**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

Religious Studies   **RSS05**

(Specification 2060)

Unit E The History of Christianity

OR Religion, Art and the Media

Report on the Examination

General Comments

There was a clear and significant downturn in the overall standard of scripts for this series. Whilst there were few scripts which scored very low marks, there was a notable lack of scripts above 70/90. Once again the Church History option proved the less popular option in this series, with only a very small percentage of students taking this option.

Several scripts revealed that some students had often written at length, though not always accurately, in response to the first question attempted, but were short of time to complete the second question fully. There were also several examples of students leaving out one part of the overall question. Time management was clearly more of an issue in this series than previously.

Section A Christianity

Question 1 *The Celtic Church*

No students attempted this question.

Question 2 *The Protestant Reformation*

03 This question was a popular choice among the students who chose the History of Christianity option. Most provided answers which were Level 4 or 5. Of these, many were able to highlight and show some understanding of the key areas of the Catholic Church which Luther challenged, but few were able to provide any robust examination of these, or comment upon the theological issues in depth. Many answers were limited to providing a list of ideas covering the sale of indulgences, anti-clericalism, and some idea of the corruption of doctrine, but lacked further development or an examination of other areas to progress beyond Level 5. For the upper levels, students must be able to provide clear and accurate understanding of the issues examined, and be able to illustrate these with appropriate examples.

04 The evaluations of the success of the Reformation tended to focus on the socio-political reasons rather than on clear reasoning between both areas covered by the statement, with the result that many answers were rather one-sided or only considered other issues in passing rather than in any depth.

Question 3 *The Catholic Reformation*

05 Of the few students offering a response to this question, most fell into the Level 4 bracket ('A generally satisfactory treatment of the topic'). The question asked students to outline the work of the Society of Jesus and then **examine** (rather than list) its contribution to the Catholic Reformation. Outlines were accurate but very basic indeed, and a few focussed on the background of the founder Ignatius Loyola to the detriment of the focus on the work of the Society of Jesus. Most answers were able to comment upon the contributions of the Jesuits to Education and Mission but few were able to push beyond these to examine contributions in areas such as worship, spirituality and recovery of discipline. The question did **not** require an exhaustive answer: a clear examination of four areas supported with good understanding and accurate examples would have been sufficient for the upper levels.

06 In 06, evaluations of the statement again proved to rather basic and one-sided, the majority agreeing with the content of the view expressed in the statement with little attention to another point of view.

Question 4 *The rise of Methodism*

There were only two responses to this question. Once again responses were relevant yet failed to respond to the trigger word in the question, 'examine', and instead listed some of the more obvious distinctive features of the 18th century Methodist Movement. There was little development beyond listing the obvious features, and distinctive theological ideas and the development of circuits and Connexion were not touched upon.

Similarly the evaluation question produced rather weak responses which engaged with the question at little more than a merely superficial level.

Section B Religion, Art and the Media

Question 5 *The nature and purpose of religious art*

09 This proved to be a popular question, yet despite the term 'sponsor' being clearly stated in the specification, few students were able to access the term in their responses. There were many very general answers which were clearly well informed but failed to address the question set. Such answers focussed on the general use of religious art as an expression of belief, with some highly inventive and debatable examples. Few managed to engage with the idea of patronage, and many tended to write tangential answers. Those who managed to access the idea of patronage, either individual or community patronage, produced answers which were generally satisfactory. With the use of more relevant and accurate examples, such answers would have been credited with higher levels.

10 The evaluation section of this question asked 'To what extent should religious communities sponsor the production of religious art in the 21st century?' However, many took this as referring to the **maintenance** rather than the **production** of religious art, and as a result failed to engage with the evaluation set. It became evident that some students had a pre-prepared answer to a question they hoped would be asked, and such responses, though relevant to a degree, failed to engage fully with the question which was asked, and the levels awarded reflected this.

Question 6 *The nature and purpose of religious art*

11 This proved a popular choice of question, and many answers succeeded in getting into Levels 4 and 5, but few were able to provide enough accurate material to push responses beyond these levels. Answers tended to be general in the extreme, rather than dealing with specific points of relevance of art for religion today. The Aztec 'Festival of the dead' proved to be a popular example. However, once again there were also several highly inventive examples in evidence offered by way of explanation. A common mistake was reference to the Isenheim Altarpiece as still being in a religious building, when in fact it is now in a museum. Most students answered from a Christian perspective, and few were able to consider that some traditions within Christianity, or indeed any other faith, see very little or no relevance in art.

12 The evaluation question drew some promising answers which did provide an attempt at a balanced and reasoned argument.

Question 7 Religion, art and popular culture

13 The thrust and demand of the question was an examination of ways in which comedy has been based on religion. A range of material was expected in response to the question. However, few students were able to provide either a sufficient range of ideas, and/or an **examination** of ways. Many answers were to some degree 'a relevant response', although many were very narrative and summarised episodes of popular TV shows, rather than providing a clear examination of different ways comedy has used religion as required by the demands of the question.

14 In the evaluation section, the responses seen tended to fall into two distinct areas. First, those which engaged with the statement, but only on a superficial level, and often repeated much of the material which had been used in the AO1. Second, those which engaged with the question and provided at best a partially successful attempt to sustain a reasoned argument. Few were able to consider the positive effects of humour in religion, or positive attitudes towards religious humour with any depth.

Question 8 *Cyber religion and TV religion*

15 The single biggest problem which prevented students from scoring high levels was their inability to distinguish between **Popular** and **Traditional** broadcasting despite the distinction being made clearly within the specification. Please refer to the underlined area below:

• *Religion on television (TV)* – televangelism, its nature and impact;
the presentation of <u>religious themes in popular broadcasting, e.g.</u>
<u>'The Simpsons'</u>; <u>traditional religious broadcasting</u>; the significance
of religious broadcasting for religion.

Once off in the wrong direction students were usually unable to write answers which satisfied the demands of the question set. Centres are advised to ensure that students are able to make *and understand* the distinction between **popular** broadcasting and **traditional religious** broadcasting. Students who were able to refer to such broadcasts as televised services for key festivals, or programmes such as 'Songs of Praise', programmes providing debate on religious or ethical matters or religious documentaries e.g. 'Around the world in 80 faiths' in their answers were rare; but those who did were rewarded accordingly. Answers which wrote, often at length and with considerable accurate detail, about programmes such as 'Father Ted', The Vicar of Dibley' or 'The Simpsons' struggled to get beyond the upper marks of Level 2, for 'an informed answer that misses the point of the question'.

16 The evaluation section of this question drew a variety of responses but few were able to provide more than a basic reasoning of simple points relevant to the question asked.

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

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion