

Examiners' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

January 2013

Edexcel GCE – Religious Studies
Unit 2: Investigations – The Study of
World Religions

6RS02/1D

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications come from Pearson, the world's leading learning company. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk for our BTEC qualifications.

Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

If you have any subject specific questions about this specification that require the help of a subject specialist, you can speak directly to the subject team at Pearson.

Their contact details can be found on this link: www.edexcel.com/teachingservices.

You can also use our online Ask the Expert service at www.edexcel.com/ask. You will need an Edexcel username and password to access this service.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

January 2013

Publications Code DP034370

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2013

Unit 2: Religious Studies - The Study of World Religions

Introduction

GENERAL COMMENTS

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-learnt 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.

Specific Comments – Paper 1D – The Study of World Religions

6RS02_1D_Q01 – Ethical Precepts & Applied Ethics

There was an improvement in the overall academic standard of investigations this January. There was a more detailed approach to discussing 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. The most popular topics included Jihad, homosexuality, capital punishment, suicide and euthanasia with reference to two world religions.

A significant number of candidates answered this question by focusing on the topic of jihad. As in the past, many of these resulted in high quality academic study. Candidates presented a broad range of ideas with first class use of scholarship and corresponding sources. These good answers engaged in debate across a number of key issues. These investigations into jihad have shown to be very successful in terms of academic rigour. There was some very interesting work on the ethical teachings of sexuality and marriage in Islam. Many candidates demonstrated careful investigation and breadth of reading with high level critical appraisal skills. There much evidence of proficient use of technical terms from a range of Islamic schools; candidates quoted a wide range of Islamic sources in addition to the Qur'an; for example Hadith and various Islamic scholars. Issues were addressed from an Islamic perspective with a balanced argument which showed knowledge of more than one point of view. Some candidates included excellent information on greater and lesser Jihad with reference to scholars, the Qur'an and Hadith with detailed analysis of alternative views whilst a few needed to include a range of evidence and reasoned argument in their exposition. Weaker candidates struggled to provide alternative views and their own strong opinions regarding the issue under scrutiny destroyed the objectivity required for addressing each point with academic rigour.

Other topics that resulted in good quality work included Buddhist attitudes to war and the diversity of Hindu ethical teachings. 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 weaker candidates failed to address the question and spent most of their time writing about the history of Buddhism and failed to address the question. These responses also made little or no reference to scholarship. It is worth noting that the January 2010 Examiners' Report contains an exemplar essay focused on the ethical precepts of Buddhism with evidence of sound scholarship. 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. A few responses at the lower levels needed to select and adapt their material to the precise demands of the question.

6RS02_1D_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. A number of candidates for this question focus on inter-faith dialogue including an examination of terms such as pluralism, exclusivism and exclusivism. Another interesting topic selected for this question was a study of Jerusalem.

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 through secure knowledge of appropriate sources and scholarship throughout their exposition; in this respect knowledge of scholars like Barth and Rahner was impressive. These responses resulted in wide ranging discussions. There was no doubting the knowledge which candidates had of this topic. A recurring problem however, was limited attention to the wording of the question. Candidates deployed a wide range of evidence and were able to draw sophisticated conclusions using sound religious terminology. An exemplar of this question quoted in the Examiners' report of June 2009 shows the range of material that pertains to the Inter Faith Dialogue.

Amongst weaker responses; candidates who focused on the role of women in Islam failed to present alternative opinions with the objectivity demanded within academic debate. Candidates need to include a range of evidence in their investigation that is supported by sound scholarship and, where possible, to show knowledge of more than one point of view. Answers in the lower levels tended to be brief, descriptive and generalised. Some candidates also relied on pre-prepared essays and failed to understand or answer the question.

6RS02_1D_Q3 – Contrasting Standpoints on Beliefs about God and/or existence

A popular topic selected in this area was a comparative study of Jesus in Christianity and Islam. Some of these were successful, although some candidates needed to focus more explicitly on the question. Some of these could have been improved by more extensive scholarship and with less narrative material. Another interesting approach was a study of contrasting standpoints of different Jewish traditions towards the Holocaust. Potentially this is a commendable approach, provided close attention is paid to the wording of the question.

This question attracted a significant number of excellent answers; candidates who wrote about Judaism knew their material well and included a range of sources in their essays.

Candidates were very well informed about the different beliefs about God in Islam, however some candidates did not understand fully the Christian teachings on the existence of God and Christian denominations were mixed up. Some candidates were not very clear about the differences between the contrasting viewpoints on belief about God they were arguing for. The approach taken by some centres to look at teachings and beliefs about Jesus in Islam and Christianity tended to be more accurate in one religion than in the other. Candidates who wrote about the Sunni and Shia Islam were one sided and unfortunately answers can be 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.

Candidates focusing on Hinduism produced excellent responses. Candidates discussed different beliefs about God using the Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita, Vedas and different schools of thought. The better responses to this question included detailed knowledge of different beliefs about the existence of God; in particular Shankaras Advaita Vedanta and critically compared this with Dvaita Vedanta. Knowledge of the topic in these responses was detailed and well-deployed in the answer.

Advice for Candidates

- 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.

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 publication.orders@edexcel.com
Order Code DP034370 January 2013

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

Pearson Education Limited. Registered company number 872828
with its registered office at Edinburgh Gate, Harlow, Essex CM20 2JE

Ofqual




Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



