

Examiners' Report
January 2013

GCE Religious Studies 6RS02 1C

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Introduction

The Investigations Paper of January 2013 demonstrated a very high level of independent student enquiry. The engagement that candidates had with their area of investigation was evidenced in the way they independently used and evaluated a wide range of source material. The enthusiasm for and knowledge of the chosen topic was clearly conveyed in many answers that were truly academic in their approach. Some Centres chose to focus on the same or similar topics for all their candidates, whereas other Centres permitted considerable choice for individual candidates. Candidates were very well prepared for the examination and it was evident that Centres used their specialist resources and interests to encourage candidates to research in depth a particular area of study. It is important to stress again that the 'Investigations' unit has a definite academic purpose. The aim is to involve students as active participants pursuing open-ended enquiries with an emphasis on independent learning. Questions were designed to be inclusive of all possible approaches to various topics and all valid answers were considered.

Whilst most centres had entered their candidates for the correct option there were still a few entries for particular areas of study where consideration regarding entry for a different area of study may have been beneficial to the candidate. It is important to ensure candidates know which area of their investigation is the best fit for the question they answer on the paper. There was evidence of candidates choosing a different question on the paper to the question they had clearly prepared for before the examination. In some of these cases the candidate was using material suitable for Question 1 to answer Question 3 and not really grappling fully with the demands of the question.

Candidates were not penalised if correct entries were not made or a cross was put in a box that did not match the answer. Examiners were encouraged to mark positively. Centres should ensure that candidates are entered for the option that matches their area of study and that candidates are clear about which question they have been prepared for on the paper.

Variation in achievement was related to the two assessment objectives. These objectives should receive prominent attention in the process of the investigation. Importantly, in the exam itself there must be explicit attention to these objectives in the examination answer. Each question consistently referred to the assessment objectives with the trigger word 'Examine' for AO1 and 'Comment on' for AO2. These dictated the structure of the question and helped candidates to plan their answers. It would be advisable for candidates to pay regular attention to the level descriptors for these assessment objectives as a way of monitoring their development and progress during their investigations. The phrase 'with reference to the topic you have investigated' will always appear in the question to ensure that the generic question can be answered with material from any appropriate investigation. The mark scheme itself is generic to all questions but the answer itself is not necessarily generic as candidates are expected to use their material to answer the question. The purpose of the question is to challenge candidates to adapt their material so that at the highest levels they may demonstrate a coherent understanding of the task, based on the selection of their material. Widely deployed evidence/arguments/sources were evident in well-structured responses to the task whereby a clearly expressed viewpoint was supported by well-deployed evidence and reasoned argument. There was skilful deployment of religious language in many answers and the fluency of the essay showed command over the material.

Candidates at the lower end of achievement struggled with the demands of the question. In preparation for this examination some candidates may find it useful to write up their investigation under exam-timed conditions to a variety of different possible questions. They might build up a number of different essay plans to different possible questions. The important point in these activities is to enable candidates to develop their management of material such as how to best structure their content to answer the specific question. However, success can be undermined by writing up a rote-learned answer which was not adapted to the question set, or by answering a question that has been written for a topic they have not studied.

Question 1

The most memorable answers concerned issues such as organ transplants and stem cell research/embryology and candidates angled their material to the question with a decisive view as to whether it is old-fashioned to insist that medical ethics should be guided by religious principles alone. The best answers had a long and highly discursive conclusion, making it clear that the candidates recognised they were dealing with an issue.

The vast majority wrote on abortion and drew on familiar material. The better candidates were able to access some scholarship, albeit rather predictably, but clearly beyond GCSE standard.

The best answers to medical ethics were attempted with an eye to scholarship and many candidates had a very wide ranging understanding of the topic and included an in-depth knowledge of a range of religious and ethical teachings.

The range of scholarship for Medical Ethics is predictable and it would be more in the spirit of the Investigations Paper for candidates to move away from the well worn identikit approach clearly evident in abortion answers to a more independent approach embedded in contemporary scholarship. That said, the best candidates explored the important religious and ethical issues with reference to well-deployed appropriate scholarship coupled with modern day examples. Some candidates also applied Aristotle's virtue ethics and Aquinas' natural law convincingly as they argued a case for/against the view proposed in the question.

Some candidates did not address this question directly; instead they wrote about the topic that they had investigated without relating it to the focus of the question.

Situation Ethics was commonly identified as a secular approach and its Protestant Episcopalian origins largely ignored.

Once again, centres are encouraged to go beyond the predictable range of material and candidates are urged to resist unloading pre-prepared answers with little regard for the question. Answers can be improved by taking decisive views, based on the evidence and also by paying close attention to the demands of the question. Abortion, as a topic, attracted weaker candidates who were working with a wide range of material but but lacked in-depth exploration of the topic. Far too many candidates presented the material they had prepared and added a four or five line conclusion in a bolt on fashion beginning with 'Therefore' or 'In conclusion' when there was little explicit relationship between this conclusion and the body of the essay.

There are a few persistent problems that are worth pointing out. Some candidates were tempted to give overly-long introductions to the topic, sometimes as much as two pages. Although good introductions are needed, long descriptions of what abortion and euthanasia are, complete with medical detail, amounts to a digression rather than clear focus on the question.

In the body of the essay, masses of narrative, that do not address the question can limit achievement. There was also evidence of answers where personal choice was often assumed to be the self-evident guiding principle, when of course in ethics personal choice is usually under the guiding scrutiny of a secular or religious principle that is being adhered to. A significant minority came across as hostile to the Church and indeed to non-Christians faiths. Some candidates argued that religions ought to move with the times. Far too many candidates either said or implied this, and of course when they took this line they demonstrated a complete misunderstanding of both the nature of deontological/absolutist ethics, and indeed of the problems associated with teleological/consequentialist ethics.

Strong opinions in the matter of personal choice destroyed many candidates' objectivity in writing, and many candidates were arguing that religion is a problem simply because it gets

in our way.

There was little evidence of reflection on the implications of science unfettered by ethics or religion. Answers on euthanasia were better in that candidates used their research more effectively.

Everyone discussed the sanctity of life and nearly everyone hit on the value of life/quality of life dichotomy. There was better use of examples when this topic was discussed.

The extract from this essay shows how the candidate has set out their study with clear awareness of the demands of the question.

Chosen question number: Question 1 Question 2 Question 3

Whether or not medical ethics should be guided by religious principles alone is a widely debated issue. I am persuaded that religious principles such as sanctity of life should be a guiding factor in medical ethics as it provides protection and value for all human life.

One of the main religious principles which can beneficially guide medical ethics is sanctity of life. Based on life have intrinsic worth, it believes that all life has value and should be preserved because of that, despite any infirmities. As Augustine wrote, "Life is a gift from God and not ours to dispose of as we wish." Therefore, applied to the medical ethics issue of euthanasia life is a sacred gift from God and should be preserved as such. Job reinforced this saying, "God gives life and takes life away." Seeing as God is the author of life, we are not to decide who lives and who dies when. Therefore clearly showing that sanctity of life is not an ad-

fashioned principle and can be beneficially applied to issues as a guiding factor.



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Examiner Comments

The introduction sets out their argument from the outset. The rounding up of material in the second paragraph shows that the candidate is aware of the question. A range of scholarship is evident from the first page that continues throughout the essay.



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Examiner Tip

Always keep the question in mind as the question is there to be answered.

This candidate gets off to a slow start by defining abortion and explaining three types of abortion methods.

The topic I have investigated is abortion. This is the deliberate ending to a human pregnancy. In 1967 abortion became legalised because too many backstreet abortions were happening. In 1990 the Human Embryology act made it legal for 24 weeks. The Abortion act 1967 made it legal for 28 weeks. The three types are chemical abortion which is the pill up to 9 weeks, vacuum aspiration up to 12 weeks and the last which is late abortion called surgical dilatation and evacuation. This is a controversial issue so not religion alone just has a say in this. In 2009 in England and Wales there were 189,100 abortions and 94% of these were funded by the NHS. In 2009 a man named George Tiller was shot dead. He offered late term abortions to mothers who were in need. Scott Roeder who was the man who killed him said he did



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Examiner Comments

There is no need to provide detail about abortion methods as time will not allow for such digression at the expense of academic engagement with the issues that surround the topic under discussion.



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Examiner Tip

Do not waste time covering material that avoids exposition of the issues within your topic and your response to the question.

Question 2

This question was either done incredibly well by the majority or superficially by a few. Where it was done well candidates had a very focused understanding of the various views of stewardship and linked this to modern issues in relation to environmental and ecological issues. Candidates with weaker answers tended to write a lot about current trends in environmental issues with very little ethical / religious content at all. Many candidates demonstrated clear use of scholarship with relevant examples in a range of very interesting answers; candidates expressed viewpoints clearly and with a consistent approach.

It is disappointing that only a small number of candidates attempted this interesting area; but encouraging to note that within these limited numbers the majority were of excellent standard.

Candidates expressed viewpoints clearly and with a consistent approach. Candidates had clearly researched the topic of the environment in depth and often in a very specific area, and incorporated it with a very good understanding of environmental ethics. Some candidates were able to apply a range of ethical approaches to the issue and a few candidates referred too much to the content of the environmental issue, rather than applying and analysing ethical theories. A full exemplar essay that showed competent scholarship in this topic is quoted in the Examiners' Reports of June 2009 and June 2010.

This essay shows knowledge of a wide range of material covered with breadth rather than depth. The candidate devotes three paragraphs to a long introduction devoted to issues regarding the natural world, and then proceeds to discuss Christian teachings in one paragraph. A more detailed exploration of major religious/secular approaches to ecology can have a qualitative impact on the essay and help the candidate to support their viewpoint by well-deployed evidence.

Chosen question number: Question 1 Question 2 Question 3

AS humans we interact with the natural world in many ways but none is more important than our relationship with animals. We use animals for many things including entertainment, clothing and companionship but the main way we use animals is for food. This started over 2.5 million years ago when the genus homo ~~first~~ evolved and developed the ability to eat meat. Over the years our use of animals to provide us with food has progressed from hunter gathering to subsistence farming then to commercial farming and now to the intensive rearing of livestock.

Although many people initially think this practise is cruel it does have its benefits, for example, intensive livestock rearing allows cheap

example, intensive livestock rearing allows cheap meat to be produced. This means that many people can remain healthy by eating a balanced diet. Also with such high yields we can secure food for many people, even with our dramatically increasing population, thus reducing starvation and malnutrition.

However, we must ask ~~the question~~ whether we need all this extra food, consider

ing that a recent study has shown that we waste between 30 and 50% percent of our food. That is about 2 billion tonnes per year. Those who endorse intensive livestock rearing must be completely ignoring the large amounts of food being put into landfill where it rots and decomposes releasing carbon dioxide and methane. These are both greenhouse gases and therefore contribute to global warming which further destroys our natural environment.

Christians are taught in the bible in Genesis 1:26 - 'let us make mankind in our image so they can rule over the livestock and the wild animals'. From this some christians would think that intensively rearing livestock is ok because we have rule over them. This shows that some christians are happy to continue damaging our natural environment. However in Ecclesiastes 3:19 it says that 'man has no advantage over beasts'. This indicates that some christians disagree with these practises that ~~damage~~ involve animals because they believe that humans and animals are on equal footing. This shows

that some christians do care about the damage being inflicted on our natural environment.

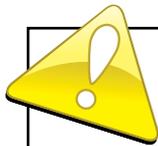
Another religion that shows that it definitely has thought for the natural world is Buddhism. Buddhist believe in reincarnation ~~se~~



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Examiner Comments

The Christian position is covered superficially in one paragraph on the second page and there is awareness of the question at the end of this section.



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Examiner Tip

Try to offer a more in-depth analysis of a religious position as this will avoid essential theological principles from being omitted or given superficial treatment.

The extract from the beginning and end of this short essay shows little engagement with the question. The reader is left in mid air at the end.

Christian views on the environment believe that we are the summit of Gods creation and therefore have dominion over the earth.

"dominion over the fish in the sea"

However, they believe we must be good stewards to the environment which means looking after Gods creation. Christians believe that as we have been blessed with intelligence this comes with responsibility to look after creation.

Some Christians believe that as God created the environment if we abuse it we will offend God. If God has given us creation to sustain ourselves on if we destroy it, it will be detrimental to us as we can no longer use its resources.

A Utilitarian view however, uses different ideas to evaluate the use of the environment.

Jeremy Bentham's idea of Utilitarianism

"the greatest happiness for the greatest number"

This view illustrates the use of the

contribute to ~~the~~ global warming. The government has ~~put~~ put in place recycle schemes to reuse some of our rubbish.

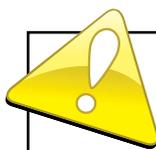
They recycle items such as plastic, paper, cardboard and glass so it can be ~~use~~ reused so we can reserve our ~~the~~ resources.

Industrialisation can be tackled by replanting trees for the trees been cut down for new ~~roofs~~ roofs and furniture. Buildings can't be built over natural habitats which will cause major disruption or effect a habitat of a rare or uncommon animal in order to protect the species so it won't die out.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate shows solid knowledge of the topic but makes no attempt to address the question or indicate a viewpoint they might be arguing for.



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Examiner Tip

Keep the question in mind throughout your essay.
If you know you are running out of time try to move towards a closing statement that addresses the question.

Question 3

There is a persistent problem in that a significant number of responses for this question were actually responses more suited to question 1 on medical ethics. Several candidates decided to write about abortion or euthanasia from the position of equality because they did not recognise their question and most failed to make this link coherent or sensible. Candidates must be clear about attempting the question they have prepared for. Better candidates did not make this error and these invariably debated homosexuality along well trodden lines of argument. Evidence of responses that deal with equality as a principle in moral philosophy were lacking, and stronger candidates could be encouraged to explore this approach.

This question was interpreted very differently by some candidates. The responses from candidates exploring issues surrounding homosexuality were either clearly supported with ethical theory and scientific argument or were answered very superficially, resulting in a one-sided argument with limited support.

As with question 1, the best answers tended to be more aware of contemporary religious, ethical, and political controversies. One danger inherent in question 3 is the possibility that emotional advocacy becomes a substitute for ethics, scholarship and background information. It is important that candidates are concerned by gender, race, and sexuality, but the passion and interest needs to be tied to genuine knowledge content. Some candidates did not refer to ethical theories at all and gave an account of the problems of homosexuality with an apparent disregard for the question. Some candidates linked their answer on equality to abortion, and this was not always well argued or developed.

There were also some powerfully stated answers on women's rights.

Many candidates have difficulty in acknowledging that equality in the modern world is the topic being addressed and that this topic is exemplified by reference to, for example, homosexuality or women's rights. Teasing out the meaning of equality in relation to human rights might help candidates use their exemplar material more effectively.

Chosen question number: Question 1 Question 2 Question 3

An example of inequality in the modern world is homosexuality. This is the topic I have investigated. A homosexual is a person with a sexual attraction to a person of the same sex. Sexual orientation is not a choice but a complex interplay of biological and environmental factors. Homophobia is an irrational fear, prejudice or discrimination towards homosexuals. Homophobia may prevent the achievement of equality in the modern world. Examples of homophobia can be seen in the UK for instance Alan Turing turned to suicide after extreme homophobic attitudes were shown towards him in 1954. A move towards

achieving equality in the modern world happened in 1967 when homosexuality was legalised in the UK, this made achieving equality possible. This has allowed people such as Chris Smith (MP) and Elton John to be openly gay. Unfortunately this is not the case in other parts of the world as homosexuality is legally punished in 93 countries across the globe, this makes achieving equality a difficult task. Furthermore homosexuality is



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Examiner Comments

The candidate introduces homosexuality as the exemplar for inequality and then notes that homosexuality is the topic studied. The notion of equality as an inalienable human right on the basis of simply being human would lend itself to fruitful discussion of the exemplar material.



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Examiner Tip

Make sure your study thoroughly explores the topic. Think about other relevant issues that might enrich the use of your exemplar material.

This essay begins by introducing homosexuality as an exemplar for the study of inequality in the modern world. Homosexuality is defined with some reference to Ancient Greek practice contrasted with modern homophobia. There is no link made to the issue of human rights and why inequality denies a fundamental right other than stating objective facts about homosexuality and homophobia.

Homosexuality is an example of how equality in the modern world is impossible to reach. Homosexuality is a sexual attraction between two members of the same sex, it has caused major debate within religions throughout the world questioning whether full equality will ever be reached.

Homosexuality dates back to Ancient Greece when homosexuals ~~reached~~^{received} no prejudice, this was when we see they had full equality, although how times have changed. Homosexuals receive high amounts of homophobia especially in the Eastern world where population is quite high. This shows strong inequality as homosexuals find it hard to be open about their sexuality anyway, it is questioned whether they will ever get that same equality back.

An example of inequality would be Alan Turing, who was a lead mathematician but also a homosexual. He was told he must change. Because he was not



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Examiner Comments

Attention could be given to how and why inequality violates fundamental human rights so that descriptive case studies might provide more useful support to a reasoned viewpoint. The candidate has not presented an argument yet.



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Examiner Tip

Work out what your argument is in relation to the material you have studied. This will help you to deploy your material to the fullest advantage.

Paper Summary

- Please directly address the question being asked.
- A generic question is not best answered with a generic answer. The question is made up of two parts. The question itself and the generic phrase 'Examine and comment with reference to the topic you have investigated.' Answer the question.
- Use appropriate sources and, if possible, include recent scholarship.
- Thoughtfully deployed material will show how well you understand your topic and how you are using your material to answer the question.
- Do not forget to comment on your material in relation to the question.
- Use your evidence to substantiate your argument.
- Comment on alternative views if you know them.
- Express your viewpoint clearly.
- Practice writing under timed conditions as part of your preparation.
- Do not spend too much time on your essay plan to the detriment of the essay itself.
- Write legibly.

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