



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

Religious Studies

RST3D

(Specification 2060)

Unit 3D Old Testament

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

A wide range of ability was seen in the scripts, but there were far more at the top end of the scale than in previous years, with a significant proportion of students gaining maximum or near maximum marks for their selected essays. The confident maturity of some scripts made them a joy to read. There was much evidence in all four questions of effective use of scholarly reference and sound application of text. One of the main reasons for students losing marks was in AO2 responses, where only one side of the argument was well developed, thus pinning them to levels 4 or 5.

Question 1 *Ways of reading the Old Testament*

01 Although question 1 was the least popular of the questions, more students answered it than in previous years. Most students noted that two incidents were to be examined, though many answers concentrated more on the crossing of the sea. Source and form critical approaches were considered and a number of students applied reader response criticism, with particular reference to liberation theology. A few students contrasted the significance of the Exodus for Jews as a defining moment in history with its significance for Christians as prefiguring the passion and resurrection narratives of Christ.

02 This was answered well by most students. Some students interpreted 'theological' in the narrower sense of views on the nature of God, whereas others interpreted it more broadly, picking up and applying points that they had made in 01.

Question 2 *God and humanity*

03 Question 2 was popular and there were some superb responses to 03, some students covering the whole range of set texts. There was highly effective use of biblical criticism, particularly source and form critical insights. Profound understanding of Genesis 1-3 and 11 was displayed in many answers; comments on Genesis 6-9 tended to be more superficial.

04 Again, there were some excellent responses with a few students using the opportunity to refer to other Old Testament texts, e.g. Wisdom literature, to support their arguments. Some answered from environmental perspectives. Others argued that the secularisation of society means that texts written for a totally different world view have nothing to say to the increasing secular modern world.

Question 3 *The ways in which people believed they should live their lives*

05 Question 3 was also very popular and it was pleasing to see that answers to 05 were far less pedestrian and contained more effective use of the set texts than in previous years. Reference was made to Wisdom's teaching on personal values and social relationships.

06 Many students found the statement in this question quite challenging and struggled to produce effective argument. Students might have considered whether the modern emphasis on people as part of a global community requires more than the Wisdom texts offer with their focus on family and the local community, or whether in fact most people still see family and community relationships as more important than global ones. They might also have considered whether society in the 21st century needs a broader basis than the theological grounding of the guidance given in Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus.

Question 4 *How the people coped in times of crisis – suffering and hope*

07 Question 4 was by far the most popular question and produced some highly competent responses that were fully focused on the question. Almost all answers commented on the explicit monotheism stated in the set texts, contrasting it with what preceded. A number of students compared passages such as Isaiah 45:5 with Elijah's contest on Mt. Carmel, making a contrast between theoretical monotheism and practical monotheism/monolatry. Many contrasted the positive message of Isaiah 40-55 with the largely negative pre-exilic prophecy, pointing to oracles describing God as working in history to save his people rather than to punish them. There was no requirement to consider other exilic prophets, but some students commented on Ezekiel's rejection of traditional views of corporate responsibility and on Jeremiah's understanding of the covenant relationship as personal and individual rather than national.

08 This produced some outstanding responses. Most students showed a real understanding of how the message of hope contained in Isaiah 40-55 addressed the various aspects of the deep emotional and spiritual crisis experienced by the exiles. Again, effective use was made of non-set texts, e.g. Jeremiah's letter to the exiles and Ezekiel's vision of a new Temple. Most students were also able to see how exilic prophecy might have failed to give hope because its claims seemed too good to be true. It was also pointed out that many exiles chose not to return when they had the chance, presumably because they had been assimilated into Babylonian culture, so the message of the exilic prophets would have meant little to them. Some students also pointed out that there was nothing in exilic prophecy to give hope to the Jews still in Judah who were suffering terrible deprivation, for the focus of the set texts in Isaiah 40-55 was on those in Babylon. Those who made use of Jeremiah and Ezekiel argued that their attitude to those left in Judah was largely negative.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

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