

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2011

GCE

GCE Religious Studies

6RS02/1F

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AREA 1F The Study of The New Testament

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

RELIGION AND SCIENCE

A popular approach to this question that works well for many candidates was either looking at the miracles of Jesus or the resurrection, and contrasting them with philosophical ideas. Most candidates were able to offer good, scholarly argument both in support of miracles/resurrection and scientific arguments against. There was a genuine attempt to answer the question set by the majority of candidates who clearly attempted to engage with the significance of New Testament teachings against scientific discoveries. There is much scope here for high achievement if candidates can grapple with various scholarly comment on examples of divine intervention contained within the New Testament and the challenges raised by scientific discoveries.

There was also evidence of responses which discussed, for example, the doctrine of creation and tended to support their arguments with extracts from the Old Testament; whilst there is no doubt that support can be found in both the Old and New Testaments candidates must be aware that this area of study is specifically focussed on the New Testament.

Q2

NEW TESTAMENT ETHICS AND MORALITY

Most candidates concentrated on either Jesus' teachings at the Sermon on the Mount, or the parables and applied them to the moral issues chosen. There were useful references to Old Testament Law, particularly the more gruesome aspects of Deuteronomy, contrasted with the agape love of Christ. Some candidates highlighted the discrepancies in Christ's teaching, for instance, on divorce.

It is worth noting again that some topics share generic ideas across a number of different areas and it is vital that candidates know the **distinctive** features of their investigation for example; there can be overlap with topics addressed in Area 1C and candidates who focussed more on classical ethical theory rather than New Testament ethics might have used the material they investigated more effectively in Area 1C. The same point also applies to the distinctive focus that is required by either a Study of the Old Testament or the New Testament.

Q3

LIFE AFTER DEATH

This question was very well done by the some candidates who contrasted the resurrection narratives and Paul's teachings from 1 Corinthians 15 with philosophical arguments surrounding immortality of the soul, reincarnation and bodily resurrection. Scholarship and evaluation were evident for this question and some responses addressed the question effectively from the outset.

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