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Examiners' Report June 2010

GCE Religious Studies 6RS04/1F

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6RS04 1F June 2010

General comments on Unit 4

This was the first year of this examination 6RS04. The Legacy Spec paper 6584 had the same content as 6RS04 but this new exam has a different mark allocation between the two Assessment Objectives. The legacy paper had a breakdown of 25 marks for AO1 and 15 marks for AO2 whereas 6RS04 has 30 marks available for AO1 and 20 marks for AO2. There are also differences in the level descriptors between the papers with, for example, AO1 having 5 levels in this new specification compared to 4 in the legacy specification.

It is of paramount importance for candidates to examine the passage on the exam paper. Candidates must relate what they have learned and apply it to the extract and not treat it in a cursory fashion nor ignore the selected text. There are very many ways of examining a passage and there is no preferred method. What is essential is an explicit focus on the text, whatever method is used to examine it. There was evidence of some candidates writing several paragraphs of material that was not linked to the question. This is not a recommended strategy.

The examination is divided into two parts. AO1 is examined in part (a) and is worth 30 marks and AO2 is examined in part (b) and is worth 20 marks. This division is on the paper to assist candidates to structure their answers and to enable them to make sensible use of their time in the allocation of material. In most cases candidates had the required examination technique to make effective use of their material. However, a few candidates spent a disproportionate amount of time on AO1 at the expense of AO2 and vice versa. There is no necessary requirement to follow the structured division as seen in the question. However, for candidates creating a holistic answer, there is a tendency to pay inadequate attention to AO2, especially in relation to the implications aspect of part (b). Candidates who run together AO1 and AO2 are credited where they achieve these, although candidates may penalise themselves with partial answers by using this approach.

Assessment Objective 1:

There was evidence of sound subject knowledge with a thorough exposition of the passage. Some candidates examined the passage in the question paper and then illustrated key ideas by the way they navigated their way through the whole passage of the anthology. This enabled candidates to incorporate various scholars and themes that were referenced in the whole article as a means of a more detailed analysis of the passage itself. A number of candidates had a strong working knowledge of the other two anthology texts and were able to link these in their answers.

At the lower levels candidates presented a more descriptive and basic account of the passage akin to a simple comprehension test. Some outlined the full article but with insufficient attention to the passage on the question paper. This may have displayed their knowledge of the anthology but not an understanding of the selected passage.

Assessment Objective 2:

The better quality answers were those that expressed view points with confidence and authority, supported by reason and evidence. Some candidates outlined their own views and were able to ally or contrast them with various scholars they had examined in their other units. Good quality work on the implications in part (b) consisted of academically rigorous approaches with pertinent examples.

At the lower levels for AO2 some candidates presented partial answers. For example, some expressed opinions giving their views on the extract but did not write about the possible implications.

Specific comments option 1F - Islam

Assessment Objective 1:

Some candidates presented a competent exposition of the passage, together with a proficient use of key technical terms. The better quality answers correctly interpreted this passage as a contribution towards an understanding of Islamic Ethics. Such candidates analysed ideas and terms such as *ummah*, covenantal relationship and its bearing on material and spiritual life. Effective use was made of relevant Qur'anic studies and illustrated by Islamic scholarship.

Some candidates linked the content of this passage with their related studies such the set texts in 6RS03 together with Sufism. Candidates at this higher level displayed sound study skills and presented answers that were well structured and displayed powers of detailed analysis, where appropriate.

At the lower levels the exposition was basic, with some answers being little more than a straightforward comprehension exercise. Some candidates virtually bypassed the passage and devoted the bulk of their answers on topics such as the Qur'an or Jihad at the expense of a study of the passage itself. These could have been used intelligently in the context of this passage but such answers needed to be rooted in the passage. Similarly, some candidates used their answer to show what they knew about basic Islamic beliefs which in many cases was not selected and adapted to the demands of this passage.

Assessment Objective 2:

A good number of candidates performed reasonably well at AO2. There were some interesting debates as seen in the controversies across some different schools and traditions. The passage lent itself to an evaluation of contemporary implications and many displayed sound understanding of some of the complexities within contemporary Islamic ethics.

It can be noted that a few candidates saw the author's name A. Nanji and seemed to more readily associate him with his work in these anthologies on Islamic Philosophy to the extent that a few candidates thought this passage (on Ethics) was in fact the same source as the passage selected last year (Philosophy) and so presented really good answers to last year's passage.

Grade boundaries

Raw mark boundaries

Max Mark	a*	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
50	43	38	33	28	24	20	16	0

Uniform Mark Scale boundaries

Max Mark	a*	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	0

a* is only used in conversion from raw to uniform marks. It is not a published unit grade.

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