



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

Religious Studies

RSS04

(Specification 2060)

Unit D Religion, Philosophy and Science

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

There were many very good scripts presented this year but, there were also some weaker scripts. The questions did not seem to present undue difficulties to the candidates but a number of issues did emerge. Centres should make sure that candidates understand that, for AO1, no evaluation is required. It was especially evident in 01, for example, where Hume's arguments were presented with an accompanying evaluation of his views. It was also surprising that few candidates presented really good answers to 05, perhaps the most straightforward question for this topic. It was pleasing to see that more candidates seem to understand the need to express personal reflection in the AO2 questions.

Question 1 *Miracles*

01 Many very good answers tackled the difficult area of laws of nature and Hume's understanding of events which violate these. Many candidates wrote that Hume argued that miracles were never attested to by a sufficient number of witnesses. They then went on to evaluate this argument by pointing to the feeding of the 5000. However, centres should note that Hume's argument is about the number of *educated* witnesses so the point about the feeding of the 5000 becomes redundant.

02 Candidates struggled with the notion that arguments could be 'not irrelevant'. This often meant that a range of views was not evident in the answer. Few answers picked out the words 'entirely irrelevant'. It is recommended that centres encourage candidates to focus on the precise words in these types of question because this often makes it easier to frame the debate. The best answers picked up on the real focus of the question: that where miracles are believed to be religiously significant, Hume's arguments on violation could well be understood to be entirely irrelevant.

Question 2 *Creation*

03 In the best answers, a range of different understandings was presented. Knowledge of the creationist position was generally sound. Knowledge of the so-called 'liberal' tradition seems less developed. A liberal view does not stop at simply stating that the words of the Bible are not to be taken literally. The liberal tradition has much that is positive to say about creation and centres are encouraged to explore this in greater detail.

04 This question was answered well by the majority and many candidates understood that the acceptance of modern science would depend largely on which religious understanding of creation was adopted.

Question 3 *The design argument*

05 This was intended to be a very straightforward question but it was surprising to see how many candidates struggled to articulate the views of Aquinas. The top scores were often given for those answers which dealt fully with the analogy presented by Paley. In particular, Paley makes the point that the order in the universe far exceeds the order found in the watch and, therefore, the likelihood of a universe designer is even greater.

06 Most candidates understood that the theory of evolution changed the nature of the classical argument. A wide range of supporting argument was adduced both for and against the thesis. Some candidates struggled with the word 'credibility'. Those who were able to define this term often managed to score towards the top end of the mark scale.

Question 4 *Quantum mechanics and religious world view*

07 There were very few scripts. Those who answered this question tended to have a good knowledge of the different elements outlined in the Specification.

08 The key element of the question is the word 'religious'. The Specification distinguishes between mysticism and religion in this regard. Unless the mysticism cited by candidates was presented within a religious context, it could not be credited under this particular question.

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