



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

**Religious Studies**

**RSS06**

**(Specification 2060)**

**Unit F Old Testament**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **General Comments**

The scripts revealed a very wide range of ability. At the top end, a significant number of responses showed quite exceptional maturity of thought. At the lower end of the mark range there were one or two students who made no real attempt to answer the questions and a significant number who relied on learned and largely irrelevant responses. Schools and colleges might wish to ensure that their students have sufficient practice in answering relevantly questions on all areas set for study in the examination.

### **Question 1 *An introduction to the world of the Old Testament***

- 01** Several students failed to read the question with sufficient care, writing about the book of Exodus rather than examining the accounts of the Exodus. A significant number of responses wrote at some length on the early life of Moses, on each of the plagues and then on the wilderness wanderings and the making of the covenant, but made only the briefest reference to the actual escape from Egypt and the crossing of the sea. As on previous occasions when a question has been set on this area of the specification, it was clear that many students had not studied Exodus 15. There were, however, a few excellent answers, which made effective use of that particular passage and other related texts. A small number of excellent answers wrote a superb commentary on that chapter, using the insights of form criticism and unpacking the theological ideas.
- 02** Although some responses were focused on the significance of the Decalogue, many students attempted this question with a fair degree of success, displaying a variety of approaches. Many considered the problems associated with viewing it as a historical event. In the course of their argument they often included material that would have been highly relevant and worthy of credit in 01. Others contrasted the views of fundamentalist and liberal religious believers or of practising Jews and secular society. A few discussed its significance for Liberation Theology.

### **Question 2 *Old Testament views of God's relationship with the people***

- 03** The vast majority of students answered this question. Most students referred to both covenants, though many showed no knowledge of Genesis 17 and/or of Exodus 19:3-6, both of which are texts set for study and are absolutely central to understanding the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. Schools and colleges might wish to ensure that the set texts are studied in detail, and that their students also have access to books that display a scholarly rather than homiletic approach. There were, however, some outstanding responses whose focus was on the concept of covenant, illustrating the points made with effective reference to Genesis and Exodus.
- 04** Although there were some highly competent responses, many students did not read the question with sufficient care. Even able students evaluated the relevance of the Abrahamic covenant rather than the ideas about God which are to be found in the traditions about Abraham. As a result, some answers contained little relevant content.

### **Question 3 *The phenomenon of prophecy***

- 05** Question 3 was the least popular choice. Most students who attempted 05 noted that the question's focus was on the 9th century BCE and that it required examination of the development rather than types of prophecy. More than one approach was adopted. Some answers focused exclusively on Elijah, explaining how the circumstances of his day and his own personality led to a new style of prophecy. Some contrasted him with Samuel and some saw him as anticipating 8th century prophecy. Others examined also the changed use of the term nabi' and the increasing political importance of court and cultic prophecy. Some students had studied Wilson's sociological distinction between

peripheral and central prophets, although some of the less able students had not fully understood this and wrote muddled responses.

- 06** This question produced some very thoughtful debate, the best answers pointing out that much depended on what is meant by 'typical' and on the prophet(s) with whom Elijah is compared. Effective use was made of a range of texts from the Elijah cycle of narratives.

#### **Question 4 *8<sup>th</sup> century prophecy – Amos***

- 07** This was another popular choice, but not all students read the question with sufficient care. The focus of this question was on Amos' views on the nature of God. Many answers were far more general. There was evidence of students producing prepared answers. Many responses that did focus on the question gave lists of different aspects of the nature of God with brief supporting evidence. Many answers concentrated on the negative views on God to be found in the book of Amos. There were, however, some superb responses that made effective use of a wide range of texts to support their points, which were developed in detail.

- 08** The quality of argument varied considerably. The statement was deliberately open, to allow for a variety of approaches. Some students had clearly been taught details of Israel's demise as a nation and made relevant use of this knowledge to justify Amos' views on the nature of God. Others approached the question from 21st century views on the nature of God. A few students pointed out that much depended on whether the more positive views found in the closing verses of the book and in other isolated oracles emanated from the 8th century prophet or whether they were exilic or post-exilic in origin.

#### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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