



Course report 2022

Subject	RMPS
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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 documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	250
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	34.9	Cumulative percentage	34.9	Number of candidates	85	Minimum mark required	94
B	Percentage	29.4	Cumulative percentage	64.3	Number of candidates	75	Minimum mark required	79
C	Percentage	16.4	Cumulative percentage	80.7	Number of candidates	40	Minimum mark required	65
D	Percentage	12.1	Cumulative percentage	92.8	Number of candidates	30	Minimum mark required	50
No award	Percentage	7.2	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	20	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

- ◆ ‘most’ means greater than 70%
- ◆ ‘many’ means 50% to 69%
- ◆ ‘some’ means 25% to 49%
- ◆ ‘a few’ means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of [SQA's website](https://www.sqa.org.uk).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The candidates answering the Medical Ethics option in Section 2 remained at around 80% of the cohort. Most candidates answered question 2 in the Philosophy of Religion section.

In the optional parts, candidates preferred questions 5 and 11. The essay questions performed as expected, however, the source questions (4, 8 and 12) did not perform as expected, and this was addressed at grade boundary.

Project-dissertation

The dissertation performed as expected. Evaluation remains the most challenging element for candidates.

Candidates should be commended for their commitment to completing the course and project-dissertation to the best of their abilities, despite a wide range of challenging circumstances.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Questions 4(a) and 8(a)

Most candidates performed well in the mandatory source questions.

Questions 4(b), 8(b) and 12(b)

Many candidates tackled the analysis of sources well and used a range of strategies to structure their answers concisely.

Question 10

Many responses to this question were commendable as they were well-structured and made excellent use of sources throughout.

Project-dissertation

Many candidates performed well in the dissertation, choosing appropriate questions, identifying issues clearly and researching issues thoroughly. Some candidates gave clear aims and focused fully on their own question throughout. Many candidates demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding of their chosen area and analysed their chosen issues well.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Philosophy of Religion (mandatory question)

Most candidates were well prepared for question 4(a) but found it difficult to apply their knowledge to answer the given questions as effectively as expected.

Responses suggest that some candidates did not understand that questions 4(b) and (c) required them to analyse and evaluate the source and not the topic given in question 4(a). This resulted in some responses that were not relevant to the questions asked.

Medical Ethics (mandatory question)

Some candidates had difficulty with question 12(a) and responses suggest they misunderstood the question. For example, instead of describing a range of beliefs relating to when life begins, they described abortion, IVF, and embryology, often in great detail.

Philosophy of Religion (optional questions)

Question 1 (Incoherence)

Some candidates misinterpreted this question by focusing on ‘incoherence’ in general, rather than writing on the atheism topic of the ‘incoherence of God’. They tended to use a combination of their knowledge about the cosmological and/or teleological arguments and attempted to make it fit the question.

Question 2 (Paley)

Many candidates demonstrated that they had a lot of knowledge of the Teleological Argument, however, the question asked them to specifically focus on Paley. Some candidates wrote in great detail about Aquinas but provided an unsubstantiated response to Paley’s argument, which therefore cost them marks.

Question 3 (Leibniz)

Some candidates conflated Leibniz’s arguments with Aquinas or wrote briefly about Leibniz before attempting a comparison with Aquinas’ arguments.

A few candidates did not engage with the questions set and instead used pre-prepared essays.

Religious Experience (optional questions)

Question 5 (Otto)

A few candidates answered this question well, however others focused their answer on William James, with only a token link or no link at all to Otto.

Question 7 (Scientific accounts)

Some candidates’ responses to this question lacked depth of knowledge and understanding of the topic.

Again, some candidates did not engage with the questions set and instead provided pre-prepared responses for specific questions that were not asked.

Project-dissertation

A few candidates chose topics to research that were not part of the course and/or tenuously linked to Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies. This had an impact on the level of research, depth of knowledge and the appropriateness of the question they posed.

Some candidates gave their dissertation a title that was either a statement, a closed question, or an overly complicated question that increased the level of demand, making it more difficult for them to establish clear aims, analyse and evaluate.

Some candidates did not identify aims or explain why they had selected particular aims, and then found it difficult to focus fully on their own question throughout the dissertation.

Evaluation continues to be the most demanding skill for candidates to demonstrate. A few candidates clearly found completing dissertations very challenging.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres should focus on teaching candidates to make straightforward responses to source questions and remind them that these questions are marked on a point-by-point basis. It is worth giving candidates timed practice for this section, to ensure they do not spend too much time on it during the exam, to the detriment of the essay component. Many candidates clearly spent a lot longer on these questions than necessary.

Please note: Knowledge and understanding should be five basic points describing the topic the candidate is being asked about. For example, one point could be ‘The teleological argument is the argument designed to prove the existence of God’. Centres are encouraged to make use of the examples published on the Understanding Standards website.

Centres should make sure that candidates are aware they will not be awarded any marks if they merely describe viewpoints in the analysis and evaluation questions. Viewpoints must be linked specifically to analysis of the source or used as part of the candidate’s evaluative judgement.

Centres should ensure they teach candidates to evaluate by using stems such as ‘I agree with this source because ...’ as this allows candidates to make a judgement on what is being said in the source. Many candidates were simply analysing in question (c), which meant they were unable to gain evaluation marks.

Centres should ensure candidates are aware they can be asked about any of the bullet points, as well as the overall section headings. These questions are designed to support grade C candidates as much as possible and, as a result, centres should tailor their learning and teaching in a way that supports candidates’ capacity to answer these questions in as simplistic a way as possible.

Essays

Centres should focus on teaching candidates how to answer questions and how to demonstrate skills more explicitly. Regular practice of essay questions will help candidates to develop these skills.

Structure

Candidates must take the time to:

- ◆ read the question carefully
- ◆ focus on the question being asked
- ◆ break the question down
- ◆ plan how to answer that specific question
- ◆ show how they will tackle it

Candidates must answer the given question explicitly, ensuring they refer to it in their aims and at the end of each section, as well as in their conclusion. They can do this by using the question stem to relate all evaluation back to what the question is asking, for example, ‘I agree that the sanctity of life is central to the debate because...’ or ‘I disagree that the sanctity of life is central to the debate because...’. When candidates pass judgement on their mini arguments within the essay, but don’t relate it to the overall question, their ability to score higher marks for evaluation is limited.

Use sources effectively

Candidates should make clear reference to sources and perspectives. Candidates need to make greater use of their chosen sources by analysing them and explaining the relevance to the argument being made, evaluating the perspectives, and providing relevant counter arguments.

Medical Ethics

In this section, some candidates wrote everything they knew about the topic rather than focusing on the issues and the question being asked. Centres should focus on supporting candidates by identifying and focusing on the moral debates in the topics. One strategy is to teach three or four moral issues arising from each debate, to enable candidates to identify the issues that are relevant to the given question, and then present a greater level of sophistication in their essays.

It is vital that centres familiarise themselves with the Advanced Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies Course Specification. Centres should also make use of Understanding Standards materials.

Project-dissertation

Questions

Centres should advise candidates to choose their question carefully. Candidates should use question stems such as ‘To what extent?’ as closed questions limit their evaluation. ‘Discuss’ proved to be a challenging question stem and it could easily be changed to ‘How far do you agree?’, which allows candidates a greater opportunity to focus on their question and to evaluate clearly.

Candidates should keep their questions simple and avoid making them complicated, to ensure they can answer them. Candidates should review their questions when they complete their dissertation to make sure the dissertation answers the question posed and not another one, in which case candidates can change their question and/or aims.

Aims

Centres must advise their candidates to make clear aims from the beginning of their dissertation by stating the aim and then explaining why they are doing it this way. Centres should make greater use of the marking instruction grid with candidates, paying particular attention to the knowledge and understanding section, where it highlights that aims need to be ‘clearly explained and achieved’ to ensure candidates can access the full range of marks

for this section. The marking instructions should be used with candidates as part of their self-evaluation and in peer evaluation.

If candidates have chosen to study morality, then they should be advised to identify the moral issues arising from the question and to focus specifically on them.

Centres should remind candidates to avoid generic statements and be specific when referring to sources. For example, ‘people would agree’, ‘Christians think’ is not specific enough for Advanced Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies.

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

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

For most National Courses, SQA aims 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 is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA 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.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2022 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).