



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

Religious Studies

RST3H

(Specification 2060)

**Unit 3H World Religions 2 Christianity
Judaism
Islam**

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

There was a significant rise in entry for this unit, but as in last year's exam, there were relatively few candidates for the sections on Christianity and Judaism. Islam remains the most popular option for candidates.

Section A Christianity

Question 1 *Origins and development of Christian vocation and service*

01 'Wider community' was interpreted generously, even when candidates strayed into areas more the domain of Question 3. Generally candidates did not show sufficient depth in their answers.

02 This question was addressed reasonably well. One candidate was unclear about the word 'irrelevant' though.

Question 2 *Christology*

03 Candidates scored well by focusing on whether Jesus was divine or human or both in an intelligent and knowledgeable way.

04 Candidates tended to respond well to this, covering a range of viewpoints and responding in a balanced and informed way.

Question 3 *Christian action*

05 A very accessible question to candidates with knowledge of (e.g.) CAFOD, Christian Aid or Tearfund.

06 Candidates were able to see both points of view.

Question 4 *Christian spirituality*

There was only one candidate for this question, which was disappointing.

Section B Judaism

Questions 6 and 7 were again the most popular in this section of the paper.

Question 5 *Origins and development of Zionism*

09 Candidates responded very well, covering both religious and political Zionism. It was very pleasing to see how much they could recall and how expertly; ranging from, on the religious side, the land of Israel being more spiritually significant than anywhere else to, on the political side, the strengthening of the state of Israel. It was also pleasing to see that all candidates who attempted this question avoided the simple narrative telling of history without trying to show beliefs.

10 Very well answered on the whole with candidates using a variety of examples to try and offer a balanced response.

Question 6 *Holocaust issues and theology*

11 The most popular question in the Judaism section. Most answers were centred exactly on the demands of the question set and some candidates scored very highly indeed. From Fackenheim to Berkowitz to Maybaum, candidates were citing the different responses with authority.

12 Answers were characterised by balanced views in response to the evaluation statement but with most candidates suggesting that no good could come from the Holocaust given its very nature and scale. Some did counter with the view that faith in God was actually strengthened by the event and how the Holocaust has served to save those in the Diaspora from persecution.

Question 7 *Bar/Bat Mitzvah, marriage and divorce*

- 13 All candidates covered both aspects of marriage and divorce, albeit in different measure. All were very sure of their ground and wrote in both depth and detail, scoring well. Inevitably, given the nature of this question there were some descriptive answers but there were clear aspects of understanding in these too. Most of the responses were of a good quality and were characterised by clarity, focus and direction.
- 14 Candidates gave generally good, considered responses to potential inconsistencies or not in Jewish teaching on marriage and divorce. Only one candidate may not have fully understood the word ‘inconsistencies’.

Question 8 *The Hasidic traditions*

No candidates responded to this question.

Section C Islam

This was, by far, the most popular section of the paper, with Questions 10 and 12 being the most popular questions this year.

Question 9 *The Shari’a and the Muslim way of life*

- 17 Reasonably popular and the better responses revealed a sound knowledge of Shari’a and the role of ijtiḥād. There was plenty of depth and detail by candidates on the role in Shi’a and the idea of ‘doors’ being open or closed. Weaker candidates responded with answers that stated just that ijtiḥād seemed to be anyone’s individual interpretation and said little else. Some responses were very comprehensive and were able to show how ijtiḥād can be considered as ‘personal effort’ or struggle linked to jihad and to try and uncover God’s rulings on issues from the different Muslim sources such as Ijma, Qiyas and the Sunnah. The best answers combined a number of different approaches.
- 18 Some excellent answers which discussed ijtiḥād well. A good understanding from the previous responses of what ijtiḥād was came through many answers to this question. Many of the better responses from candidates indicated the inherent nature of ijtiḥād, and that the purpose for many Muslims is to try and establish what God’s command is. This was often nicely contrasted with the view that God has actually laid out all a Muslim needs to know about the law anyway and that the conservative Muslim approach is that most Muslims do not have the training in legal sources to conduct ijtiḥād.

Question 10 *Shi’a Islam*

- 19 Even though the question asked candidates to focus on the distinctive practices of Shi’a Islam, there were some that clearly would have preferred a question on the distinctive beliefs of Shi’a Islam. This was a pity as some candidates who decided to offer ‘one that they had prepared earlier’ came a little unstuck. When the more able candidates focused entirely on practices, or at the very least on beliefs related to practices, they fared much better. Some went off on a historical digression; in general those that focused on Ashura, temporary marriage, practice of the pillars and concealing identity responded in a much better way to the question set. Very few, surprisingly, discussed the practice of lesser jihad (6th pillar). The higher level marks were awarded for those that did bring out of the distinctive nature of Shi’a.
- 20 Many answers repeated material from AO1 to demonstrate a contrast between beliefs and practices. As always it was good to see the more able candidates focus on evaluation. Some conclusions in weaker answers simply pointed out the obvious, that you could not have practices without the beliefs behind them. Perhaps some candidates could have made a little more of the hidden Imam and the Day of Judgement overriding for many Shi’a Muslims the importance of keeping the festivals going. Some better answers did focus on a specific argument that in Shi’a the historical bloodline of their beliefs may always hold sway.

Question 11 *God and humanity*

- 21** This was the least popular question on the Islam section of the paper. Candidates seemed to find it less accessible than the others. That said, the better responses were able to make use of Sufism for the immanence aspect. Some of the more able expressed how Allah is not remote and unapproachable and is close to humankind as expressed through the Qur'an and the Hadith. Responses were competent and covered both aspects well, when they featured Allah as the author of creation and the controller of destiny alongside Allah as a universal God who is absolute and integrates all affirmative values. These candidates were also able to use a good range of technical terminology.
- 22** The best answers did explore the concept of free will in Islam and whether there could ever be such a thing because Muslims have to submit to the will of Allah. This was often contrasted with the Kharijites arguing that humans have 'qadar' or the capacity to right or wrong, thereby deserving the reward or punishment they received.

Question 12 *Women and family life*

- 23** This was clearly the most popular question on the paper and by some margin. Candidates seemed to find it very accessible though there was a full range of responses, levels and marks. The more able candidates dealt with idea of specific roles indicating equality. They also identified that Muslim teachings on status displays some disparity between theory and the teaching and practice. As well as identifying the role of a woman in Islam as wife, mother, the bringing up of children, the best answers covered such areas as dress, property ownership, voting, engaging in politics and taking up employment as evidence of the status of a woman in Islam. Weaker answers sometimes offered platitudes and generalisations and were unable to score the higher levels available.
- 24** Many of the better responses pointed out the positive treatment of women in Islam making it more likely that there is greater equality than stereotypes would sometimes have us believe. Some candidates cleverly sought to discuss that in western society we see views of Islam and the way women are treated differently to how women are actually treated in traditional Muslim countries. At the weaker end, candidates sometimes generalised about polygamy and how this was unfair as well as different rules for divorce proceedings and that men and women will never be equal in Islam. The best answers used examples and offered a more balanced and reasoned approach.

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