



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject	RMPS
Level	Higher

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.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Candidates answer questions from one part in each of three sections of the paper: World Religions, Morality in the Modern World, and Christianity: Belief and Science. There are 40 marks available for each section with three questions in each topic composed of parts worth between 3 and 10 marks. The total number of marks available is 120. There are two papers: one for World Religions, and the other for Morality and Belief and Science.

Most candidates appear to have understood the demand of questions in terms of the length of their answers. Candidates had no difficulty in identifying Knowledge and Understanding (KU) skills, but there was considerable evidence that they did not have a clear understanding of Analysis and Evaluation (AE). At central marking RMPS skills were identified as:

- ◆ Knowledge and Understanding — factual information
- ◆ Analysis — doing something with information
- ◆ Evaluation — making a judgement or measurement of information

Candidates performed well in KU and analysis, but struggled with the evaluation, often giving extra information rather than making some kind of measurement or judgement. The result of this was that marks were not accessed in the high-value AE questions.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates performed well where they:

- ◆ carefully read the whole question and did not simply latch on to familiar terms
- ◆ used words or phrases from the question
- ◆ regularly referred back to the question
- ◆ used words or phrases appropriate to the skill being examined
- ◆ made some use of sources
- ◆ provided additional detail to explanations
- ◆ drew conclusions in analysis or evaluation questions

Areas which candidates found demanding

World Religions

Some concerns were expressed about questions 3a and 3b in Buddhism. There were no issues raised during marking procedures. Candidates coped well with the questions.

Other than the evaluation across all topics, there were no particular areas of weakness.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Knowledge and understanding is not a problem, nor is analysis — there is a problem in evaluation. Every RME teacher and their learners enjoy the challenges of class, group and paired debate. RME teachers see candidates using high-order evaluative skills in these discussions and yet, when it comes to the question paper, they tend to simply list arguments for and against or simply show how people agree with each other or disagree as the case may be.

What we are looking for is a demonstration of an ability to judge or measure an issue or position, not a rote-learned list of who says what about something or other. It might be useful to list the key words and phrases that usually mean that a certain skill is in the process of being demonstrated. The lists can be found in the new Higher RMPS Course report, but are neither exhaustive nor authoritative. They have been devised from reviewing a number of assignments and question paper answers to see how candidates introduce these skills rather than guessing from a teacher's perspective about how we would imagine they should introduce these skills.

This was the final year for this Course. It is therefore imperative that if centres wish to present candidates for the new Higher RMPS course in future years, that they familiarise themselves with all appropriate SQA guidance documentation to enable them to support their candidates effectively. There will also be further guidance provided in the 2015 Course Report for the new Higher RMPS course.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	4318
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	1965
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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 - 120				
A	32.9%	32.9%	647	84
B	25.3%	58.2%	497	72
C	20.7%	78.9%	407	60
D	7.1%	86.0%	139	54
No award	14.0%	-	275	

The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required. The 2014 adjustment was no longer required.

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.