



Course report 2022

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| Subject | Religious, Moral & Philosophical Studies |
| Level | 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

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| Number of resulted entries in 2022 | 3540 |
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

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|-----------------|------------|------|-----------------------|------|----------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| A | Percentage | 25.6 | Cumulative percentage | 25.6 | Number of candidates | 905 | Minimum mark required | 52 |
| B | Percentage | 22.6 | Cumulative percentage | 48.2 | Number of candidates | 800 | Minimum mark required | 42 |
| C | Percentage | 21.7 | Cumulative percentage | 69.9 | Number of candidates | 770 | Minimum mark required | 32 |
| D | Percentage | 16.7 | Cumulative percentage | 86.6 | Number of candidates | 590 | Minimum mark required | 22 |
| No award | Percentage | 13.4 | Cumulative percentage | N/A | Number of candidates | 475 | 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://sqa.gov.uk).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper was valid and in line with the Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies Course Specification.

Question stems were in line with the language used in the course specification. 'Buddhism', 'Morality and justice' and 'Origins' remain the most popular topics taught within the Higher course.

Candidates continue to confidently present a wealth of knowledge and understanding in each of the sections. However, analysis and evaluation remain more challenging for many candidates.

Assignment

There was no requirement to complete this for session 2021–22.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1 — World Religion and Morality and Belief

In relation to World Religion and Morality and Belief, candidates were able to structure and answer questions, which allowed them to gain marks and perform well.

Question paper 2 — Religious and Philosophical Questions

Candidates performed best in this section, especially 'The problem of suffering and evil' and 'Miracles'. Candidates consistently perform well in 'Origins' and 'The existence of God'.

There are many centres where candidates are excelling in this section, showing clear structure, skills and relevant content.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

The 10-mark question in the World Religion section required candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of two beliefs and use the skill of analysis to explain the relationship between these beliefs. Candidates who did not do well in this question did not structure their responses carefully to show their knowledge and understanding on each belief and present analysis.

The 20-mark question in the World Religion section proved challenging for many candidates as they were unable to demonstrate both knowledge and understanding, and skills relating to the nature of human beings. While candidates clearly demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the world religion they had studied, they were unable to use the correct knowledge and understanding required to address the question. When candidates introduced other beliefs into their response (such as beliefs about God), without linking to the nature of human beings, they were unable to access marks.

The Morality and Belief questions proved challenging for candidates as they were unable to unpick the question and respond with appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills. This section proved challenging as many candidates failed to analyse (10-mark question) and analyse and evaluate (20-mark question) the religious and non-religious responses to the moral issues.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

It is recommended that centres do not teach content outside the parameters of the course specification. This results in candidates being unable to access the appropriate knowledge and understanding required to respond to questions. For the World Religion and Morality and Belief sections, it is important that candidates are taught content under the appropriate headings ('Beliefs', 'Practices', 'Purposes of punishment', and 'Responses to crime') and within the appropriate bullet points (for example Buddhism — nature of human beings: tanha; Three Root Poisons; kamma).

When preparing questions for assessment purposes, centres should use SQA-style questions. Questions should contain wording from the 'Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment' section in the course specification. The SQA Understanding Standards webinar presentation contains sample question stems and advice on how to create questions for candidates. Candidates should have practice of answering questions that are directly linked to the course specification.

In the absence of an assignment, it is crucial that candidates are taught how to read and unpick questions. Take this example:

- ◆ Evaluate religious and non-religious responses to moral issues arising from sexual relationships.

To answer this question, candidates should highlight the aspect of course content they are expected to focus on (sexual relationships, the moral issues arising from sexual relationships and religious and non-religious relationships).

Knowledge and understanding marks will be credited for:

- ◆ descriptions of sexual relationships
- ◆ descriptions of moral issues arising from sexual relationships
- ◆ religious and non-religious beliefs and/or viewpoints

Analysis marks will be credited for:

- ◆ explaining consequences and/or implications of moral issues arising from sexual relationships
- ◆ explaining consequences and/or implications of religious and non-religious responses to sexual relationships

Evaluation marks will only be awarded when candidates give reasoned judgement on the religious and non-religious responses to the moral issues.

Centres should emphasise appropriate essay structures, providing evidence of knowledge (K), analysis (A) and evaluation (E):

- ◆ For a 10-mark World Religion question: KKKAA x 2 or KKKKKKAAAA
- ◆ For a 10-mark Morality and Belief question: KKKAA x 2
- ◆ For a 20-mark World Religion and Morality and Belief question: KKKKAAEE x 3

Centres should focus on only teaching appropriate content for each section. For example, the cosmological or teleological arguments should only be taught within the 'Existence of God' section. Centres teaching the 'Origins' section only need to teach the Big Bang theory and the theory of evolution as the scientific arguments and Genesis 1 and 2 as the religious arguments. Candidates should link their evaluation to the language of the question that is posed, for example for 'To what extent do you agree with religious explanations for the origins of the universe?', candidates should use, 'I agree with this religious explanation because ...'.

Candidates should use the wording of the question alongside appropriate skills phrases to be awarded marks for analysis and evaluation. Candidates who used phrases such as 'An implication of this belief is ...' or 'A consequence of this viewpoint is ...' did not just repeat content from a previous knowledge and understanding point already made, and they were able to analyse in response to questions. Likewise, candidates who responded to evaluation questions using the wording of the question, for example answering 'Evaluate the significance of ...' with 'This is significant to Buddhists because...' were able to access evaluation marks. This is particularly useful for grade C candidates who need more support to access the 20-mark questions.

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](#).