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Examiners' Report June 2010

GCE Religious Studies 6RS02/1D

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General Comments

The Investigations Paper of June 2010 demonstrated an encouraging level of engagement with a wide range of topics by candidates who demonstrated a superb level of scholarship across all areas of study. The enthusiasm for, and knowledge of, the chosen topic was clearly conveyed in many answers that were truly academic in their approach. 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 note that the overall title of this unit '*Investigations*' 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.

Most centres had entered their candidates for the correct option but there were still a few entries for particular areas of study where it might have benefited the candidate more to consider entry for a different area of study. It is important to ensure candidates know which area of their investigation is the best fit for the question they answer 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 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. In preparation for this examination 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.

Specific Comments - Area 1D - The Study of World Religions

Question 1 - Ethical Precepts & Applied Ethics

There were a number of answers on the topic of jihad. In most cases these were the result of careful investigation and breadth of reading with high level academic skills in critical appraisal. There were more instances of candidates quoting a wider range of Islamic sources in addition to the Qur'an; for example hadith and various Islamic scholars. There was evidence of proficient use of technical terms with a range of Islamic schools and interpretations. Candidates debated complex issues such as Palestine with an analysis of competing interpretations. There was some commendable work on some of the more complicated problems of our time.

Other topics that attracted investigation included capital punishment, suicide and euthanasia, with reference to two world religions. There were interesting answers using material from various religious traditions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. Some responses were very knowledgeable on a wide range of Hindu traditions and sources. Some candidates focussing on Buddhism were slow to address the question and wrote about the history of Buddhism instead of about key ethical teachings/one or more moral problems. Some weaker candidates did not address the question and simply listed stories associated with the Buddha. Candidates can improve their answers here if they show evidence of scholarship in their answer. There is an exemplar of an essay in the January 2010 examiner's report which shows good scholarship integrated into sound knowledge of Buddhism.

Question 2 - RELIGIOUS PLURALISM, INTERFAITH DIALOGUE, And RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

There were very few answers to this question and hence the range of topics offered was narrow. There were some very good answers on the Interfaith Dialogue - this is a topic that candidates find difficult but the strongest candidates distinguished themselves by showing the intricacies of this dialogue. An exemplar of this question quoted in the June 2009 Examiner Report showed the range of material that pertains to the Interfaith Dialogue.

There were some examples of careful studies on the Holocaust including contextual material on anti-Semitism with implications for the various Christian churches that showed a sound understanding of historical relationships between different religions.

Question 3 - Contrasting Standpoints On Beliefs About God

There were too few responses to this question to make a detailed comment. However, this question demands knowledge of contrasting views and there can be a possibility of answers becoming one-sided if candidates are not confident about a tradition other than their own.

That said, candidates generally appreciated differences in belief and their research conveyed the desire to understand in greater depth a view they did not ascribe to. Candidates, in most cases, were aware that in this type of topic it is important to create a balance of material between the different traditions under investigation.

Some candidates chose to contrast different religious traditions such as beliefs about the nature of God in Christianity and Islam or beliefs about Jesus in the New Testament compared to the Qur'an. These studies were interesting and well informed generally. Others selected various interpretations within a religion such as different schools within Hinduism.

Grade boundaries

Raw mark boundaries

Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
50	41	36	31	27	23	19	0

Uniform Mark Scale boundaries

Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
100	80	70	60	50	40	30	0

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