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# **Examiners' Report**

## Principal Examiner Feedback

### Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE  
In Religious Studies (6RS02)  
Paper 1F Investigations – The Study of the New  
Testament

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## **AREA 1F New Testament**

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### **Introduction**

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2017 examination season heralded the end of an era and the final entry stands as a testimony to the historic high level of engagement with selected studies drawn from a very wide range of academic fields. Over the life of this specification there has been consistent evidence of superb research on topics that are clearly of great interest to candidates. This legacy of academic achievement has been inspirational for examiners whose privilege it is to see what can be achieved by our candidates. The new specification will obviously provide a different assessment experience and centres will find that their excellent resources can be integrated into future schemes of work.

The high standard of work evidenced in June 2017 was no exception to historical high standards as candidates demonstrated a very high level of independent enquiry which clearly demonstrated what their chosen area of investigation had meant to them as a learning experience. 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. Candidates were mostly 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. At this stage in the life of the specification it is difficult to find new things to report because, in the main, centres possess a very high degree of expertise and this is clearly evidenced in the work that is produced on the day of the examination.

Examiners were encouraged to mark positively and to credit all valid material according to the mark scheme and question paper. Variation in achievement was related to the two assessment objectives. 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. These candidates were insecure with their management of material and did not know how to best structure their content to answer the specific question. 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. This approach is contrasted with excellent praxis whereby 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 anticipated content. 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.

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 1F – The Study of the New Testament**

Candidates on the whole gave comprehensive and detailed responses to each question. Evaluation was evident through direct exposition of the New Testament and critical appraisal of particular relevant standpoints. Question 3 was hallmarked by a 'structure' of candidate response that was evidently framed on a model answer which was hoped to fit likely questions. Although this direction does not negatively impact on examiner marking there should be an awareness that such modelling may lead to constraining the natural and nurtured ability of candidates to produce something original and compelling to read. This perennial problem has been reported on every year.

#### **Question 1 Religion and Science**

Candidates who presented academic answers to this question are to be commended for how well-versed they were on the New Testament and related philosophical issues. Successful responses had a solid grasp of New Testament scholarship and how this related to the religion and science debate. At the top end, many answers were excellent and received very high marks. There was a clear and detailed understanding of the issues and of the religious and theological meanings behind them. Candidates referred to a range of scholars, both ancient and modern, and attempted a detailed theological discussion that was firmly contextually situated within the religion and science relationship. There was proficient use and understanding of complex theological ideas such as 'salvation' and the use of New Testament symbolism was impressive. Clearly the best candidates were very well prepared and had achieved a very wide range of knowledge of relevant scholarship.

## **Question 2 New Testament Ethics and Morality**

Answers to this question were really excellent, offering detailed ethical analysis of New Testament teachings, coupled with a range of useful scholarship and proficient use of religious language.

## **Question 3 Life After Death**

Every year this question attracts a very high level of interest in and enthusiasm for the one question that arguably can only be a matter for speculation during our lifetime. This is by far the most popular question and attracts many excellent responses at the top end with a clear and concise analysis of New Testament teachings, coupled with philosophical debate. The range of scholarship and textual analysis was impressive and candidates were comfortable with handling their material to answer the question.

### 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.

