

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel GCE in Religious  
Studies (6RS02) Paper 1F

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## **AREA 1G Christianity**

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### **Introduction**

#### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

Expressing annual praise for the quality of candidates' work is a delight because, once again, the Investigations Paper evoked excellent studies drawn from an inspiring range of topics within a wide range of varied academic fields. The high standard of work evidenced in June 2014 was no exception to historical high standards as candidates demonstrated a very high level of independent enquiry which clearly demonstrated engagement with their chosen area of investigation. Candidates showcased their knowledge of a particular academic field in the way they identified a line of enquiry, clearly expressed their view, analysed key concepts and deployed evidence with coherent understanding of their task whilst fluently evaluating a wide range of source material that they had at their disposal. The enthusiasm for and knowledge of the chosen topic was clearly conveyed in many answers that were truly academic in their approach. Some Centres continue 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 (or vice versa) and not really grappling fully with the demands of the question. This practice does not always work to the best effect as the candidate might end up answering neither question as fully as possible. It must be noted that each question was written for ONE of three topics within each particular Area of Study. Candidates were not penalised if correct entries were not made or a cross was put in a box that did not match the answer or if no box was ticked at all. However, evidence shows that candidates have decided that the question for a topic that they clearly had not prepared for looked more inviting and selected that question but that did not necessarily mean they were best prepared to answer that question. More candidates in this session answered a question they had not prepared for and may need to be reminded which question their material is best directed at and be advised to answer that question. Examiners were encouraged to mark positively and to credit all valid material according to the mark scheme and question paper. 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. There is still evidence of Centres studying Papers 1B and 1F being entered for 1A. This might be an oversight regarding filling out the form – Centres must choose 6RS02 and then identify which of the seven papers from 1A to 1G is the specific entry.

Variation in achievement was related to the two assessment objectives. These objectives should receive prominent attention in the process of the investigation.

Importantly there must be explicit attention to both objectives in the examination answer and also to the question that is intended to focus the 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 good essays showed command over the material; such command makes for high outcomes and rewards the amount of hard work done by the candidate. Many candidates had clearly learned much in the process and their overall grasp of the issues involved and command over their material was highly commendable.

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. There was evidence of rote learned answers using the same structure and material inclusive of quotes; whilst much information was relevant to the topic and consequently was awarded in terms of AO1, there was a significant lack of engagement with the specific demands of the question and consequently marks for AO2 were low, with only generic evaluation provided. This approach is contrasted with another form where candidates were trained to answer the question; arguably, this is evidence of good practice but at the lower end some candidates thought it was sufficient to simply use the question stimulus at the end of each paragraph. The best answers were those which were guided by the statement as opposed to simply '*tagging it on*' to content that they were already anticipating to write about. A balanced approach to the question that meets the highest levels of achievement according to both assessment objectives is obviously desirable and the generic question accommodates many possible routes to success whereby any valid approach to the question was credited.

Finally, there is increasing evidence of poorly written scripts that are almost illegible – scripts are scanned onto software for marking and even though the examiner can enlarge the screen many scripts were still very difficult to read. Candidates are strongly advised to develop their practical handwriting skills and then practice writing under timed conditions. Candidates who cannot achieve legible writing may need to consider accessing the facility for word processing their answers according to the regulations. Centres are assured that much time was invested in attempting to decipher illegible answers but there is always the risk that a badly written word/phrase/paragraph could be misinterpreted and it is best to avoid the chances of this occurring. Examiners understand the time constraints that candidates are writing under but this problem regarding illegible handwriting seems to be on the increase. Centres need to address this issue because the current format for

examinations requires candidates' ability to sustain handwriting and academic standards under examination pressure.

That said, the excellent work of centres and candidates in 6RS02 bears testimony to the academic potential of candidates that is a joy to behold when it is fully realised.

### **Specific Comments – Area 1G – The Study of Christianity and the Christian Church**

#### Question 1 DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH UP TO AND INCLUDING THE REFORMATION

The majority of candidates did very well in this question and demonstrated detailed knowledge of the topic studied. Candidates are very well versed in Church History and diverse topics included studies of early Church History and the establishment of the Creeds, the Crusades, Calvin, Luther and Gregorian Reform. Other topics such as the Cathar movement, Monasticism (the desert Fathers) and the Anabaptist movement were investigated. The most popular topic was the study of Calvin or Luther's ideas. 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. There was 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.

This year it was remarkable that many very able candidates successfully studied Luther in great depth. They understood the complex problems of the Church in Luther's lifetime and could relate this in a meaningful way to their own experience of the Church in the modern world. The impact of their investigation had informed their opinions and made them examine their own commitment afresh. This form of

evaluation emerging from a study reflects the best spirit of the Investigations Paper and the best answers integrated a personal journey with sound academic reasoning based on a huge bank of relevant knowledge of the topic.

### Question 2 THE MODERN PERIOD

There were some interesting studies on Thomas Merton, the Catholic Church in Ireland, Black Theology and Liberation Theology; as also studies on social justice through the perspective of the Rights of Women. The studies on Black Theology and Liberation Theology were well informed and at the higher end candidates addressed the question. There was 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 as 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. There were few problems addressing the question as most candidates had a solid grasp of their material.

### Question 3 CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND PRACTICE

There were a variety of traditional responses to this question such as homosexuality and sexual ethics, or Bonhoeffer in the context of Nazism as an exemplar of Christian belief and practice. The range of topics studied for this unit remains lamentably narrow and an original topic on Christianity and sport that was introduced in 2012 did not reappear. However, this year has seen more work on social justice that was very well executed. It is good to see 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.

Issues that are noted each year continue to persist at the lower range of achievement; 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 Question 1. 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.

#### Paper Summary

##### Key Points to Remember

- Do not ignore the question.
- 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.
- Well 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.

