

Examiners' Report January 2009

GCE

GCE Religious Studies (8RS01/9RS01)

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6RS01: Unit 1 - Foundations

Introduction

Candidates are to be congratulated on producing some high calibre answers. In many cases candidates presented informative answers that focused directly on the demands of the question. Although there was evidence of good practice, there were other examples that require improvement.

A number of answers at the lower levels had little evidence of being structured. Quite often this was indicated by poor construction of paragraphs. There were responses that spanned several pages with perhaps just one or two paragraph breaks. On the other hand, there were scripts in which most of the paragraphs consisted of only two or three lines, with little evidence of effective sign-posting techniques. It may be useful for candidates to be familiar with the level descriptors in the Sample Assessment Materials. On page 111 a feature of AO1 levels 1 and 2 is that the writing may lack clarity and organisation. Whereas on page 112 level three says a candidate will demonstrate 'most of the skills needed to produce effective extended writing' and in level 4 there will be 'good organisation and clarity'.

Effective paragraph techniques are merely a part of good organisation in essays, but nevertheless an important part, and one that can be easily targeted for improvement by candidates. One reason why essay construction is important is that without it the content in answers may appear incoherent with little sequence from one paragraph to another with insufficient evidence of linking together ideas, points of views and arguments.

Philosophy of Religion

Question 1 (a):

There were a number of responses that were of a high standard. Those candidates who performed well addressed all the parts of the question. They selected the key ideas and examined their strengths. Some candidates presented these tasks as separate demands and others combined their analysis of key ideas together with their strengths. Either approach was appropriate. It is pleasing to see a marked improvement from previous specifications with similar questions in which candidates understand that an examination of key ideas is not synonymous with showing an understanding of its strengths. The good quality scripts paid clear attention to the demands of AO2 and fully addressed the point about the strengths and weaknesses being 'equally balanced'.

On the other hand some candidates focused on ideas but had little to say on strengths and some of these bypassed reference to the view about the strengths and weaknesses being equally balanced. This was quite noticeable in some responses that combined parts (i) and (ii) into a single whole and thereby omitted part of the requirement for AO2.

Question 1 (b):

This was not as popular as the question about design argument. Those answers that performed well, addressed the AO1 point about the 'distinctive' ideas and the AO2 issue about the 'extent' this may be seen as a strong argument. The weaker answers did not supply explicit evidence of answering the thrust of these questions.

Question 2 (a):

The majority of candidates presented good quality answers to this question. They examined the key features of the problem of suffering together with the essential ideas of two solutions. The majority selected Augustine and Irenaeus and some examined process theology and a few looked at Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist approaches. All of these routes are eminently suitable exemplars. Some candidates focused on evaluative issues in part (ii) and those candidates who scored high marks systematically commented on the claim in the quotation that suffering is a mystery and cannot be solved.

Question 2 (b):

Candidates answered this in a competent manner. They focussed on both parts of (i) in terms of an outline of key concepts together with an examination of main reasons to believe in miracles. The majority of candidates were familiar with Hume's criticisms and there were instances of a judicious weighing-up of Hume's points.

Ethics**Question 3(a):**

The principles of Utilitarianism were widely known and often very well presented. Bentham and Mills were pretty well understood. However a number of candidates did not address the actual evaluation question asked but provided their own already prepared evaluation. Situation Ethics was not as widely understood, though there were some excellent answers among them. Again some ignored the evaluation requirement about a genuinely religious ethic and simply evaluated whether Situation Ethics was valid today.

Question 4(a):

The just war theories were generally well known and were superbly argued by some of the better candidates. Many applied them to the contemporary situation. Pacifism views were not so widely known. It may be worth pointing out again that St Augustine was born about 17 years after Constantine died so Constantine did not consult with him.

Question 4(b):

This was not well answered with too many candidates launched into a whole series of dilemmas without examining the reason why dilemmas arise as the question asked. Some candidates struggled to see how religious belief could be helpful in resolving these dilemmas.

Buddhism

Question 5(a):

Was quite well answered although some candidates could have paid more attention to the influence of the religious context on the life of the Buddha.

Question 5(b):

Some answers to question 5 (b) were narrative and descriptive with very little material on the enlightenment of the Buddha. The question required an examination of the key features and this requires more analysis than a biographical story. Admittedly, Conze's *Buddhist Scriptures* is a set text for unit 3 but the account of the Buddha's life in chapter 2 is accessible to AS candidates.

Questions 6(a) & 6(b):

Attracted good quality answers.

Christianity

There were few responses in this section

Hinduism

No responses seen.

Islam

Overall in this section, candidates displayed good proficiency in their use of key terms together with evidence of sound understanding. However, the evaluative requirements in parts (ii) were areas that could be further improved and given the mark allocation of 9 for part (ii), some candidates' answers were too brief. In question 11(a) candidates selected from a wide range of suitable exemplars in order to give an account of a religious tradition. Part (ii) received some good answers with fine use of the Qur'an with an ability to put their material into perspective. There were some very good detailed answers to 12(a)(i) but these were sometimes let down by very short answers to part (ii). There was a similar pattern to question 12 (b) in which part (i) displayed good levels of understanding but with a very short part (ii) and these sometimes contained mere repetition of part (i) material.

Judaism

No responses seen.

New Testament

Question 17:

The teaching of Jesus on wealth and poverty was well understood and there were some very good answers from Luke's gospel using a wide range of texts. However the extent to which they led to controversy was not so well attempted. Not many Fourth gospel candidates attempted this question most did number 18.

Question 18(a):

There were some very good answers on the significance of these miracles and healings for the ministry of Jesus, although some of the weaker candidates emphasised narrative accounts without applying them to the ministry of Jesus. The controversial character of the miracles was assessed well by some though few seemed to think that this might include the question of whether they actually happened.

Question 18(b):

The texts on discipleship were well known. Most appeared to limit the demands of being a disciple to the apostles, and not see its application to all followers of Jesus in all ages. The evaluation brought a number of narrative accounts but some did evaluate the crucial role that John the Baptist played in the ministry of Jesus

Grade Boundaries

6RS01: Unit 1 - Foundations

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	90	69	61	53	46	39	32
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

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