



Course report 2025

Advanced Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies

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. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 253

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 214

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	112	52.3	52.3	98
B	38	17.8	70.1	84
C	40	18.7	88.8	70
D	16	7.5	96.3	56
No award	8	3.7	100%	Not applicable

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- 'most' means greater than or equal to 70%
- 'many' means 50% to 69%
- 'some' means 25% to 49%
- 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The essay questions performed as expected.

The number of candidates who chose to respond to the religious experience section decreased again this session. The source questions (questions 3, 6 and 9) performed as expected.

Feedback from markers indicated that most candidates had been entered at the correct level.

Project–dissertation

The dissertation performed as expected. Candidates found evaluation the most challenging skill to demonstrate in the dissertation.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Essay questions

Section 1, part A – Philosophy of religion: candidates produced many excellent responses; a few of the improbability of God responses were exceptional.

Section 2, part B – Medical ethics: candidates who responded to the organ allocation question, (question 7) wrote stronger responses, as they focused on the morality of the question and linked back to the question effectively more than candidates who responded to question 8. Many candidates tackled question 7 with an impressive breadth and depth of knowledge.

Source questions

Religious experience: candidate responses were excellent, and most responses were sophisticated. Candidates responded in line with the required expectations of the questions and understood what they were asked to do. Most candidates engaged fully with what was in the source for analysis and evaluation.

Medical ethics: most candidates answered questions 9(a), 9(b) and 9(c) well. They focused on the topic of abortion, analysed and evaluated the given source, and clearly structured their answers.

Project–dissertation

Many candidates had strong research and used their sources well. A few candidates are still overly reliant on class handouts and less-reliable online resources.

Philosophy of religion

Fewer candidates completed philosophy of religion than in previous years. Many candidates performed consistently well in this area. Markers commented that candidates completed excellent dissertations on suffering and evil. Candidates completed atheism dissertations to a high standard.

Religious experience

Far fewer dissertations were submitted on this option this year, but candidates performed well in this area.

Medical ethics

The trend this year has been towards medical ethics. Many candidates completed their dissertation on abortion or assisted dying, and many were completed to an excellent standard.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Essay questions

A large number of candidates attempted the atheism question about the improbability of God (Section 1, question 1), but some candidates answered using incoherent points to argue God's improbability, rather than looking at improbability itself.

In the course specification for medical ethics, 'assisted dying' is the term listed and currently used in the media. Some candidates wrote essays that focused completely on euthanasia (in some cases there was a lack of relevance to the question), and a few candidates did not show an understanding of what 'assisted dying' means.

More candidates attempted the organ allocation question than expected, and most talked about issues directly relating to allocation. However, a few candidates focused fully on opt in/opt out systems rather than on the given question, which had an impact on their mark. A few candidates used opt in/opt out systems skilfully as part of analysis of issues related to allocation. Some candidates were unsure about how to explain what made either organ allocation or assisted dying a moral issue or not.

Source questions

A few candidates struggled to answer the ‘describe’ question in a straightforward manner — they gave additional information, lengthy responses with irrelevant information, and did not display the basic knowledge and understanding required. A few candidates continue to analyse and evaluate the topic given in the ‘describe’ question 3(a), 6(a), and 9(a), and not the source itself.

A few candidates did not label short answers, for example in questions 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), and left it for markers to judge which questions were being answered.

In section 1, Philosophy of religion, question 3, a few candidates misunderstood Ward’s quote, which meant that they answered questions 3(b) and 3(c) incorrectly.

Project–dissertation

This was better this year, but a few candidates chose questions that could elicit a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response. A few candidates are still choosing questions that are overly complicated and then finding it difficult to answer. Some candidates wrote a strong dissertation, but didn’t answer the question they had set themselves.

Philosophy of religion

A few candidates tried to cover too much content and/or too many areas, sacrificing depth in their dissertation as a result. A few candidates needed to review their questions when they completed their dissertations.

Medical ethics

A few candidates attempted to tackle organ procurement in organ donation, but feedback from markers indicated that candidates found it more difficult to identify issues.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Essay questions

It is advisable that centres use marking grids with candidates throughout the year when giving feedback on essays.

For questions on medical ethics, teachers and lecturers should instruct candidates to focus on what the question says. Candidates should refer to the wording of the question throughout their essays, and use this in their evaluations.

Source questions

Candidates must be aware that the 'describe' question will be a bullet point from the course specification, and that it is worth 5 marks. They should revise these carefully. Candidates should stick to relevant knowledge and understanding of the topic itself, and not add additional viewpoints.

Candidates must ensure that they read the source carefully, and that they focus on the source for analysis and evaluation, not the topic. If they discuss other views, they must consider if this is necessary or if they can link the view clearly and relevantly.

Candidates should label short answers clearly. If they need to add extra information later, candidates should state which page additional information has been written on to make it helpful and easily identifiable for markers.

Teachers and lecturers can address issues that candidates have with source questions through regular, timed practice and feedback. Using the examples given in the marking instructions on the [Advanced Higher RMPS page](#) of our website may help candidates have a better understanding of a range of possible ways of answering, and the expected length of response.

Project–dissertation

Dissertations should be printed single-sided, using 1.5 or double-line spacing, leaving clear margins. Each new point or section should be paragraphed clearly to make the structure of the dissertation explicit. Candidates should follow the course content and the 4,000-word limit — many dissertations run 300 to 400 words over, but these are no stronger than focused responses that remain within the limit.

Candidates must go beyond a description of current affairs and focus on issues in greater depth.

Candidates must also be aware of [our policy on the use of artificial intelligence](#).

Questions

Questions must be within the scope of RMPS and need to be tied in closely to religious, moral or philosophical issues. Candidates should not reuse assignments or folio work from other subjects, as this can harm their results in Advanced Higher RMPS. This might disadvantage some candidates in their exam preparation, as they are focusing on areas outwith the course. Candidates must answer their own questions, and if they need to review and reword their question before submitting their dissertation, they can do so.

Wording of questions

Candidates who reflect the wording of the question in their evaluation typically achieved higher marks.

Aims

Candidates should remember that they are expected not only to state their aims clearly, but also to explain the reasons for them. Candidates may review their aims after completing their dissertation and adjust them to reflect what they have actually done during the research and writing process.

Areas of study

In medical ethics in particular, candidates should try to give fewer but more in-depth responses, rather than a breadth of shallow religious and non-religious responses. Dissertations that explore topics in depth tend to show stronger analysis and evaluation, as this allows candidates to demonstrate understanding of the arguments rather than simply repeating them.

Research

Candidates should use footnotes and submit a clear bibliography, as it shows the range of resources that they have accessed during the research process.

Understanding Standards

Centres should advise candidates to look at a range of examples of dissertations on the [Understanding Standards website](https://sqa.my/).

Appendix: 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 is 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 to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of our 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. 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.

- 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.

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](#).