AQA

ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Education

Archaeology 1011
Specification

Unit ARCH1

Report on the Examination
2010 examination – June series

Unit ARCH1

The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual

General Comments

It was clear that centres understand how to achieve top marks in the terminology questions in Section A, and realise the importance of learning the five prescribed sites of Section B in detail. It was also clear that tutors have emphasised time management since the majority of candidates were able to answer both questions in Section C. Success in Section C requires candidates to have learnt more than just the five prescribed sites, so that they can draw upon other well-known sites and themes associated with the time period and the subject being discussed. Centres are encouraged to refer to the ARCH1 Guidance Document in the Archaeology Teacher Resource Bank on the AQA website.

Tutors' attention is drawn to the following general observations which were identified by the examiners during the marking process:

- Encourage candidates to learn correct spellings for commonly used sites such as Salisbury, Stonehenge and Amesbury – which frequently appear as Sailsbury, Stone Hendge and Aimsbury (sic); also the word entoptic (from the Greek 'in the eye').
- In Section A, encourage candidates to avoid defining terms by simply repeating the term in question (eg "ritual feasting is a feast…")
- Tutors should be aware of the danger that 'throw-away' ideas and analogies in class may be taken as 'gospel' by students and repeated verbatim in the examination where they may not be entirely appropriate.

Section A

Overall most candidates are aware of how to approach these questions; there were very few incidents of over-long answers. However, the following points should be noted:

- Some centres are clearly instructing their students to give a 'modern' example after their archaeological one – this usually results in an unduly brief archaeological exemplification. Modern exemplification is a useful teaching aid to develop understanding, but should not be used as an appropriate example in the exam – hence ritual feasting ought not to be illustrated by reference to eating roast turkey at Christmas. Similarly avoid general references to modern Christian, Muslim or Hindu practice (as examples in Section A). Examples should be clearly archaeological in character and this may require candidates to look outside the period from which they will be answering their questions in the rest of the paper;
- A number of students defined myth as modern/popular untruth with therefore inappropriate examples, rather than relating it to creation myth and narrative;
- Shamanism at Lascaux was often used to define myth – but this is technically ritual rather than myth unless directly linked to tradition;
- There is no evidence of ritual feasting at Stonehenge itself.

Section B

- There were many very detailed answers on the prescribed sites in this section, however it was noticeable that some candidates exaggerated the facts at some sites e.g. there are the remains of over 10000 bodies cremated in the Aubrey Holes at Stonehenge;
- Centres should be aware of the need to teach the five sites in depth. Candidates should be able to relate the sites to their appropriate context and make comparisons with other sites if appropriate;
- A minority of candidates had clearly been briefed to start their answer by defining both religion and ritual in generic terms – this very rarely added to the answer and it should be remembered that, under timed conditions, this results in a lack of appropriate depth further on in the answer;
- Similarly, indiscriminate references to Hawke's ladder of inference do not add to an answer unless linked in detail to the problematic interpretation of the evidence from the specific site;
- Diagrams/plans of sites and concepts take up valuable time, detract from the detail of the answer and usually add little.

- Centres are reminded that the sites listed in Section B will be examined for the final time in the summer of 2011; a new list of prescribed sites, for use from January 2012 onwards, will be published in the 2012 version of the Specification. This should be available on the AQA website in September.

Section C

Performance across the three contexts was broadly comparable. Many students responded well to these questions, producing well-supported answers within the time available. However:

- A minority answered only one question in Section C;

- Some centres are clearly still teaching more than one context / period for the unit. Teachers are reminded that whilst this is appropriate for Section A (where, for example, 'excarnation' can best be defined through prehistoric examples that therefore need to be taught to all candidates), it does not seem to work in Section C where such answers tend to be overwhelmingly generic and poorly exemplified, presumably because candidates have not spent long enough on any one context.

Question 7:   There was a problem here with some candidates not paying attention to what the actual question was asking of them. The focus was on two 'megalithic' sites – Woodhenge, Seahenge, Durrington Walls, Flag Fen do not count as 'megalithic' since they are not constructed primarily of 'large stones'.

Question 8:   There seemed to be a general lack of understanding of beaker burials & some use of inappropriate examples e.g. Wetwang chariot burials, rather than the Bronze Age burials from the site; this confusion in time periods between the Iron Age and Bronze Age led to a few candidates relying on the prescribed sites of Wetwang (Iron Age) and Flag Fen (Bronze Age) being used interchangeably to answer questions 8 and 9.

Question 9:   Many good answers using well-known examples such as Lindow Man, Tollund Man & Clony Cavan. Some answers strayed too far into the scientific elements

which were more relevant to ARCH2. A large number of students referred to Flag Fen as a site of bog bodies when there is no evidence for this. There seems to be some evidence for the presence of mistletoe in bog bodies, but candidates should be careful about expanding this to drugs as a whole. Where students used Flag Fen to develop points about structured ritual deposition into water & its luminal properties they gained credit. Relatively few answers integrated the idea of bogs as places of stasis or 'limbo'.

Question 10: Some candidates were evidently confused and appeared to be writing about a different site. As the largest prehistoric man-made mound in Britain, it was reasonable to expect that candidates would have been able to reflect upon its possible functions.

Question 11: Candidates again did not read the question carefully enough – they answered about canopic jars, but failed to notice the requirement to consider canopic chests and canopic shrines. Candidates should be aware that Tutankhamen's canopic jars were all human-headed rather than having the heads of the sons of Horus.

Question 12: The 'Book of the Dead' is central to our understanding of Egyptian beliefs and this question ought to have been straightforward for candidates. Many simply did not know enough, but there were some excellent answers.

Question 13: ' Funerary stelae' are just that – many candidates seem to be getting confused with images on tomb walls/pylons. It seemed that many candidates did not understand the term 'stelae'.

Question 14: Communicating with the dead is another central concept in Egyptian belief. Generally this question was quite well answered, although some were unaware of relevant features.

Question 15: Votive altars were well known and understood by some, but curiously this proved to be the most challenging question in this section. Many candidates simply did not know about the purpose of votives, nor examples.

Question 16: Candidates knew quite a lot about local deities, and here knowledge of cult centres and shrines was used to good effect.

Question 17: Not many responses to this question, but some demonstrated good knowledge including references to simple burials, grave goods, coffins and sarcophagus.

Question 18: Sulis-Minerva was well known; this proved to be one of the more accessible questions in Section C.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades
Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the
Results statistics page of the AQA Website.