

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2011

GCE

GCE Religious Studies
6RS02/1D

Edexcel is one of the leading examining and awarding bodies in the UK and throughout the world. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers.

Through a network of UK and overseas offices, Edexcel's centres receive the support they need to help them deliver their education and training programmes to learners.

For further information, please call our GCE line on 0844 576 0025 or visit our website at www.edexcel.com.

If you have any subject specific questions about the content of this Examiners' Report that require the help of a subject specialist, you may find our **Ask The Expert** email service helpful.

Ask The Expert can be accessed online at the following link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/Aboutus/contact-us/>

January 2011

Publications Code US026827

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Edexcel Ltd 2011

AREA 1D The Study of World Religions

Introduction

The Investigations Paper of January 2011 demonstrated a remarkable level of scholarship evident across all areas of study and some answers demonstrated the engagement that candidates had with their area of investigation. 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. Some 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 candidates 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.

Candidates were mostly entered for the correct paper 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.

Some topics share generic ideas across a number of different areas and it is vital that candidates know the **distinctive** features of their investigation so that in the exam candidates know which question to answer ie question 1, 2 or 3. It is worth noting that the difference between discussing an ethical issue, for example, in Area C and Area D would be in the kind of emphasis required by Area of Study; Area 1C requires a range of ethical and/or religious teachings applied to a medical issue whilst Area D requires a more detailed knowledge of the ethical precepts of the World Religion(s). Candidates were not penalised if correct entries were not made or a cross was in a box that did not match the answer.

Variation in achievement was related to answering the question and 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. Preparation for the exam must also pay attention to enabling candidates to develop their management of material studied throughout their investigations and to how best structure their content to answer the specific question. Success can be undermined by writing up a rote-learnt answer which was not adapted in any way to the question set.

The mark scheme itself is generic to all questions. It was not possible to include exemplars for some questions that attracted a small entry in this examination series.

Q1

ETHICAL PRECEPTS and APPLIED ETHICS

The most popular topics included homosexuality, capital punishment, suicide and euthanasia with reference to two world religions. Candidates who chose to address the issues in these topics with reference to Buddhism presented some very knowledgeable responses that scrutinised closely the ethical precepts of Buddhism. Some responses failed to 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 was a marked improvement in the level of detail about religious teachings and traditions that resulted in much better quality essays. Careful use of scholarship was directed towards the demands of the question and this approach is to be encouraged. There were a number of answers that discussed fully the ethical precepts of Islam that was accompanied by excellent information about centres of thought within Islam. There were a few answers on greater and lesser Jihad which were very knowledgeable about the subject whilst some simply wrote all they knew about Jihad without making reference to the question. Candidates can improve their answers by demonstrating a much more detailed approach to studying any particular world religion. Weaker answers might contain a few quotes from sacred scripture but fail to include other sources such as relevant scholarship and on the other hand scholarship is best accompanied in this Area of Study by ethical precepts that are derived from religious tradition and the authority of religious leaders. Islam has a strong tradition of hadith and some candidates made little or no reference to these teachings.

Q2

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 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.

Q3

CONTRASTING STANDPOINTS ON BELIEFS ABOUT GOD

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. There were some good comparative studies on the contrast between Christological doctrines within Christianity and Islam. This approach is to be encouraged as this form of exploration offered much scope for addressing the demands of the question fully.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

Further copies of this publication are available from
Edexcel Publications, Adamsway, Mansfield, Notts, NG18 4FN

Telephone 01623 467467

Fax 01623 450481

Email publications@linneydirect.com

Order Code US026827 January 2011

For more information on Edexcel qualifications, please visit www.edexcel.com/quals

Edexcel Limited. Registered in England and Wales no.4496750

Registered Office: One90 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7BH