



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies (2060)

RST3A Religion and Ethics

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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General Comments

This seemed to be an examination which caused few surprises and difficulties. The questions were straightforward, and made similar demands of the candidates. The question on Topic 4 Science and Technology (parts 07 and 08) was the least popular.

However, a couple of points need to be made. Many candidates were well prepared for the examination, so much so that it was obvious in many cases that they had written answers to similar questions before in class. However, several of these candidates then tried to fit the essay which they had already written into the question before them, and in most cases this was not wholly successful as there were subtle changes of emphasis. Centres need to urge their students to use their information to fit the question before them, not the other way round.

There was also much evidence to suggest that centres are only studying two out of the possible four topics of study. This is not recommended as centres are diminishing their candidates' chances of success by reducing the amount of questions they can choose to answer.

The specification makes it clear that religious *teachings* are needed about certain ethical issues. Many candidates gave generalisations as opposed to specific, referenced teachings.

There were also some liberal interpretations concerning the term 'invention' for Question 4. As indicated in the Specification, an example of an invention would be something specific such as nuclear weapons, rather than procedures such as cloning, IVF and genetic screening. These ought **not** to be considered 'inventions' in the same way, and are more appropriate to be studied and used in 'human experimentation' or 'scientific and technological advances' (bullet points 1 and 3 respectively on the specification).

Question 1 *Libertarianism, free will and determinism*

Parts 01 and 02

This was a popular question, and one for which many candidates had been well prepared. Unfortunately, some candidates evidently expected a similar question, namely 'Explain libertarianism and determinism within **one** religion'. This is not quite the same question as the one set.

The main issue with part 02 was that some candidates failed to appreciate the inclusion of the words 'how far'.

Question 2 *Virtue Ethics*

Parts 03 and 04

This was another popular question, with many candidates having a clear awareness of the contribution of MacIntyre to Virtue Ethics. Some candidates ran out of time because they wrote too much about Aristotle before addressing MacIntyre. Candidates need to be advised how long such an 'introduction' needs to be.

The issue with 04 was that some candidates did not discuss the compatibility or incompatibility of Virtue Ethics with a religious approach to ethics, but the negative and positive points of using a Virtue Ethics approach to decision making. However, from the candidates who did answer the question set, there were some excellent and interesting answers.

Question 3 *Religious views on sexual behaviour and human relationships*

Parts 05 and 06

Part 05 was another example of where candidates were anticipating a question similar to the one which was on the paper, but answered the one they were hoping to get, which prevented them from attaining the highest levels. Too many of the responses were about sexual relationships rather than the topic of marriage. Whilst some candidates tried to make a connection between (for example) homosexuality and marriage, these connections were usually tortuous or wrong.

However, part 06 was where discussion of civil partnerships, adultery and divorce could occur, and there were many excellent answers here.

Question 4 *Science and technology*

Parts 07 and 08

The definition of 'invention' has already been discussed. As it happened, the 'choice' of 'invention' was not a big issue this year, as the question was about the *control of the use* of inventions, rather than inventions themselves. If candidates picked that up, then good points were made even if their choice of 'invention' was inappropriate. Examples of 'inventions' which worked well included the car, the Internet, CCTV and the atomic bomb. Centres should be aware of expectations in this regard for future years.

There were also good answers for part 08, with some candidates applying a Virtue Ethics approach to the answer, or comparing a Virtue Ethics approach with a religious, Utilitarian or Kantian approach. Equally, there were good answers which took a more general approach but drew on specific examples (such as cloning, IVF techniques or the Internet). Medical advances were acceptable here as the question was not about inventions but scientific developments.