acceptable viewpoints.

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 no number of reasons is specified, candidates can choose to present several brief reasons or to give fewer extended reasons. Questions beginning 'Give', 'State' or 'Identify' 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 remind candidates of the time restraints in the external exam, and teach them how to give sufficient time to providing detailed answers to those questions worth more marks.

Again, as documented 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 judge the value of an argument and present a valid conclusion. The last of these is a skill candidates need to develop if they are to progress on to study the Higher course.

Concern was raised this year about the number of 'No Awards' for candidates, which suggests that these candidates 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', which shows they knowingly presented candidates who were not expected to pass the examination. It is recommended that candidates are given the opportunity to achieve a complete course at a lower level than knowingly allowed to fail at Intermediate 2.

Once again Central Marking proved to be a positive experience for those involved. The continuous quality assurance ensures standardisation of the marking process and ensures all candidates are treated fairly.

The opportunity to work alongside colleagues in a supportive atmosphere is valued by all who participate in this process. If you are not already involved in exam procedures and you have appropriate experience, you are advised to apply to become a marker as this is certainly one of the best, and most useful, professional development activities you can participate in.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2011	1178
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	1242
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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	26.8%	26.8%	333	63
B	14.7%	41.5%	183	54
C	21.5%	63.0%	267	45
D	6.1%	69.2%	76	40
No award	30.8%	100.0%	383	-

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.