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Examiners' Report June 2010

GCE Religious Studies 6RS04/1J

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June 2010

Publications Code UA024675

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General comments on Unit 4

This was the first year of this examination 6RS04. The Legacy Spec paper 6584 had the same content as 6RS04 but this new exam has a different mark allocation between the two Assessment Objectives. The legacy paper had a breakdown of 25 marks for AO1 and 15 marks for AO2 whereas 6RS04 has 30 marks available for AO1 and 20 marks for AO2. There are also differences in the level descriptors between the papers with, for example, AO1 having 5 levels in this new specification compared to 4 in the legacy specification.

It is of paramount importance for candidates to examine the passage on the exam paper. Candidates must relate what they have learned and apply it to the extract and not treat it in a cursory fashion nor ignore the selected text. There are very many ways of examining a passage and there is no preferred method. What is essential is an explicit focus on the text, whatever method is used to examine it. There was evidence of some candidates writing several paragraphs of material that was not linked to the question. This is not a recommended strategy.

The examination is divided into two parts. AO1 is examined in part (a) and is worth 30 marks and AO2 is examined in part (b) and is worth 20 marks. This division is on the paper to assist candidates to structure their answers and to enable them to make sensible use of their time in the allocation of material. In most cases candidates had the required examination technique to make effective use of their material. However, a few candidates spent a disproportionate amount of time on AO1 at the expense of AO2 and vice versa. There is no necessary requirement to follow the structured division as seen in the question. However, for candidates creating a holistic answer, there is a tendency to pay inadequate attention to AO2, especially in relation to the implications aspect of part (b). Candidates who run together AO1 and AO2 are credited where they achieve these, although candidates may penalise themselves with partial answers by using this approach.

Assessment Objective 1:

There was evidence of sound subject knowledge with a thorough exposition of the passage. Some candidates examined the passage in the question paper and then illustrated key ideas by the way they navigated their way through the whole passage of the anthology. This enabled candidates to incorporate various scholars and themes that were referenced in the whole article as a means of a more detailed analysis of the passage itself. A number of candidates had a strong working knowledge of the other two anthology texts and were able to link these in their answers.

At the lower levels candidates presented a more descriptive and basic account of the passage akin to a simple comprehension test. Some outlined the full article but with insufficient attention to the passage on the question paper. This may have displayed their knowledge of the anthology but not an understanding of the selected passage.

Assessment Objective 2:

The better quality answers were those that expressed view points with confidence and authority, supported by reason and evidence. Some candidates outlined their own views and were able to ally or contrast them with various scholars they had examined in their other units. Good quality work on the implications in part (b) consisted of academically rigorous approaches with pertinent examples.

At the lower levels for AO2 some candidates presented partial answers. For example, some expressed opinions giving their views on the extract but did not write about the possible implications.

Specific comments option 1J - New Testament

The performance of candidates for this paper was excellent at the top end but perhaps a little lower in the middle range than in previous years.

At the top end, candidates were well-versed in the complexities of the question and were able to understand, evaluate and offer a clear exegesis. There was evidence of good learning and access to scholarly debate, enhanced by scriptural examples. Most candidates offered informed comment on such matters as replacement theology, the nature of salvation and atonement and links with the Old Testament. A number, interestingly, also spoke on the nature of authority in the Church. There were a range of approaches taken, with excellent and original material offered at a high level.

In the mid-range, candidates seemed less secure about this passage. Though interesting, some of these answers missed the main point of the text. A significant number simply re-wrote the text in their own words then added any scriptural or other knowledge that they had, with varying degrees of success.

The distinctive feature that separated top from mid range was the focus of the overall answer. Few candidates in the mid-range faced Keith Ward's text explicitly and instead tried to manipulate their material to fit the question, but not always successfully.

At the lowest levels candidates wrote a GCSE-style answer on the life of Christ and applied it in a very basic way to the text. A number of candidates in part (b) resorted to personal testimony and confessional material.

Grade boundaries

Raw mark boundaries

Max Mark	a*	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
50	43	38	33	28	24	20	16	0

Uniform Mark Scale boundaries

Max Mark	a*	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	0

a* is only used in conversion from raw to uniform marks. It is not a published unit grade.

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Order Code UA024675 Summer 2010

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