

Course report 2026

Advanced Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies, SCQF level 7

We've written this report for teachers and lecturers. We recommend you read this with the published course assessment documents and marking instructions.

The report:

- provides a summary of how each course component performed
- highlights areas of the question paper and coursework where candidates performed well and areas where they didn't perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

We collect and prepare the statistics in course reports before we complete the appeals process.

Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 214

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 240

Distribution of course awards (including minimum mark to achieve each grade)

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	141	58.8	58.8	98
B	54	22.5	81.3	84
C	19	7.9	89.2	70
D	14	5.8	95.0	56
No award	12	5.0	100	Not applicable

We've not applied rounding to these statistics.

In this report:

- 'Most' means greater than or equal to 70%.
- 'Many' means 50% to 69%.
- 'Some' means 25% to 49%.
- 'Few' or 'a few' means less than 25%.

You can find [statistical reports](#) on our website.

General commentary on grade boundaries

Our main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels, and to maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, we aim to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It's very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, we hold a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Senior Qualifications Scotland staff normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors use their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. We can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- We can adjust the grade boundaries downwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- We can adjust the grade boundaries upwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- If levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do

this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).

How the course assessment performed

Question paper

The essay questions (questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8) performed as expected.

The source questions (questions 3, 6 and 9) performed as expected.

Feedback from markers indicates that most candidates were entered at the correct level.

Project-dissertation

The project-dissertation performed as expected.

Candidates found evaluation the most challenging skill to demonstrate in the dissertation.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper

Essay questions

In section 1, Philosophy of Religion, most candidates opted to answer the teleological argument question. Most candidates answered the question appropriately and to a good standard. Candidates who opted to answer the presumption of atheism question were, overall, well prepared, and they answered to a high standard.

In section 2, part A (Religious Experience), most candidates' essays were of a high standard and they used sources and case studies effectively.

In section 2, part B (Medical Ethics), most candidates completed essays well and deployed a broad range of sources to support their analysis of the issues.

Source questions

Most candidates wrote clearly structured, appropriate responses that tackled the given source.

Project-dissertation

Most candidates selected issues from within the course specification, and their project-dissertations were of a higher standard than those with issues selected from outwith the course specification. This reflects that there was less depth of understanding of the issues chosen by the approximately 10% of candidates who chose from outwith the course specification.

The most popular dissertation topics this year related to medical ethics, followed by philosophy of religion, reflecting current issues in society. There was an increase in the number of candidates choosing religious experience.

Overall, question choice has improved. Question stems that are open, such as 'to what extent' elicit stronger analysis and evaluation than 'discuss' or questions that can be answered with 'yes' or 'no'.

Candidates showed good use of aims. Aims were explicit and most candidates explained the reason and purpose of their choice.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper

Essay questions

In section 1, Philosophy of Religion, a few candidates' essays only covered the teleological argument of Paley. While that content was accurate and detailed, they ignored the question stem about Aquinas. This resulted in a few candidates underperforming in this question.

Source questions

A few candidates did not label their answers 'a', 'b', and 'c', and had to rely on the markers' decision as to where marks could be allocated for skills. A few candidates did not engage with the source and instead ignored it, analysing and evaluating the topic that was to be described in question 'a'. This was most noticeably the case in the Philosophy of Religion section.

Project-dissertation

A few candidates chose questions that were difficult to answer for their project-dissertation. When using a statement as part of the question, candidates must be mindful of the clarity of the statement they have chosen, as a few were overly convoluted.

Some candidates did not check, refine and edit aims when they had completed their dissertation.

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper

Essay questions

You must prepare candidates to answer a full range of potential questions and to answer the question to the best of their ability.

Source questions

In all source questions, you must prepare candidates for the topics that can come up for 'describe' questions by referring to the course specification. Candidates need to read the source carefully and ensure that they are analysing and evaluating the source rather than the topic. Candidates must label their answers with the correct question number and letter. You should encourage regular, timed practice.

Project-dissertation

You should use the course specification as a guide to support candidates when they choose their topics. Candidates should ensure that they use their own words in project-dissertations. Any suspected malpractice has to be investigated according to our procedures.

Length of dissertation

Project-dissertations that are short tend to be awarded fewer marks as they lack depth of analysis and evaluation.

Some candidates exceeded the 4,000-word limit by at least 10%. A few candidates added unnecessary appendices. We recommend that candidates take the time to review and edit their work to within the 4,000-word limit, as some candidates who exceed this lose focus and could be more succinct.

Font and spacing

Please advise candidates to use 12-point font and double-spaced lines.

Structure

Candidates using a chapter structure must link explicitly to the question, referring directly to the question and showing clearly how the chapter serves a purpose in the project-dissertation.