



Course report 2025

National 5 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: 2,493

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 2,504

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	1,148	45.8	45.8	70
B	394	15.7	61.6	60
C	355	14.2	75.8	50
D	252	10.1	85.8	40
No award	355	14.2	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 question paper mirrored the style, wording and level of challenge of previous papers and it performed as intended. Most candidates responded well to the questions and, provided they knew the course content, including topic-related vocabulary, they were able to apply this effectively to the prompts.

The average mark was 2 marks higher than in 2024. A few candidates achieved full marks for the question paper, indicating that all of the available marks could be accessed. Differentiating questions, especially those worth 8 marks, provided additional challenge.

The level of demand across the six religions was similar. The most popular World Religion continues to be Islam, followed by Buddhism. Candidates tackling Islam questions achieved the highest marks for the World Religion section.

Morality, Medicine and the Human Body was the most popular option in section 2, followed by Morality and Justice, and candidates continue to perform particularly well in this section of the question paper. There has been an increase in the number of candidates answering on global issues and an improvement in the quality of answers on conflict, with candidates demonstrating increased confidence with the content and terminology compared to 2024.

In the Religious and Philosophical Questions section, most candidates answered on existence of God, with candidates who tackled questions on miracles achieving the highest average mark.

Assignment

The assignment task and the approach to marking were consistent with previous years, and attainment in this element was in line with 2024, with candidates achieving an average mark of 12.5.

The task was intended to allow candidates personalisation and choice, and therefore required them to propose their own question and carry out their own research independently. Most candidates did this successfully. However, some candidates were not clear about the required elements of the task, and this meant that they had inappropriate titles or scored poorly for use of sources and conclusions.

Most candidates opted to explore a moral issue this year, but there were also some very good reports on philosophical questions, for example about Existence of God, Origins, and The Problem of Evil and Suffering. In line with previous sessions, very few candidates wrote about a purely religious question.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Candidates showed very good knowledge about religious practice across the six options, for example the five pillars in the Islam section and dharma in Hinduism.

Candidates completed the 8-mark evaluation questions about the relevance of following religious teachings well, with most candidates stating that they were unsure before exploring both sides of the debate.

Candidates answered question 40(b) in the Suffering and Evil part well, with many candidates effectively selecting and applying what they had learned about religious responses to their explanation.

Most candidates responded in line with the expectations of the requirements for the 8-mark questions.. Most candidates drew effectively on arguments they had studied to make a case for their personal view.

Assignment

The titles proposed by candidates had a significant impact on their ability to gain marks in the task. Candidates who posed a straightforward question about a genuine moral or philosophical debate produced the best reports because they had many arguments to analyse and explain before presenting a personal conclusion.

Candidates who chose to explore a moral question scored particularly well for Standard A: Impact and Significance, as much of the debate was framed around potential consequences.

Most candidates analysed and explained contrasting views and were therefore able to identify the reasons for disagreement about their chosen issue.

Many candidates offered concluding points on the views they had explored in the course of the report as well as at the end, and this contributed to the mark for standards E and F.

There were some excellent reports on the validity of arguments for God's existence. Candidates used counter-arguments to support their analysis and explanation of the issue.

Some candidates documented their research, making it clear where they had sourced their information. This enabled them to achieve good marks for use of a range of sources of information.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Questions 5(a), 11(a) and 14(a) asked for knowledge on belief about judgement for 6 marks. A few candidates read 'judgement' as the way people judge each other, rather than God's judgement. Although this is not the intended meaning of the term in the course specification, candidates may have studied teachings about how people judge others as part of their study of the world religions. Marks were therefore awarded where candidates' interpretation of the question was reasonable, and their knowledge points were correct.

In the Morality section, questions 19(b), 22(b), 25(b), 28(b) and 31(b) asked for a detailed description of a religious view for 6 marks. Some candidates struggled to describe a religious view on the specified aspect of the content, especially on exploitation in the Relationships part.

For questions 28(a) and 28(b), the course specification gives hospice and palliative care as examples of end-of-life care, and this is what the question aimed to sample.

However, some candidates also wrote about assisted dying. As this is viewed by many as a way of caring for the dying, candidates were able to achieve these marks.

Some candidates were not awarded marks for question 29 because they were unclear about the distinction between assisted dying and euthanasia; for example, assisted dying could not be seen as murder, as it does not involve ending the life of another person. Some mistakenly thought that the recent Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill passed in Westminster was in relation to euthanasia.

For question 37(b), the Existence of God, a few candidates did not access all marks because they interpreted the statement, 'everyone should accept the cosmological argument,' to mean that people should be made or forced to accept a view. They then argued that people shouldn't be compelled when it comes to belief and should be free to make up their own minds, rather than evaluating the validity of argument.

Some candidates answered the 8-mark questions by describing views they had studied rather than giving a reasoned personal opinion.

Candidates did not complete Sikhism questions as well as those for the other religions. Some candidates were unable to explain belief about Jivan Mukhti, and this had an impact on their final mark for this part. However, there was an increase in total marks candidates achieved for this part, compared to 2024.

There was an unintended ambiguity in Sikhism, question 18(a), which was worth 4 marks. The question could have been interpreted to mean teachings of two gurus, or two teachings of the gurus collectively. Candidates were given full credit for either interpretation, and marks for this question were similar to those for the equivalent question in the other world religions.

Assignment

Single-word titles and exam-style questions featured again this year. These are not appropriate for the task and tend to disadvantage candidates because they do not naturally cover all of the required elements, for example, reasoned conclusion.

Some candidates explored questions which were not particularly controversial, so while they could be seen as morally concerning (for example, exploitation or animal cruelty), it didn't enable them to explore a range of views within a true moral debate.

Some candidates struggled to give detailed explanations of views on the issue they had chosen to investigate, and just gave a quotation followed by a summary of what the quotation was saying. This added little in terms of information and reduced the scope for depth, analysis and conclusion.

Some candidates gave very brief conclusions which were not well justified, or that simply summarised information about views they had already presented.

Some candidates gave little or no information about the sources they had used in their research. Sources were sometimes included on the resource sheet, but this is not marked so they lost marks for this aspect of the assessment. Some candidates continue to confuse use of quotations with giving evidence of use of a range of sources of information.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres should ensure that candidates are confident about the subject-specific vocabulary in the course specification, as questions are usually based on these. The specification is available to view on the [National 5 RMPS subject page](#) on our website.

Questions make it clear what the candidate must do. If candidates are asked to **describe** a belief or practice, they should not go on to offer an evaluation. Evaluation questions usually include the prompt, 'How far do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.' Candidates should start with a brief statement to indicate agreement, disagreement or that they are undecided, and this should be followed by an explanation of the reasons for their view. There are no marks for related knowledge points, and candidates should not just present factual knowledge of views they have studied.

The maximum number of marks available for a Knowledge and Understanding question is 6, so it's useful to use this as a guide to how much detail to learn.

In the Morality and Belief section, candidates should be prepared to write about religious or non-religious views on the headings before the colon in the list of content. So, for example, in the Justice part, they could be asked for a view on the purposes of punishment generally, but not the individual purposes, and in the Medicine part they could be asked about end-of-life care, but not hospice.

Candidates should make it clear whose view they are describing — it is not enough to say, 'some religious/non-religious people ...'. Viewpoints can be of individuals, groups, campaigning organisations, or religions, for example.

The course specification presents assisted dying and euthanasia as distinct. Although there are moral questions in common, candidates need to be clear about what makes them different.

Sometimes centres will need to request an exceptional circumstances review, so in the course of the year they should gather evidence to support the awarding of a grade. While a full-length prelim that mirrors the real exam is ideal, it is not possible for all centres to offer this, and split prelims or unit assessments are acceptable. However, it is important that this evidence covers all three sections of the exam.

Assignment

A good report starts with a good title. Ideally, this should be in the form of a question, and it should be about a divisive issue. RMPS Higher exam questions should not be used for a National 5 assignment.

At level 5, candidates should propose their issue, and centres should not tell them what to write about. However, it is good practice to discuss a range of suitable issues and to advise candidates on the suitability of their titles. Submissions from a centre should contain a range of titles that reflects the range of interest within the group.

It is helpful to give generic advice about how to word titles and on the general structure of the report — for example, including a section on the impact and significance of the chosen issue and offering conclusions throughout as well as at the end.

Centres should share the mark-related criteria with candidates and encourage them to use them to assess their own progress in meeting the six standards.

A few centres instructed candidates to write about a part of the course that had already been taught and provided candidates with sources of information.

Over-reliance on class notes limits scope for genuine personal research and results in reports that are very similar in terms of content and reference to sources. There is a misconception that this makes it easier for candidates to achieve a good mark for the assignment. However, this is not reflected in the quality of the reports seen at marking. Those candidates who explore a truly controversial issue which is of genuine interest to them tend to produce the best reports.

Teachers and lecturers can recommend good sources of information, for example books, documentaries, organisations or thinkers, but candidates should research

these sources for themselves and locate useful information in them without help. Centres should not provide quotations for candidates to use in their assignments.

To access marks for using a range of sources of information, candidates need to make clear in the report where they got their information from. This is not the same as giving a range of quotations, which could all come from one source. What matters is the relevance of the information, and a report with no quotations can still achieve full marks. The assignment task gives some examples of the kinds of sources candidates might use to help with their research, for example books, leaflets, documentaries, and interviews. Candidates should make sure they indicate what sources they have used in the body of the report, as the resource sheet is not marked. They could write, for example:

- 'In the documentary ... I found out that ...'
- 'Data from the ONS website shows that ...'
- 'I spoke to ... and they explained that ...'
- 'In an article in The Independent on (date) ...'

Campaigning organisations are an excellent source of information about controversial issues because they often publish statements about their position and the reasons for it. For example, a candidate exploring the morality of assisted dying might benefit from looking at groups like Care Not Killing and Dignity in Dying.

Although the assignment only requires candidates to present one viewpoint, the task is about exploring an issue of debate, so ideally candidates should explore contrasting views and the reasons behind them. A quotation in isolation rarely represents a view adequately, though they can be used effectively. It is more useful for candidates to give detailed explanations of the reasoning behind different perspectives on their chosen issues in their own words.

There are 6 marks for concluding on the issue and this can include evaluative comments on the views presented. It is not enough to simply summarise the information that has already been presented.

Candidates are free to use the resource sheet as they wish, and it is a requirement of the task that this is enclosed with the submission. In rare cases where candidates

opt not to use it, they should still submit a blank copy showing their name and candidate number to avoid a penalty being applied.

The [Understanding Standards website](#) has a range of examples of assignment reports with commentaries. These can be used within centres, and it is helpful to direct candidates to them, too.

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](#).