



Course Report 2014

Subject	RMPS
Level	National 5

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 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.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question paper

This was a very encouraging first N5 RMPS exam. Centres are to be commended on preparing their candidates very well and enabling them to produce some excellent responses. Initial feedback indicates that the question paper was positively received by centres, and markers reported that the majority of candidates found it accessible and had few difficulties understanding what they were being asked to do. Virtually all were able to navigate through the options and had enough time to complete all of their answers to a good standard. Few left questions out.

The 8-mark skills questions were especially good for differentiating the most able candidates. Candidate responses showed that the assessment was reliable, whichever options the candidates has chosen.

Very few candidates were identified as having been entered at an inappropriate level, suggesting that centres are also making good judgements about what is expected at National 5.

Component 2: Assignment

For most candidates the Assignment task performed well. Many produced well-researched, balanced and thoughtful studies of issues that were of interest to them, and were able to identify their contemporary relevance clearly. As with the Standard Grade investigation, the majority of candidates chose to tackle a moral question, though a few produced interesting reports on religious or philosophical issues. Medical ethics and same-sex marriage were popular areas of study, and proved to be good vehicles for exploring a debate which is current. Most relied on online resources and school based textbooks, and many took care to cross-check their findings.

There was evidence of some very good independent work, though a number of centres had steered all candidates to particular questions, or encouraged learners to draw on material which had already been taught as part of a unit, and this limited the candidates' scope for demonstrating their ability to propose an issue and research independently. A centre's submission ought to include a range of titles, and it is expected that there will be evidence of personalisation and choice in both identification of the issue for study, and the approach to the task itself.

There was some inconsistency in the approach to the use of the Resource Sheet, and a number of Assignments had inappropriate titles, so centres are advised to revisit the published guidance, revised for 2014/15, and to give particular attention to the clarification given in Section 5 of this report, as they prepare future candidates for the Assignment task.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question paper

A high proportion of candidates achieved very good marks, and this indicated that we had a strong cohort who had been prepared very well by their centres. Attainment was even across the three units and a few candidates achieved full marks.

In the majority of cases candidates understood clearly what the questions were asking them to do, and were able to apply what they had learned skillfully. There were some outstanding responses that would not have looked out of place at Higher level, and it was good to see how well candidates had been prepared to show deep understanding of key aspects of content, as well as breadth.

The 8 mark skills questions were the most demanding and responses varied in quality with some candidates giving a few brief points and others offering detailed, balanced explanations which showed a good appreciation of different viewpoints. Good candidates were able to draw on arguments studied as well as offering and fully justifying a personal perspective.

Component 2: Assignment

There were many excellent reports that demonstrated good use of a range of sources and the candidates' ability to analyse and reflect on these as they came to a personal conclusion.

It was good to see candidates analysing and concluding on the viewpoints they presented in the course of the report, as well as at the end, as this allowed them to show how far the viewpoints they had researched were influencing their conclusion.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

Candidate performance in the questions worth between 3 and 5 marks was strong across sections and options.

In the 8-mark skills questions there was evidence that many candidates didn't just give a list of points they had learned, but that they were able to reflect and respond to the questions in a spontaneous and personal way, drawing on sound KU built up in the course of their studies. Confidence with the unit content has been the key to producing good analytical and evaluative answers.

A number of markers acknowledged the good level of knowledge and skills demonstrated in the World Religions section. Most candidates showed good understanding of the mandatory content and were able to explain how beliefs and practices were related to each other.

It was particularly pleasing to see application of knowledge about sources, for example in Hinduism Question 2 some used the story of Krishna and Arjuna to illustrate the importance of dharma, and the Qur'anic account of creation was used to explain Islamic belief about the nature of human beings in Islam Question 3(a). Some markers felt that using sources in this way helped very good candidates to distinguish themselves.

Morality and Belief questions were answered well across options. *Religion, Medicine and the Human Body* was the most popular option in this section, followed by *Religion and Justice*. Some candidates made particularly good use of examples and case studies in their answers, especially on those asking about impact. There were some especially good answers showing detailed understanding of embryo research, its potential impact and religious perspectives. Candidates also clearly enjoyed writing about sex before marriage, and the majority did it well.

Our original wording for Question 1(c) across the Morality and Belief section was changed from 'Explain the possible consequences ...' to 'Explain the possible impact ...' in the hope that candidates would feel free to include both positive and negative examples in their responses. The majority did exactly this, and it was good to see many very balanced answers which showed they were used to considering different aspects of an issue.

There was some very good use of specialist language in the Religious and Philosophical Questions section, especially where candidates were explaining ideas about the nature of God.

Component 2: Assignment

A number of markers commented that they had enjoyed reading the Assignment reports, and that many candidates had engaged very positively with their chosen issues and produced thought-provoking and sometimes moving reports, especially when they were dealing with life-and-death issues.

Most reports included a good explanation of the importance of the chosen issue in the contemporary world, were well structured, and included an explanation and analysis of a range of viewpoints.

Where candidates had identified a complex and controversial issue, analysis and evaluation came more easily. Some candidates had chosen issues about which they already felt strongly, and these tended to result in a good level of analysis, and some very thoughtful personal reflection. It's worth remembering that, although the Assignment is tackled for assessment purposes, it is also a really valuable process for learners as they engage with problems they find relevant.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question Paper

Christianity Question 2(b): Some candidates gave rather weak answers on the importance of the Kingdom of God.

Recommendation: Candidates should be prepared to write in depth about the concepts detailed in the mandatory content. This may mean showing straightforward knowledge, but might also include an explanation of impact or significance for followers or the wider world.

Christianity Question 2(b): Some candidates missed the word 'show', and as a result wrote generally about whether worshipping in church is better than worshipping at home.

Recommendation: Candidates need to take care to read questions carefully to ensure that they can access all the marks.

Hinduism Question 2(b): Candidates tended to focus more on the usefulness of Bhakti, and many offered a helpful comparison with the relative demands of the other paths. Analysis of marks achieved suggests that this was effective in ensuring fairness for candidates tackling the Hinduism section.

Islam Question 3(b): It was raised that the term Vice-regency did not appear in the mandatory content. Vice-regency is used in the current version of the Course Assessment Specification and was added to clarify what is meant by the Arabic term 'Khaliphas', and to distinguish it from a study of the debate surrounding succession to the Prophet. Analysis of marks achieved shows that performance was in line with the equivalent questions across the World Religions Section and that most candidates produced good answers.

Religion and Morality unit (all sections) Question 1(a): 'Explain how religion helps people to make moral decisions'. This prompt elicited rather general answers, which didn't go much beyond what was given in the question. Candidates tended to write things like, 'They do what the religions says,' or 'They try to follow the religion,' without really getting into detail about the ways in which religion might guide people, and many picked up just one mark. A notable exception was a very good response from a candidate who presented a detailed explanation of the roles of scripture, tradition and authority in turn.

Recommendation: Candidates should be prepared to give detailed explanations of the different sources of moral guidance prescribed in the Course Assessment Specification. In the case of religious authority, this could be done by looking at approaches common to different religions, or by giving specific examples from religion, eg the role of the commandments in Judaism or the eightfold path for Buddhists.

Religion and Justice Question 2: Although retribution is the term used in the current arrangements (having replaced 'revenge') some candidates lacked confidence in writing about it.

Recommendation: Take care to use up-to-date specifications as you prepare candidates, and bear in mind that the prescribed terms are likely to crop up in questions, so candidates should be able to write about them in some depth.

Religion and Relationships Question 1(c): A few candidates interpreted ‘different gender roles’ as different from the status quo. This was an unexpected, but not an unreasonable reading, so candidates were credited where they discussed the possible impact of a change in gender roles in society.

Religion, Medicine and the Human Body, Question 2: This question on Euthanasia and Palliative care was tackled sensibly by some, but many got side-tracked into a general discussion of whether or not euthanasia should be permitted.

Recommendation: Candidates should be advised to read questions carefully and to look out for questions that invite a comparison or require them to think about the relationship between two things as marks can only be awarded for points that address the question.

In the Religious and Philosophical Questions section candidates tended to repeat points already made in different answers. However, this was unavoidable because of the overlapping nature of the mandatory content, so points were credited when they were applied appropriately in a different context. Answers to Section D – Miracles were sometimes rather vague, and although it is a prescribed area in the option, some struggled to explain why someone might prefer to understand miracles metaphorically.

Religious and Philosophical Questions Question 2(b) all sections: Some candidates lost marks because they didn’t focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the view expressed by Arti.

Recommendation: commenting on the strengths and weaknesses of views is a required element of the course, so candidates should be prepared to explain why a religious, moral or philosophical view might be perceived as reasonable or unreasonable. If a question asks for both, candidates won’t be able to achieve full marks if they only write about one.

Component 2: Assignment

Sources

Many candidates, including some who scored full marks for other sections, lost marks because they didn’t reference their sources in the body of the report.

Recommendation: Candidates should be reminded that the resource sheet is not marked, and that they should indicate in full their sources of information as they present it. It is especially important to reference sources of information about religious viewpoints (these can include primary religious sources, but also sources about religion, eg textbooks).

Choice of topic

There was concern that a significant number of candidates had failed to identify an appropriate issue for study. In some cases the topic was not particularly controversial and this made it difficult for them to locate viewpoints and to avoid producing a descriptive report

that was mainly KU. Others chose titles that addressed sociological questions but which did not have a clear religious, moral or philosophical dimension.

Recommendation: The Assignment is intended to ensure a degree of personalisation and choice, however it is entirely appropriate to advise candidates on the suitability of their title. Wording the title as a question about morality or belief may help them to keep on track, and makes their intention clear to the marker. 'Should we help the homeless?' would be fine because it is a moral question, but 'Why do people become homeless?' risks becoming a sociological study instead of something that is truly RMPS. Using a single word title like 'Homelessness' is not recommended.

Conclusions

Some candidates found it difficult to express a fully developed conclusion which related properly to the question they had set for themselves, or to go beyond what had already been presented in the report.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

Centres should take care to ensure that they are working with the most recent versions of the mandatory documents, and that they refer only to these when clarifying points about content. Minor changes to wording were made to address some ambiguities, and the examining team are required to write questions with reference to these latest versions of the Specifications. It's important to note that the Support Notes are **not** mandatory, and were developed prior to revision of the Course Assessment Specification and the Course Specification, so while they are very helpful sources of guidance for centres planning to deliver the new courses, they should not be seen as authoritative statements about content. This advice also applies at Higher level.

In World Religions, centres should continue to help their learners to understand the connections between the different beliefs and practices studied, and the ways in which followers find guidance in a range of sources. Sources for the World Religions section may, but don't have to, be texts. Iconography, liturgy and ritual are valid too, but they do need to have recognised authority within the religious community and should be a means of guiding belief and practice for religious people. It is not necessary to have a different source for each bit of content, as it's likely that one source could cover several — for example, Jesus' story of the Sheep and the Goats is useful for exploring ideas about the Kingdom of God as well as Judgement; while in Hinduism, the image of Shiva Nataraja teaches many things about the nature of Brahman as well as the Samsara cycle. Using sources in this way also helps learners to appreciate the connections between beliefs, practices and sources in an integrated way. Building learners' confidence with using sources at N5 will be important as a stepping stone to Higher where the role of sources is also a key feature of the World Religion Unit.

Learners should be encouraged to think of **all** questions as potential source questions. While they will sometimes be invited to write specifically about a source they have studied, they should be encouraged to look for ways to apply their knowledge about sources as they explain, analyse and evaluate beliefs and practices. Sources shouldn't be seen as a distinct bit of the course, but rather as a way into exploration and understanding of the content.

Candidates should be reminded to take care to stick to the terms of the question. There is no need to evaluate in a straightforward KU question, and where a question asks for one side of a debate, no marks will be awarded for also writing about alternative views. If candidates are asked to consider two things, eg strengths and weaknesses, they should take care to include both to access all of the available marks. They should also take care to distinguish between questions asking about the **importance** of something and those looking for straightforward knowledge.

Many centres have continued to offer a Prelim Exam, and this is particularly helpful for learners where it mirrors the style and demand of the real thing. Although not a requirement, it can also generate useful evidence in the event of having to make an Exceptional Circumstances request. Although they are appropriate for your own class tests, centres are advised to avoid asking questions that relate to specific detailed content delivered in their own centres, as these can't and won't appear in the final exam. The questions in the exam are designed to be very open, and to allow candidates who have studied different sources, thinkers and arguments to apply what they know to the same prompt. This skill of application is a key feature of the new exam, so it's helpful for candidates to have some experience responding to questions where they have to ask themselves, 'What can I bring to this answer?'

Component 2: Assignment

Centres are reminded that, unlike the Standard Grade Investigation and the AVU at N4, the N5 Assignment is an externally-assessed component, and that it should be submitted to SQA unmarked.

The Assignment is intended to enable candidates to demonstrate their ability to independently research, analyse and conclude on a Religious, Moral or Philosophical question of their own choice. While teachers shouldn't be doing the work for their learners, it is important at this level to offer advice on the requirements of the task, and comment on progress in meeting those requirements. Suggesting useful sources of information is fine, but it's the candidate's job to then use the sources independently.

It is especially important to ensure that candidates have proposed a suitable area for study, and centres should advise them where they need to re-think their choice. A valid title should ideally be expressed as a question, and should be truly an issue, ie a matter of genuine debate. It is also important to ensure that it is a Religious, Moral or Philosophical question, so candidates should be exploring a question about belief and/or morality.

We saw a number of titles which were really addressing sociological questions — for example a comparison of different parenting styles or the causes of homelessness. For the most part these tended to be quite descriptive and failed to get into any Religious, Moral or Philosophical aspects of the issue, disadvantaging candidates further.

A few centres submitted Assignments which all had the same title, and which contained very similar content. It was evident that they were drawing mainly on material which had been taught as part of their work on a unit. While the letter of the arrangements may currently permit this approach, it is not in the spirit of the task. A centre's submission should typically include a range of titles, and the reports should emerge from the learners' own work and reflect their own style rather than what has already been taught.

Centres are reminded that the write-up should take place under controlled conditions, and candidates must complete the task strictly within one hour, and in one sitting. Centres should make use of Alternative Assessment Arrangements as appropriate, eg where candidates may struggle to write legibly.

Resource Sheet

Candidates are only permitted to take the Resource Sheet into the write-up, and they should use the template provided. It should be submitted with the final report.

The Resource Sheet is intended to assist candidates in accurately referencing the resources they have used in the course of the study. While it is sensible to also include reminders of key points, headings etc, they should not be copying large chunks from the Resource Sheet, which will not attract marks, though it is expected that they will include quotations in full.

It's especially important to remember that the Resource Sheet is **not** marked, so candidates should take care to include anything that is to be marked in the main body of the report. This applies particularly to identifying their resources clearly.

Additional Information

2014 was the first year of the new N5 qualifications. RMPS had a healthy uptake of 1,220 enabling a clear judgement on candidate performance. Although both components performed broadly as expected, it was agreed that:

Although some questions in the QP did show differentiation, this will need to be monitored closely. In the short term a review of next year's QP is needed for consistency with SCQF level 5, especially the higher order skills.

Some marks were given **too** easily in the Assignment with none of the prompts demonstrating differentiation. The PA, exam team and markers reported giving high marks to scripts that they felt were worth **much** less. This is because of the way the MIs were applied (in accordance with the instructions given in the mandatory documents). In the short term the Marking Instructions and documentation will be reviewed in order to realign the marks with the skills expected at SCQF level 5. This will take place as soon as possible and apply to academic year 2014/15.

A Course review will be planned to ensure appropriate skills and rotation/sampling of mandatory course content in the QP, particularly for the Morality section and the Religious and Philosophical Questions section; and to ensure that the Assignment is fit -for-purpose. **This review will be undertaken after the 2015 examination diet.**

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	0
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	1231
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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 80				
A	38.3%	38.3%	471	61
B	20.3%	58.6%	250	53
C	17.5%	76.1%	216	45
D	6.4%	82.5%	79	41
No award	17.5%	-	215	-