



## Course Report 2015

Subject	RMPS
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates, which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors 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 assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

# Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

## Component 1: Question paper

The question paper largely performed as expected, and similarly to the 2014 paper. Feedback indicates that it was positively received by centres, and that it was felt to be fair and accessible for candidates. The majority of candidates understood what was required by the prompts, and were able to complete the three required sections in the allocated time.

Eight-mark questions differentiated well between candidates, but in questions worth three to five marks, there was less to distinguish answers, with most candidates scoring high marks. Questions asking for **two** points for four marks were felt to be too straightforward at this level, and limited scope for depth, so these are unlikely to feature in future exams.

The Grade Boundary for an A was raised by four marks to take account of the low demand in some questions, and in session 2015–16 the current model for the question paper will be reviewed with a view to increasing demand in 2017. The question paper in 2016 will follow the current model, and any issues with the level of demand will be addressed through setting of grade boundaries.

## Component 2: Assignment

The Assignment element performed well and enabled candidates to demonstrate knowledge and skills in relation to an issue of interest to them. Most identified appropriate issues, but some were disadvantaged by a poor choice of question. For example, there were a number of reports on sociological questions, or what appeared to be poorly-adapted Modern Studies reports that did not address religious, moral or philosophical questions. Where the question was truly related to RMPS, candidates performed well, with some achieving full marks.

It appeared that some candidates had worked entirely independently, while others had relied heavily on work already covered in class. While it is acceptable to research an area from within the Course, the purpose of the Assignment is to allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to propose and research an issue of their choice, with limited input from the teacher. Teachers are expected to advise learners on the suitability of their title, and on useful resources, as well as reminding them of the required elements and monitoring progress.

Commenting on contemporary relevance and impact proved straightforward for those tackling contemporary moral issues, but less so for those wishing to pursue a religious or philosophical question. This requirement will therefore be revised to ensure that those opting to study a religious or philosophical issue are not disadvantaged.

Use of a range of sources, analysis and concluding were the most demanding aspects of the Assignment, and these served to differentiate well between reports of different standards.

Analysis of results in 2014, and feedback from markers, showed that the approach to marking the Assignment element did not appropriately differentiate between reports of different standards, and inflated marks for poor reports. For this reason, the approach to

marking was revised, and introduced at the Understanding Standards events before being applied successfully in the 2015 diet. A more holistic approach to assessing, against statements about quality, enabled markers to distinguish effectively between reports of different standards this year. As a result, poor reports were no longer able to achieve high marks. Centres should bear this in mind when they come to analyse this year's component marks, particularly if comparing with those for 2014.

## **Section 2: Comments on candidate performance**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

Centres are to be commended again this year for preparing learners very well for the demands of the exam.

Most performed especially well in questions worth 3–5 marks, and were able to offer developed points, which showed deep understanding of the beliefs, practices and issues studied. Eight-mark questions were more demanding, and responses varied in quality. Those achieving high marks tended to produce structured answers which included different perspectives, drawing on viewpoints studied as well as offering well-justified personal views.

Some candidates lost marks where they did not appear to know aspects of the mandatory content, notably in the questions on mission and the sunnah. Candidates who did know this content performed well, however, with some achieving full marks for both parts of the question.

A few candidates should have been entered at National 4, but the majority were entered at the appropriate level.

### **Component 2: Assignment**

Although there were a number of excellent reports, some of which achieved full marks, the overall standard was lower than in 2014. Markers reported an increase in the number of reports that were limited in depth and detail, especially in analysis and evaluation of the issue and viewpoints.

Candidates are expected to propose an issue for study, and the appropriateness of the title has a considerable impact on attainment in this element. Some chose interesting questions, but struggled to access relevant resources, or to clearly identify religious, moral or philosophical aspects.

Most candidates this year opted to research a moral question, with particular interest in questions arising from assisted dying, equal marriage and capital punishment. Few tackled a religious question, though there were some very good reports addressing questions arising from suffering and evil and theories of origins. Most candidates included good detail on contemporary relevance or impact, and this was done especially well by those looking at contemporary moral questions.

The approach to the Resource Sheet remains inconsistent, with some making very good use of this resource, for example by including notes on key points to include, and sources consulted. Those who had planned their use of the resource sheet carefully produced reports of better quality. They were well structured, and more likely to have covered all of the required elements.

## **Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

A high proportion of candidates achieved very good marks in the question paper. Most candidates were confident with the mandatory content, including specialist vocabulary, and were able to show depth in their answers to questions sampling Knowledge and Understanding.

There was good application of sources in the World Religion section, and many supported points in the Morality and Belief section with reference to useful case studies. As in 2014, most candidates achieved their best marks in the Morality and Belief section, and answers to the 4-mark evaluation question were especially good, with many writing more than was required for the marks. Candidates made good use of the arguments they had studied, but were also able to justify their own views clearly.

Answers explaining the main features of Utilitarianism were strong, with some giving detail that would not have been out of place at Higher level. Many candidates were also able to apply Utilitarianism effectively to the given moral question, with some able to draw helpful distinctions between the approaches of Rule Utilitarians and Act Utilitarians.

### **Component 2: Assignment**

There were a number of common characteristics in successful Assignment reports. Candidates who stayed focused on the question they had set, and who structured the report (eg under headings) tended to score well. Although marks for contemporary relevance and impact can be picked up throughout the report, including a dedicated section on this aspect of the research enabled candidates to include good development and detail.

Those who presented a range of views from individuals or groups, and then analysed and commented on these, produced better reports than those who only listed general advantages and disadvantages or pros and cons. They also tended to include clearer evidence of use of a range of relevant and appropriate sources of information. It was good to see some candidates offering conclusions on viewpoints as they presented them, as well as offering a final conclusion that drew them together at the end of the piece.

The marking instructions indicate that a good report will be appropriately balanced. This means that candidates who showed an awareness of different views in the report, and produced a discursive rather than persuasive piece, usually gained more marks.

## Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

### Component 1: Question paper

**Questions 4 (a) & (b) and 8 (a) & (b):** A number of candidates did not attempt these questions. Three centres raised concerns about the level of demand in the two-part religion questions, and the use of the terms 'mission' and 'sunnah', which they felt might disadvantage candidates.

The two-part question was intended to be demanding, but was split into knowledge and skills to assist candidates. Given that, at Higher level, candidates need to write one 20-mark answer, the two-part question is an appropriate level of demand at National 5, and a number of candidates presented excellent responses and achieved full marks for both parts. This style of question is especially useful for differentiating for grading purposes, and is therefore likely to appear in future examinations. The terms 'mission' and 'sunnah' are taken directly from the mandatory content, so the questions are valid. Centres should ensure that these terms are covered in delivery and advise candidates that they may be asked to demonstrate knowledge and understanding and/or skills in relation to any of the mandatory content.

**Question 13 (a) & (c):** Although the question was about punishment and sentencing in general, many candidates answered only with reference to capital punishment. Although these responses were acceptable for the marks, candidates will be expected to demonstrate understanding of issues relating to other aspects of punishment and sentencing.

**Question 19 (a):** Many candidates were not aware of the distinction between assisted suicide and euthanasia. While some of the moral issues raised are the same, some candidates lost marks where they offered points that only apply to euthanasia, for example that it could be perceived as murder.

**Question 23 (a):** The mandatory content for the Origins of Life section requires a study of the distinction between literal and metaphorical readings of creation stories. This implied that candidates would study more than one, though 'stories' can reasonably be read as generic rather than plural, so markers were instructed to make all marks available for answers which described one story. This ensured that candidates were not disadvantaged. Most candidates described the two Genesis accounts, and developed answers that enabled them to access all of the marks.

**Question 23 (b):** Some candidates struggled to explain a non-religious perspective on creation stories, and this may have been due to the use of the word 'understand' in the prompt. Non-religious perspectives on all areas of content should be studied, and there were some very good answers to this question.

**Section 3, Part B:** Some candidates confused the teleological and cosmological arguments, and lost marks as a result. Because these are the terms given in the mandatory content, they are likely to be used in exam questions, so candidates should be careful to ensure that they are clear about the distinction.

**Question 25 (a):** Candidates were asked for evidence used to support the teleological argument, but a significant number lost marks in this question because they described the argument, or retold Paley's watch parable. Responses highlight the need to remind candidates to read questions carefully in order to avoid losing marks.

**Question 29 (b):** As with 23 (b), some candidates had difficulty explaining a non-religious perspective on miracle stories. Again, this may have been due to the use of the word 'understand' in the prompt, but non-religious perspectives on all areas of mandatory content should be covered.

## **Component 2: Assignment**

While most centres were using the up-to-date Course Assessment Task, a few centres based their guidance on the original marking instructions, and this limited some candidates as well as leading to some reports that were rather formulaic and lacked coherence. The revised instructions for assessing the Assignment report are designed to be holistic in nature. Candidates should aim for good quality in each element of the Assignment, and a coherent whole.

Some seemed to be unclear about what was required by the task, and lost marks because they had missed out required elements, eg contemporary relevance/impact, or a religious viewpoint. Some attempts to include a religious perspective were very brief, and seemed tacked on to a report which would otherwise have read like a piece completed for Modern Studies or English. While it may be possible for a report for one subject to form the basis for another, it is important that candidates are clear about the particular requirements for different subject areas.

A number of candidates gained most of their marks for Contemporary Relevance and Concluding, but struggled to include analysis of the issue or viewpoints. Some reports were rather descriptive, with lengthy sections giving background information, for example on different ways in which capital punishment or abortion might be carried out, but little detail on related moral questions. Similarly, some reports on theories of origins described the scientific theories at length, but failed to get into the philosophical questions raised by them.

## **Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

Discussion following the second year of N5 and the first of the new Higher has identified some issues in relation to course content and coverage, and minor changes to the mandatory documents will be made early in the session. Centres should therefore take care to ensure that they are working with up-to-date versions of key documents. Particular attention should be given to the Course Assessment Specification. The National 5 RMPS web-page also gives access to update letters advising centres of any changes.

Course Support Notes, textbooks and local authority courses should not be seen as giving authoritative statements about content. They can be seen as useful guides to possible

approaches to teaching and learning. External Assessment is developed only with reference to the mandatory documents, and it is these that should guide planning in schools.

At Grade Boundary it was agreed that the level of demand of the question paper needs to be slightly increased to improve differentiation for grading purposes. As a result there will be a review of the approach to the question paper during the coming session with a view to implementing some changes for the 2017 diet. The exam in 2016 will follow the existing model, so in the coming session centres should continue to make use of the Specimen and Past Papers as they prepare candidates for the question paper.

Although the question paper will not include questions specifically about sources, the role of sources remains an important aspect of the World Religions Unit. Centres should continue to encourage candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of ways in which key religious sources guide belief and practice, and the relationship between these. Good use of sources to illustrate or illuminate points has been a positive feature in both 2014 and 2015, and is an effective way for candidates to build up marks.

In the Morality and Belief section many candidates have made very good use of case studies. This is another useful route to the marks, provided candidates take care to apply their knowledge clearly to the prompt.

In two-part questions a number of candidates went beyond the terms of the first part, for example offering evaluation where the prompt was only intended to elicit KU. To avoid unnecessary repetition, learners should be encouraged to read both parts of the question before answering.

While a Prelim exam is not a requirement, it does provide candidates with worthwhile practice in tackling the demands of the question paper. In the event of needing to make an Exceptional Circumstances request, prelim exams that mirror the scope and demand of the real exam also provide particularly useful supporting evidence. Bear in mind that Unit assessments are designed to enable candidates to demonstrate minimum competence, without the added value that comes with the exam, and while some candidates do exceed these requirements, a grade can only be awarded where there is evidence of attainment of the standard. The 2014 Course Report includes some additional guidance on development of appropriately demanding exam questions.

Following the Understanding Events which took place in February 2015, examples of candidate evidence and commentaries are now available on the Understanding Standards website. These will assist teachers in applying national standards consistently within centres, and can be usefully used with learners as they prepare to tackle the final exam.

## **Component 2: Assignment**

Centres should ensure that they are using the current version of the Course Assessment Task and Marking Instructions, which are designed to encourage a more holistic approach. Examples of candidate evidence and commentaries exemplifying the revised approach are available on the Understanding Standards website.

There were some inappropriate titles again in 2015, and these limited the candidates' ability to access marks. Centres should ensure that candidates are pursuing an issue that is truly Religious, Moral or Philosophical (or a combination of these). Candidates should avoid questions which invite a descriptive report — for example asking why people commit crimes tends to lead to a sociological study with little scope for comment on morality. Framing the title as a question is advised, and the issue should ideally invite a range of viewpoints. This will also help candidates to present a clear conclusion. Candidates should be reminded to stay focused on the question they have decided to pursue, and to ensure that their conclusion relates to it directly.

The Resource Sheet is intended to assist candidates, and will not be marked. Candidates should be made aware that credit for use of sources can only be given if there is evidence of their use in the body of the Assignment report. Candidates are expected to use a range of resources in their research, and use of only two sources would not normally be seen as adequate for full marks. Markers are directed to consider the appropriateness of the resources consulted and their application to the question set by the candidate. Candidates are advised to indicate where they got their information from as they present it. For example, if presenting a Buddhist view or Biblical view, they might reference a textbook or website. Some candidates found it helpful to tell the story of their research, including their use of sources, and how they helped them to reach their conclusion.

Current arrangements for completion of the Assignment report state that it should be completed under controlled conditions. Candidates should only refer to the Resource Sheet during the write-up, and this should be completed in one hour, and in one sitting. Candidates should not have access to drafts or any other sources of information.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	1231
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	2117
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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 - 80				
A	35.0%	35.0%	742	60
B	21.1%	56.2%	447	51
C	20.3%	76.5%	430	42
D	7.7%	84.2%	163	37
No award	15.8%	-	335	-

In 2014 grade boundaries were increased as the assessment was less demanding than intended. For 2015 the intention was to align assessments with notional values of 50% for a grade C and 70% for a grade A.

This has been achieved in the Assignment but the Question Paper is not sufficiently demanding, due to the constraints within the allocation of marks to Analysis and Evaluation. The paper has not allowed for significant discrimination, more noticeably for A candidates. As a result, the C boundary has been increased by 2 marks and the A and Upper A boundaries have been increased by 4 marks.