

Examiners' Report
January 2012

GCE Religious Studies 6RS02 1C

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Introduction

This unit provides for a balance of teacher-directed and more independent candidate enquiry. This 'Investigations' unit offers the opportunity to undertake individual research into a topic of particular interest to the candidate. This is the reason why each question includes the expression, "with reference to the topic you have investigated". The ability to select and manage individual research material to fit into the demands of the question is an important discriminator in terms of assessment.

It is for this reason that the mark scheme for this unit is a generic one. There are no indicative mark schemes per question, given the fact that there are so many legitimate ways of answering questions based on independent research.

The two assessment objectives should permeate this whole process. Candidates should determine whether there is sufficient material to access a variety of sources (AO1) and to evaluate alternative views (AO2). Candidates may monitor their progress with reference to the criteria in the level descriptors across both AO1 and AO2. The assessment criteria are always mentioned in each question. Typically this is achieved with the trigger words, 'examine' for AO1 and 'comment on' for AO2. The assessment of the candidates work is based on the application of these objectives.

Some candidates performed very well indeed. It was clear that many candidates had selected topics of genuine interest to them. There was evidence of substantial background reading which was used effectively in answers. Candidates presented well structured answers based on the question, and candidates were able to use their knowledge to address the focus of the question. A feature of high quality answers was the ability to relate to the question throughout the answer. Some candidates performed well across both assessment objectives with detailed content and cogent argument.

An area for improvement was that some candidates did not select their material in accordance with the specific question. Some candidates could have adapted their material so as to use it more effectively to address the question. In some cases the question was barely mentioned and in others there was only passing reference to it in the final few sentences. Some answers at the lower levels drew on sources that were below the standard required for GCE work. These answers tended to be descriptive and unduly narrative rather than analytical. Some answers at the lower levels were short and these lacked elaboration and the substantiation required at this level of work.

Some Centres chose to concentrate on the same topic for a number of candidates. This was useful when backed up with relevant sources, whereby candidates could develop their own slant and specialism on these selected topics. Occasionally, some of these answers became formulaic, without targeted attention to the demands of the specific question. To put this into perspective an important aim of this unit is to involve candidates as active participants so as to provide possibilities for open-ended enquiry and independent learning.

Most candidates were entered for the correct paper. However, there were a few entries where candidates attempted a topic that was on a different paper. It is essential that candidates are entered for the area of investigation which is the best fit for the question on the paper. Candidates were not penalised if a cross was in a question number box that did not match the answer.

Question 1

This was the most popular question, with the majority of answers being on abortion and euthanasia. In addition, some candidates selected genetic engineering, organ donation, IVF and contraception. Good quality answers analysed the reference in the question to 'guided by religious principles' with, for example, ideas about having a range of guides. Some abortion essays had an over reliance on standard material, just a little above GCSE level, but there was more scholarship this year, used with more confidence and maturity. Some candidates presented substantial detail on different methods of abortion. Sometimes this was not related to a study in ethics and hence some of this detail did not reflect the criteria of the higher levels in AO1. Euthanasia essays were often heavily weighted with case study material, sometime to the detriment of analysis. Euthanasia essays focussed more on current news on the issue rather than conceptual issues. Case studies can work very well indeed. However, such an approach requires more than mere narration. Given this is an ethical studies paper, candidates should analyse the material and consider how ethical theories may apply or would respond to these case studies.

The earlier part of this answer focused on the teachings of religious traditions on abortion and this passage is followed by an examination of personhood.

The principle of the sanctity of life, the belief that all life is sacred and belongs to God adds more disagreement to the abortion topic. The principle believes that abortion is immoral as it is destructive of sacred human life that was made in the eyes of God. As the principle states all life is sacred, believes in the sanctity of life are against abortion.

One of the key philosophers to develop the sanctity of life was Thomas Aquinas. He used the sanctity of life to create Natural Law (or theology). This was created by Aquinas with influence of the five primary precepts he believed were divine and self evident in this world. The first was to 'preserve life', showing that Aquinas is against abortion as it does not preserve life' it instead destroys it. One of the other

precepts found by Aquinas was based on reproduction. Abortion contradicts this principle as it stops the process of reproduction.

Also in support of the sanctity of life was Albert Schweitzer. He created the idea of 'reverence for life'. The idea that every living thing (person) has a will to live. Even a foetus, in Schweitzer's opinion, has a will to live. Abortion ignores this will by destroying the foetus' inbuilt desire to life. Showing Schweitzer too is against abortion.

The principle of sanctity of life seems quite clear cut. It comes across as an important religious tool to help guide people when deciding if abortion is right or wrong. It suffers though from strong critiques, that again add to the debate ^{about} if ~~its~~ ^{and} religion should be used as a guide.

One of the key critiques of the sanctity of life is Mary Anne Warren who focuses on Schweitzer's 'reverence for life'. She believes that to have a will or inbuilt desire to live the person must be able to think. A foetus, in Warren's view, does not have the capacity to think, therefore does not have a will (or want) to live. Warren consequently is for abortion, seeing the termination of a foetus as morally right.

A further critique of the principle is Jonathan Glover. He focuses on the consciousness of the foetus, believing that life is just a 'necessary vehicle of consciousness'. Further on, Glover criticises the belief that the foetus is 'special' or of sacred value. This questioning is valid as what makes human life, especially the unborn special? Obviously Glover overlooks the teaching '1 Corinthians 6' that supports the sanctity of life. This teaching states that 'the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit', Glover dismisses this and the sanctity of life seeing the foetus as not a special life of great value.

Peter Singer the controversial Australian philosopher heavily criticises religious impact on the abortion debate and the sanctity of life principle. Singer focuses more on the 'quality

of life' over the sanctity of it. He believes that this modern, secular society we live in should not live by the sanctity of life principle. When facing an issue like abortion Singer believes the quality of life the foetus will have should be used to determine if abortion is right or wrong. In Singer's view if the foetus is to have no quality of life, for example it is disabled abortion would be right, as the foetus would

have no quality of life'. Showing that Inge believes the sanctity of life to be outdated, and a new approach should be taken.

The Sanctity of life is a religious principle used by many religious believers when facing the abortion dilemma. It is a valid principle and certainly helps many people when this medical ethics issue arises. Showing that religion is still an important guide.



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Examiners' Comments

This is an example of good practice concerning the theme of 'sanctity of life'.



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Examiner Tip

The candidate selects some key scholars and clarifies some important ideas and uses them to debate different views about the 'sanctity of life'.

This is the conclusion to a candidate's answer.

I would like to finally relate back to ~~whether~~ ~~religion~~ why religious principles should not guide medical ethics in my case of abortion.

Not everyone in the world is religious and even those who are, not all of them are of the same faith. We have even seen how the same faith but just different denominations, in this case anglican christians contrasting with evangelical christians have different views. Also inconsistencies in

the Bible, while staying with Christians; we've already looked at the quote of your body being your temple, but Jesus' main teaching was of love in the form of agape and so what if abortion is the most loving thing to do in the situation? *

This again shows an inconsistency just in the same holy book, while the Muslims base their views on a non-scientific idea of ensoulment.

And so for all of the above, there is no actual clear universal principle which we can apply from religion, ~~it~~ and so it should not be used for guiding abortion.

I personally support Glover's idea; he rejects sanctity of life and just says that life is special anyway, but doesn't belong to God and is just something worth preserving. He talks about the act of killing being directly wrong and basically upholds the idea of life from a humanistic perspective.

As we can see there are numerous aspects to this issue and ~~so~~ so this topic will continue to be controversial.

Abortion is one of those issues where it seems it will never be universally decided on a fair rule: what is fair anyway?

So my ideal means ~~no~~ ~~no~~ no rounded conclusion in this case.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate brings together a range of ideas and views expressed earlier in the answer. The material is concise and shaped into an argument with a clear point of view.



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Examiner Tip

The candidate uses these concluding remarks to explicitly focus on the question.

Question 2

Many candidates followed the same formula, focusing on Gaia, deep and shallow ecology and a little religious discussion. There was little focus on topics such as waste and recycling, habitat management or the politics of conservation. It seemed that some candidates had a pre-set formula which they followed and although it was legitimate it was generic, with minimal focus on the question.

Question 3

There were some excellent essays on contrasting views about homosexuality, and there was effective use of recent issues such as the differing outcomes of the Gene Robinson and Jeffery John scenarios. Although these case studies will become dated soon, candidates managed to use them to show how attitudes towards equality are often different within Christianity. Good quality answers clarified the different meanings of 'equality' and the complexities in the ethical issues selected. More candidates wrote about philosophical issues pertaining to equality and justice which underpinned their material more substantially than has been the case in the past. A considerable number of essays focussed on MX and MLK and in some cases candidates were very good at adapting the material so as to link to the question and to the issue in general. It was essential for candidates to link their material to differing religious and/or ethical principles. Sociological surveys have their legitimate place although the nature of this paper is a study of ethics.

This is the first part of the answer. This section focuses on the view that religion is responsible for some inequalities. It continues by considering the evidence against this view.

Equality can be defined as having 'the same measure or value or status of something' (Oxford English Dictionary). In the modern world we can see a stark contrast between literally millions of people in terms of upbringing, social status, financial background and career opportunities. Many have argued that religion is to blame for

these inequalities.

19th Century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche was an extreme nihilist and sceptic. He famously stated in 'Daybreak' that "God is dead" and also that religion creates a "slave morality". This means people who, for instance, worship the Christian deity, are inevitably submitting their person to slavehood. As Nietzsche was a strong advocate of individuals bettering themselves to the highest possible degree and participating ~~in~~ in the criteria of the 'übermensch' ('Beyond Good and Evil'), it would mean religion would only thwart this ambition - an ambition, he thought, which should be sought by all.

Furthermore, he argued against Boethius who ~~a~~ suggested life was like a 'wheel of fortune' that provides both good and bad life experiences. Nietzsche argued that ^{the} hard times ~~the~~ people face can either prompt them to ^{learn} ~~a~~

from their mistakes, or be defeated whenever adverse situations arise. This inequality ~~is a result of~~ of people's actions is indicative of the fact that inequality is not so much a result of religion or ethical practices, but rather a fundamental inequality in people in general with regard to their behaviour, which is often influenced by religion.

St ^{Augustine of Hippo} ~~Augustine of Hippo~~ developed the idea of theodicy: just as evil, he explains, is a privation of good, so too is inequality a privation of equality. ~~the~~ This occurs because without inequality, there would be no

social context in which to manifest our human virtues. For example if there were no homeless people, citizens would be unable to exercise the virtue of charity. St Irenaeus, on a similar note, expresses the notion that without inequality, we would not be able to participate in 'soul-making' - the notion that through perfecting our virtues in light of the presence of inequality, we can perfect our souls and come to know God. He says the conditions on Earth are just right for soul-making to take place. Therefore, inequality is not a result of religious or ethical practices, but rather, a necessity in our human lives if we are to come to knowing God.

Similar to Nietzsche, Karl Marx believed religion was used by the bourgeois to control their subordinates, particularly the working class. In ~~Engel's~~ Engel's 'Philosophy of the Right', Marx makes the comment that religion is "the opiate of the people". This immediately suggests that, because religion is used by the bourgeois to control lower classes, it is therefore partly responsible for causing inequality in society. In addition, Marx attacks the Christian hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful', drawing attention to the fact that it once read, 'The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, God made them highly and lowly, and ordered their estate.' This again emphasises Marx's opinion that, ~~providing~~ religion is responsible for certain inequalities of the world.



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Examiner Comments

The candidate defines the concept of 'equality' and examines and discusses various scholars who support the view that religion causes inequality.



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Examiner Tip

The candidate makes effective use of scholars by selecting relevant key ideas and using them to build up an argument.

The selected part of the answer begins by considering the view that culture and society may be the cause of inequality. The candidate continues after this passage to examine the view that religion and/or ethical principles result in inequality.

Question 3:

It is very easily argued that the world is a vastly unequal place. There are one billion people on our planet without sufficient food or water, furthermore the richest three have more wealth than the combined wealth of the poorest 600 million. Inequality pervades life closer to home also in that a black citizen is eight times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than white citizens, according to Ministry of defence statistics of 2009, this is nearly a decade after the Steven Lawrence enquiry. Our houses of parliament seats only are filled only 22% by women, this is less than Afghanistan. In our constantly 'shrinking' global village, with growing atheist trends, local life has become increasingly multicultural, exposing and mixing several

differing religious and ethical principles and practices on equality

Many would argue that it is culture and society that ~~cause~~ result in inequality, arguably due to enshrined ethical principles. John Locke is one philosopher who would agree with this, he theorised the 'Tabula Rasa' which is the idea that we are born as blank slates, ~~and~~ it is our life ^{experience} and cultural conditioning that divide us and ~~cause~~ ^{result}

in inequality, which by Princeton university was defined as "a state of some measure, quantity, value or status." John Locke wrote, "mankind is premissably born to the same advantages of nature and same faculties" this is evidence to Simone De Beauvoir's theory in her book 'The Second Sex' (1949) that 'one is not born a woman but rather becomes one'. Further examples of inequality produced by society are laws, in 2010 a law was enforced supranationally by the European Court of Justice to prevent inequality in ~~vehicles~~ a vehicle of life insurance prices against men. Inequality can also be in the form of 'positive discrimination', for example the 'Disability Discrimination Act 1995' insures disabled candidates for a job will have special consideration. The feminist Andrea Dworkin, blames a very specific ~~part~~ part of society for inequality ~~and~~ crime against

part of society for inequality and crime against women, "Many feminists ask whether pornography causes rape. The fact is that pornography and prostitution have caused and ~~continued~~ continue to cause pornography."

These theories and philosophers reject that biology or religion ~~to~~ alone (may criticise religious contribution to society and culture) cause inequality. However giving no weight to the possibility that biological differences cause inequality seems unfounded. The feminist scholar Daphne Hampson would agree, as she wrote,

"they [men] appear so external. Their talk is of sport, cars and computers... They have no easy intercourse with others across boundaries, something many women take for granted. Male relationships are competitive and concerned with honour. The sole close relationship many men have is with their partner. Men are concerned with never unmasking themselves. Male hierarchy is due to the need to keep others at bay to stop them becoming too close or a threat." Peter Singer was very clear also on the subject, "we are not equal in height, mathematical ability, greed or emotion", perhaps therefore, ~~to~~ to prevent biological difference translating to social inequality we should view equality as a normative ~~and~~ not a description. Further explanations ~~of~~ our natural inclination towards

inequality, as opposed to religious or ethical differences is highlighted by Peter Vardy, citing a "famous economist", who wrote "if we agreed on equal distribution of resources today by tomorrow we would be in the same position as some would spend it, some would invest it, some would gamble it away and some would save it."



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Examiner Comments

The candidate puts this topic into a broad context with useful contributions from important scholars.



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Examiner Tip

The candidate builds up a point of view with an understanding of some of the complexities in this topic. Scholars are used to support the overall line of thinking and reasoning.

Paper Summary

The following points summarise important objectives for candidates:

- Manage the material from the investigations to focus on the demands of the question
- Use appropriate sources
- Show an understanding of the topic
- Present a thoughtful analysis of the material
- Make effective use of evidence and argument
- Comment on alternative views
- Show a clearly expressed viewpoint

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