

Examiners' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

January 2013

Edexcel GCE – Religious Studies
Unit 2: Investigations – The Study of
Christianity and the Christian Church

6RS02/1G

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January 2013

Publications Code DP034370

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Unit 2: Religious Studies – The Study of Christianity and the Christian Church

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-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.

Specific Comments – Paper 1G – The Study of Christianity and the Christian Church

6RS02_1G_Q01 – Development of the Church up to and including the Reformation

Candidates are exceedingly very well versed in Church History and the most popular topic was the study of Calvin or Luther's ideas. There were some very good examples demonstrating strong knowledge of the topic studied. Most candidates paid close attention to the question and used the material they had investigated effectively. They were confident with their knowledge of Christian Theology and were able to draw out the significance of the material they were using. However, there was also evidence of candidates who were following the same structure, used the same quotes and who missed opportunities for independent comment on their material. This approach to the Investigations Unit is to be discouraged as achievement can be depressed if candidates offer AO1 material that is not commented on. Candidates are not marked down for presenting similar material but they are expected to fulfil the demands of both assessment objectives.

The Examiners' Report of June 2009 includes a full essay exemplar which shows the work of a candidate who had a very secure knowledge of Church History and who could adapt this very well to answer the question. This essay is full of well-deployed knowledge and critical analysis and is worth examining as this form of approach to this unit is to be strongly encouraged.

6RS02_1G_Q02 – The Modern Period

There were fewer responses to this question in January and therefore the range of topics was limited to a few studies on Black Theology and Thomas Merton. These were mostly very well done and offered well-informed responses to the question.

There was still a tendency for weaker candidates to make sweeping statements about the nature of Jesus as a model for Black Theology and opportunities to contrast this contribution with other theologies were missed. There is a case for considering the influence on and place for this theology in mainstream Christianity. It was good to see that the majority of responses to this question used a range of material that was well suited for this unit.

6RS02_1G_Q03 – Christian Belief and Practise

There were a variety of responses to this question and the full potential of this question have yet to be realised; some candidates discussed homosexuality and sexual ethics and others discussed Bonhoeffer as an exemplar of Christian belief and practice. The range of topics studied for this unit remains lamentably narrow. It is good to see, however, the expertise that the best candidates have in their investigation and the best answers are full of contemporary scholarship. There is not much evidence of mid-range answers for this question and the following point is to be strongly made for weak candidates who might have fared better if they were entered for a different paper.

It is worth noting 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, the material on homosexuality could also be used to address Area 1C, Q1. A feature of Area 1G would be the emphasis on Christian Theology and whilst candidates are free to choose their material the answer must show specific knowledge of Christianity and the Christian Church. Candidates who expound ethical theory at the expense of Christian theology are not meeting fully the distinctive demands of this unit.

The Examiners' Report of January 2010 includes a full essay exemplar that shows how a candidate answered the question by analysing Bonhoeffer's Christian beliefs and practice. The conclusion conveys a genuine attempt to relate the material studied to contemporary Christian belief and practice.

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.

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