



## External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	RMPS
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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 significant fall in the number of candidates presented for Intermediate 1, with only **7980** candidates presented for the external exam. Markers stated that the quality of responses from candidates was significantly poorer than we have previously encountered. While candidates appeared to understand the wording of the questions, the vast majority did not appear comfortable with the content of the paper and did not seem prepared for the external exam. Only 55% of candidates achieved a pass at A–C; 42.6% of candidates received a 'no award'.

Candidates were so unfamiliar with the content of the course it raises questions about the quality of their responses to NABs and to Prelim' exams attempted in school.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates who attempted Christianity appeared to have a better understanding than those candidates attempting other religions.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

The majority of candidates attempted Buddhism in Section 1 – World Religions, but lacked basic knowledge and either did not attempt many questions or gave incorrect answers. 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.

As in previous years, markers noted 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.

## Section 1

### Buddhism

Q1(b) a significant number of candidates did not recognise the term 'skillful action'.

Q1(c) the majority of candidates did not know the Third Noble Truth.

Q2(b) few candidates were able to explain why Buddhists worship.

Q2(c) the majority of candidates did not know the Fourth Noble Truth.

Q2(d) few candidates knew the Five Precepts.

## **Christianity**

Q2(c) a number of candidates gave examples of worship services rather than acts of service.

## **Section 2**

### **Gender**

Q (d) and (e) a few candidates did not understand the term 'Developing World'.

### **Medical Ethics**

Q (e) many candidate responses provided out of date information. It is important in this unit especially that practitioners keep up to date with changes in the law and in medical research.

## **Section 3**

Q (e) and (f) some candidates confused the First Cause with the Design Argument.

# **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

2015 will be the last RMPS Intermediate 1 exam, but the following advice is useful also for preparing candidates for other RMPS assessments.

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 share their expertise with 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 not a specific number of reasons specified in a question, 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' or 'Explain' require more information, eg identifying an item and then adding a fuller description. Centres should also remind candidates of the time constraints upon them in the external exam and teach them how to give sufficient time to providing detailed answers to those questions worth more marks.

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 other RMPS courses.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	581
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	79
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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	12.7%	12.7%	10	42
B	10.1%	22.8%	8	36
C	31.6%	54.4%	25	30
D	2.5%	57.0%	2	27
No award	43.0%	-	34	-

## 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.