



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	RMPS
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

The number of candidates presented for Intermediate 2, ~~858860~~, was nearly 300 lower than in 2013. Although many markers commented that the quality of candidate responses appeared to be much poorer than previous years, the overall standard remained fairly steady with 69.8% of candidates achieving an A–C pass. This is only marginally lower than previous years.

Buddhism was the most popular option chosen in Section 1, followed by Christianity and Judaism. Again no candidates attempted Sikhism. Medical Ethics and Crime and Punishment were the most popular options in Section 2.

Centres intending to present candidates for Intermediate 2 in 2015 should note the following important information: following a minor Course review implemented in 2007 some changes took place to the marking of AE questions. 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 which is then developed into a relevant AE point this is credited with one additional mark for KU. This has been well-publicised by SQA in a number of ways and all Centres were informed. However, judging by evidence submitted for Absentee Candidates and Appeals, the vast majority of centres have not 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.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates performed well and were presented at the appropriate level. There was evidence that some centres have made good use of the 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 responses to Judaism were usually well written with many candidates achieving high marks. Some candidates gave very detailed answers that showed evidence of very good learning and teaching. A 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 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 any 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 arisen because candidates failed to read the question properly. While it is understandable that they are in a stressful situation during the exam, it is vital that the importance of taking time to read the questions properly is made clear to them.

Section 1

Buddhism

Q(a), (b) & (c) a significant number of pupils did not appear to recognise the term 'tanha'. This was very disappointing as tanha is not only part of the mandatory content but candidates who could not recognise this basic term lost 12 marks.

Q(f) many candidates failed to identify the dilemma for the Buddhist believer between an emphasis on action or belief.

Christianity

Q(e) a significant majority of candidates described liturgical activity rather than individual Christian action.

Islam

Q(e) some candidates did not seem to recognise the term 'Khalifa'.

Section 2

Crime and Punishment

Q(a) a high number of candidates answered incorrectly because they did not limit their responses to the UK, but offered 'electric chair' and 'lethal injection' as methods of execution.

Gender

Q(e) the majority of pupils did not seem to have any knowledge of the UN's involvement in gender issues.

Q(f) the majority of candidates failed to describe a specific secular viewpoint or make any connection between the viewpoint described and the statement in the question.

Medical Ethics

Q(a) a number of pupils could not provide an accurate description of palliative care. Many were still able to provide reasonable responses to Q (b) & (c) so were not severely disadvantaged.

Section Four

Markers reported that a significant number of candidates displayed a very poor understanding of the basic information in this section suggesting that this section had not been taught thoroughly or accurately. For example, some candidates confused scientific method with the Big Bang and could not describe evolution or the story in Genesis 2.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

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 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 no number of reasons is 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' 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.

As in previous years, SQA representatives again raised concerns over the number of 'No Awards' for candidates (14.5% of candidates), as this suggests that these pupils are being presented at the wrong level and would have fared better if presented for Intermediate 1. There were a higher number of centres this year from whom all candidates presented failed. A small number of centres also 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, it is surely better that they are given the opportunity to achieve at a lower level than knowingly allowed to fail at Intermediate 2.~~

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	1178
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	858
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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	27.2%	27.2%	233	63
B	14.7%	41.8%	126	54
C	16.9%	58.7%	145	45
D	5.4%	64.1%	46	40
No award	35.9%	-	308	-

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.