



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies (2060)

RST3E New Testament

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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General Comments

There were some very good answers that reflected a high level of knowledge and understanding of the course topics with good use made of scholarship and illustrations from the text of John's Gospel. However, there were also a surprising number of very weak scripts, with some candidates writing barely more than three sides in the answer booklet.

Reference to scholarship is part of the Level 6 and Level 7 descriptors. Some candidates interpret this as listing various names of scholars at any given opportunity. No credit is given for just naming a scholar unless there is some discussion about their particular contribution to the issue in question.

Parts 03, 05 and 07 were all focused on specific texts. Some candidates seemed to use prepared answers or repeat learnt class notes ignoring the particular focus of the question set. Some candidates, for example, attempted to answer part 05 by referring to other signs. Most surprising of all were those candidates who answered part 07 by referring to Jesus' passion narrative rather than the resurrection narrative.

Question 1 was the least popular question answered and Question 3 was the most popular.

Question 1 *The context of John's Gospel*

Part 01

Although this was the least popular question, overall candidates performed best on this question. It seemed that those who tackled it had prepared the material well. Most candidates made excellent use of illustration from the text. The one weakness in the answers concerned candidates who only discussed the similarities and differences between John's Gospel and the synoptic gospels. The trigger was "Examine the relationship..." and the stronger candidates went on to explore some possible explanations about the relationship in terms of whether John had knowledge of the synoptic gospels.

Part 02

Clearly some candidates struggled to find arguments to support and challenge the claim. However, it forms part of the issues arising from the debate about the relationship between John and the synoptic gospels, which is listed in the specification. There was good knowledge of the historical differences but few discussed how those differences might be explained.

Question 2 *The nature, role and purpose of the discourses in John's gospel*

Part 03

Questions that focus on a particular text often prompt weaker candidates into writing a commentary on the text. Almost by accident, the candidate will include in such a commentary material that is relevant to the focus (i.e. nature/ purpose/portrayal of Jesus). However, such answers will generally not rise beyond Level 3. If the candidate reorganised the material specifically to address the focus, then a much higher level would be awarded.

There was some evidence that candidates struggle with the term "nature". The teachers' notes available on the AQA website explain this term and what is expected. In brief, it is about the characteristics of the material, ie what identifies that material as a discourse.

Many candidates limited discussion about purpose to Christology and drifted into an answer more about the discourses teaching about the person of Jesus.

Part 04

Some candidates focused on understanding rather than relevance, although there is an overlap.

Candidates continue to struggle to present high level AO2 answers and fail to reason and critically analyse. Far too often, answers drift into listing arguments for and against a view/claim with no attempt at weighing up how successful those arguments are.

In A2 the evaluative element is weighted more than that in AS, and therefore has a greater effect on the total mark and grade awarded. Candidates need to be made aware of the level descriptors for AO2 to understand what is required.

Question 3 *The nature, role and purpose of signs in John's Gospel*

Part 05

The question on signs continues to be the most popular. However, some candidates wrote an answer in a commentary form rather than selecting aspects that portrayed Jesus and his ministry.

It should be noted that skills of selection are an important aspect of the AO1 descriptors.

Part 06

There were some good evaluative answers with most candidates focussing on the debate about symbolism and history.

Question 4 *The nature, role and purpose of the passion and resurrection narratives*

Part 07

There were some good answers covering material from both chapters. Good use was made of support from the text. The weaker candidates tended to just select from chapter 20 and so omit some important aspects.

Part 08

This is a debate that has been well rehearsed by candidates. However, a significant number of candidates made no reference to the theme of "the hour" and coming death throughout the gospel. Many candidates discussed the view that, for John, the death and resurrection cannot be separated. Hence, there were some good evaluative answers.