



## External Assessment Report 2015

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

In this final year of presentation for Intermediate 2 there were only 135 candidates. The pass rate remained more or less in line with previous years with 65.2% of candidates achieving an A–C pass.

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

The inclusion of the word 'two' in Gender Q (e) was potentially misleading for candidates as this was a 6-mark question ideally requiring three reasons. This was taken into account during Central Marking and every response for Gender was examined closely to ensure that no candidate was disadvantaged in anyway.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Markers generally felt that some candidates performed very 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. This is good practice and good use of a 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 appeared to be better prepared for answering the Analysis and Evaluation (AE) questions with some comparing/contrasting different religious views in Q (f) in Section 2.

## 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. A number of candidates also confused religious and secular viewpoints and did not appear to understand the difference between the two, giving the impression that this had not been adequately covered.

Some candidates (usually all candidates from a particular centre) 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 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.

Many of the issues raised below have resulted from candidates failing to read the question properly. While it is understandable that they are in a stressful situation during the exam, it is important that the importance of taking time to read the questions properly is made clear to them.

## **Section 1**

### **Buddhism**

Q (d) candidates generally told the Buddha's story rather than explain his role within Buddhism.

Q (e) many candidates failed to give any answer to this question and most did not seem to know anything about Buddhist worship.

### **Christianity**

Q (e) candidates appeared confused between Christian serving their local community and community service as a punishment.

## **Section 4**

Markers reported that a significant number of candidates (often all candidates from the same centre) displayed a very poor understanding of the basic information in this section suggesting that this section had not been adequately covered. For example, some candidates appeared to have little basic knowledge of the Big Bang and could not describe evidence for evolution.

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

Although this is the last year of the Intermediate 2 paper the advice below is useful for attempting studies in any RMPS subject.

As stressed in each report in recent years, 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 not access full marks. 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.

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

no number of reasons specified, candidates can choose to present several brief reasons or to give fewer extended reasons. 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 restraints on them in the external exam and teach them how to give sufficient time to providing detailed answers to those questions that are worth more marks.

Again, as in previous reports, 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 2014	858
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	134
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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	34.3%	34.3%	46	63
B	13.4%	47.8%	18	54
C	17.9%	65.7%	24	45
D	9.0%	74.6%	12	40
No award	25.4%	-	34	-

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