

Moderation Feedback - Central

Assessment Panel:

RMPS

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
included in this report**

Religious Studies – Standard Grade Investigation

Central Moderation

General comments on central moderation activity

As last year, I would wish to express my gratitude to the staff of SQA for their preparedness and support throughout the moderation activity. Issues which arose were quickly and positively resolved. I particularly appreciated the offer of arranging a visit to ‘not accepted’ centres to explain the reasons for their rejection and with a view to offering support and guidance for the future.

An appropriate percentage of presenting centres was sampled.

A good range of issues for investigation was evident, insightful work had been undertaken by many candidates and this had been acknowledged in the grading by their presenting centres. Many centres had made full use of the comments boxes on the flyleaf and included appropriate evidence to support the grades allocated for planning and conduct of the investigation.

Some centres, however, were deemed to be over-generous in their interpretation of the GRC and some failed to provide supportive comments to the allocation of ‘high’ grades for planning and conducting when no evidence to support these grades was submitted.

There are still some centres who permit candidates to investigate a topic (which produces a descriptive report) rather than investigate an issue (where differing, often conflicting, viewpoints are presented, analysed, assessed and a personal conclusion is reached and justified).

Specific issues identified

It was noted, with considerable regret, that some centres failed to make significant, and, in some cases, any, use of the comments section on the flyleaf. This, compounded with lack of evidence of the planning and conduct phases of the investigation, made it difficult to assess the accuracy and validity of the grades awarded for planning and conduct. This was especially true when the final report failed to reflect the grades allocated for planning and process.

This year approximately 110 investigations were moderated. It was gratifying to note that these covered a range of approximately 38 different topics many of which clearly reflected the personal interests of the candidate. Where this was the case it was clear, across the grade levels, that candidates had gained from the exercise. It was noted, however, that over 20 investigations were related to abortion and the majority of these showed little or no content beyond that which would normally be taught as part of the Course with few signs of more in-depth investigation.. There was also a tendency to describe, in detail, methods of abortion with no exploration of the significance in relation to the issues of abortion. It is generally the case that candidates investigations, after moderation, score better when they have not chosen abortion for their issue.

There were several examples of candidates stating (in records of process) that they had been **given** material by teachers (most frequently on abortion), yet the grade allocated suggested independent identification of resources.

At times high grades (e.g. 3 or 2) were given for planning and conducting when it was clear that candidates had been given a plan of action and that sources were limited to two or three standard class texts. These gradings ran counter to the notion of independence and of the use of “a wide

range of resources and lines of enquiry”.

The use of the internet as a source is to be commended. It was, however, noted that the citing of internet sources was, at times, weak e.g. citing a search engine such as www.yahoo.com for information on abortion with no reference to the actual sites used. There were also examples which clearly showed that the information gained from the internet reflected a distinctive American slant in terms of statistics and nature of discussion when more appropriate British equivalents are available. There was also a lack of critical evaluation of websites.

While many candidates were clearly reporting in their own words there was still a significant minority who quoted verbatim passages from standard texts without acknowledgement and without appropriate grading for sub-elements 2 and 3.

In some centres there is still a tendency to allocate high grades to reports which are descriptive without analysis and a corresponding tendency to allocate high grades for quantity of information without regard to quantity or quality of analysis. There is, too, still a tendency to allow topic studies rather than investigation of an issue, yet Credit grades are awarded. When the Investigation is of a topic and no issue identified the grade awarded should be a 7 since the GRC have not been met.

It was also noted that, on more than one occasion, the evidence of planning and process related to an issue which was not the issue addressed in the final report yet the grades allocated for planning and process did not reflect this.

Moderators expressed concern that, on a few, but clear, occasions when the justified point of view developed by the candidate in the course of the investigation ran counter to what appeared to be the point of view of the assessor and/or what might be the prevailing view within the community the centre serves, the candidate was penalised. On these occasions the comments submitted on the flyleaf reflected criticism of the candidate's sources and/or interpretation and lower grades were awarded. Candidates, in the same centre exploring similar topics, who had drawn on fewer sources and who applied less analysis to these sources but had reached what might be described as 'more conservative' conclusions received positive comments and higher grades. This is poor practice and efforts should be made to ensure that this does not occur.

Feedback to centres

The Moderators:

Commend centres on the continued variety of issues selected for investigation and would continue to discourage investigations on issues which would be covered in detail in normal course work.

Would, again, discourage centres from allowing candidates to take a descriptive/topic approach and, when candidates cannot be discouraged from this approach, would encourage centres to reflect this weakness in the gradings including the award of Grade 7.

Would encourage all centres to make full use of the opportunity to justify grades in the comment boxes on the flyleaf. This is particularly important when the evidence for sub-elements 1 and 2 is weak.

Would remind centres of the contents of paragraph 3.8 of the Arrangement Document in relation to a record of process.

Would, in relation to awarding grades for sub-elements 1 and 2, remind centres to give full consideration to the extent of teacher help and guidance as opposed to independence, to the range of resources consulted and to the ability to state and analyse differing viewpoints on issues.

Would, again, encourage full citation of Internet sources and would commend analysis of the nature of Internet sites consulted.

Would remind assessors that the candidate's personal opinion is only assessed in relation to the extent to which it supported (grades 6 and 5) or argued (grades 4 to 1).