



Pearson

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Religious Studies (6RS02)
Paper 1G Investigations – The Study of Christianity
and the Christian Church

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AREA 1G Christianity

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 1G – The Study of Christianity and the Christian Church

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

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. There has been a very high standard on studies of Luther for the last few years and this final session was no exception.

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.

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.

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.

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