



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
June 2012**

**Religious Studies**

**RST3A**

**(Specification 2060)**

**Unit 3A Religion and Ethics**

***Report on the Examination***

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## General comments

All the questions were accessible and the full range of marks was given for each separate part of each question.

Many students were able to achieve high marks on the AO1 parts of the questions as there was a great deal of evidence to suggest that certain text books had been used extensively as part of revision. Students were able to remember much information and repeat it. However, this technique did not help with the AO2 parts of the questions and there were many students who appeared to be thoroughly unprepared for these sort of questions. Many responses were only from one point of view or from personal, subjective viewpoints. It was rare to come across arguments which were backed up with facts or reference to scholars. It was also very rare to see essay plans being written.

### Question 1 *Libertarianism, free will and determinism*

- 01** This question was well answered. The role of conscience is a topic area with which students obviously felt comfortable, and many scholarly views were cited. However, few students explained these views with examples, perpetuating the idea that much of the knowledge was rote learnt rather than fully understood. Some students only wrote about conscience rather than libertarianism and conscience. Some students wrote about determinism, which didn't really have a place in this particular answer.
- 02** The practical application of liberty should have been an accessible question, but many students only seemed to be able to answer from one perspective (which was either that libertarianism could work in practice or that it could not); this might have been ameliorated if they had written essay plans. Others argued for determinism as opposed to showing how libertarianism cannot work in practice. Once again, exemplification of how libertarianism might work was lacking even with the words 'in practice' being prominent in the question.

### Question 2 *Virtue Ethics*

- 03** This was a straightforward question about Aristotelian virtue ethics, and many students were able to give good, factual answers. However, some students wished to show how to apply virtue ethics, which was not incorrect or inappropriate but inevitably meant that their coverage of the whole system of Virtue Ethics was somewhat curtailed. Others wished to talk about the weaknesses and strengths of Aristotelian ethics, and yet others to compare Aristotle's Virtue Ethics with those of later scholars such as MacIntyre, Annas and Foot; none of these approaches was what was asked for in this question. A handful of students tried to answer this question without mentioning the existence of the virtues at all.
- 04** This question provoked some mixed responses. Many students were able to argue that friendship was the most important aspect of human nature in Virtue Ethics but were unable to suggest why it was not, and thus what else might be. This was particularly peculiar as many of the same students had mentioned the importance of the virtues of Truth and Courage in 03, and also about the Soul, and yet seemed unaware that these might be worthy alternative responses. Very few students even tried to argue against friendship being the most important aspect of human nature within Virtue Ethics as, interestingly, they appeared to have missed out the words 'of human nature' in their reasoning. Thus most alternative responses said that being virtuous was the most important aspect of Virtue Ethics, which was not addressing the question set. Missing out the words 'of human nature' meant that answers became mostly about the strengths and weaknesses of Virtue Ethics, which is an entirely different question. Students need to be advised to read the whole question carefully.

### **Question 3 *Religious views on sexual behaviour and human relationships***

- 05** This was an accessible question and one for which many students had rehearsed an answer. Unfortunately, some students failed to discern that the question asked about 'love' and there were a majority of answers which talked about sex before marriage, the Christian marriage service and the Christian Church's current attitude towards same sex relationships and marriage. Able students were able to tweak the emphasis so that love became the dominant feature even with the above examples; however, many answers were focussed more on sexual relations rather than love. There was evidence that some students really didn't understand the difference between sex and love; the rape of Tamar and the seduction of Lot by his daughters, in the Old Testament, were offered as examples of *philia* love as they concerned family members.
- 06** This question was often not well answered, possibly because it was apparent that many students did not understand the difference between sexual relations and love. Some were able to argue that a religious concept of love was difficult to put into practice, but not that it was not, other than saying that if you were a Christian [or an adherent of another faith] then it would not be difficult as that was what you were supposed to do by being a member of that faith. Once again, very little evidence was given in the arguments, but a certain amount of subjective opinion. Students are advised to consider approaching these sorts of questions by writing essay plans rather going straight into the answer.

### **Question 4 *Science and technology***

- 07** This question was generally well answered. Most students discussed CCTV, internet bullying, 'cookies' and internet fraud as examples of conflict with human rights. A few students merely gave different examples of how one's *privacy* could be compromised. Cloning and embryo research were also cited as examples of conflict with human rights, but a minority of students failed to state what *human* right was being violated in these cases and why it could be described as a *human* right. Several students mentioned the people at Northwick Park hospital who had volunteered to take part in some drugs trials but had a bad reaction to these drugs; as these people had given their consent voluntarily to these experiments, it was difficult to argue that their rights had been violated.
- 08** Again, the second part of this question was generally answered quite weakly. Students seemed to be only capable of addressing one side of the debate, namely that advances in technology should not override human rights. However, there were some students who had obviously thought through the idea and were able to give a very good, detailed argument with examples about certain developments improving human lifestyle and discussing sensitively the idea that progress needs to happen. Some students also pointed out that ideas/ inventions could not be halted once they had been developed.

#### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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