



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies (1061)

RSS04 Religion, Philosophy and Science

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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RSS04 Religion, Philosophy and Science

General comments

It was pleasing to note that many centres have responded in a very favourable manner to the new Specification. Candidates were able to write thoughtfully about the issues raised in the questions and it was clear that they had been prepared well for the examination. In addition, there was evidence that centres had prepared well to deliver the new material introduced into the Specification. A disappointing number of candidates appeared to be unfamiliar with the difference between the Assessment Objectives; AO1 is assessed in the first part of each question and AO2 is addressed in the second part of each respective question. A disappointing number of candidates included AO2 material in the first part of the question. This was especially evident in Question 1 where candidates found it hard to resist the temptation to bring in the Humean critique of miracles. Centres are advised to impress upon their candidates the need to adhere strictly to the requirements of AO1 in the first part of each question. Many candidates were also reluctant to advance to analysis or comment in the second part of each question. A simple statement of the debate around the thesis of the question shows little or no evaluative skill.

Question 1 (Topic 1 *Miracles*)

The question provoked an interesting variety of responses. The best answers recognised that religious significance can arise both as a matter of personal, subjective faith and from the objective fact that laws of nature are broken by miraculous events. Many candidates also understood that religious significance required them to express what a miraculous event tells us about God. Good examples were used but candidates who confined themselves to a long list of examples were unable to access the higher levels of the mark scheme. The second part of the question (Question 02) was less confidently answered. Candidates found it difficult to link miracles with the concept of belief in God. A disappointing number of candidates failed to address the word 'reasonable'. Many candidates simply rehearsed the Hume / Wiles critique without then coming to a view as to whether or not the critique was justified.

Question 2 (Topic 2 *Creation*)

What was noticeable about a large number of answers to this question was the lack of content actually detailing the religious views on the creation of life on Earth. Many answers merely addressed the different ways of interpreting biblical texts without initially saying what was in those texts. Whilst some candidates could clearly distinguish between 'literalists' and 'liberalists', neither term proved to be particularly helpful to them in addressing this question. The Specification mentions creationists and it is recommended that this is the term to which candidates refer in their answers. There was seeming confusion about what Young Earth Creationism (sometimes incorrectly referred to as 'New Earth Creationism') and Old Earth Creationism denotes. A significant number of candidates referred to Old Earth Creationists as having a liberal view of biblical texts. This is a view which would not be recognised by liberal Christians. References to the Big Bang could only be credited where they were clearly linked to the issue of life on Earth. Many candidates understood the point in the second part of the question (Question 04) but were reluctant to assess the strength or weakness of a particular point of view and so restricted the marks that could be awarded.

Question 3 (Topic 3 *The design argument*)

This was a very popular question which was answered, for the most part, very well. The Humean critique was well understood. Better answers did more than simply list Hume's points, they went on to explain them. There was plenty of detailed analysis in the second part of the

question (Question 06) but few candidates really explained whether or not Hume had 'destroyed' the Design Argument. Throughout some answers there was clear confusion about the chronology of Aquinas, Paley, Hume and Swinburne. This was an issue only where candidates believed that Hume had been criticising Swinburne in the first part of the question (Question 05).

Question 4 (Topic 4 *Quantum mechanics and a religious world view*)

This was the least popular question. Centres are advised to teach this topic as guided by the Specification. Teaching other areas of quantum mechanics which are not on the Specification could confuse candidates. The second part of the question (Question 08) required some understanding of the interaction between quantum mechanics and religion, not mysticism. Reference to mysticism was credited but candidates were asked to go beyond this by the question.

Overall, some centres had prepared their candidates very well and examiners were pleased to read some outstanding answers.