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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A (1RA0)
Paper 3: Area of Study 3 – Philosophy and Ethics
Option 3B: Christianity

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies A Paper 3B: Area of Study 3 –Philosophy and Ethics - Study of Christianity (Paper code: 1RA0/3B)

The paper contributes to 25% of the overall award.

The assessment consists of two questions and candidates must answer all questions. The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification. Centres are to use this, rather than other published resources when planning the course content.

This area of study comprises a study in-depth of Christianity as a lived religion in the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

There are two sections:

- Arguments for the Existence of God
- Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

Candidates had studied Christianity within the context of the wider British society.

Please note: AO stands for 'Assessment Objective'

SPaG stands for 'Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar'

Question 1 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of God

Bullet point. 1.4 Christian attitudes towards religious experiences and its use as a philosophical argument for the existence of God: **the nature of a religious experience and why it might be regarded as revelation**, including reference to Exodus 3; Christian responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments that religious experiences do not provide proof that God exists.. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was: 'Outline three features of a religious experience.

Candidates are asked to 'Outline' on (a) items. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of one mark.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a list.

- An example: Outline 3 characteristics of God:
- God is creator (1 mark)
- God is creator, judge and lawgiver (1 mark for list or sentence)
- God is creator, busy and distant. (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)

- Busy, distant and God is creator, (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)
- Creator, judge, lawgiver (1 mark for list)
- Creator, busy, distant (0 Marks) (all three elements need to be correct for 1 mark)
- Creator, judge, distant (0 marks)

Most candidates were awarded 3 marks. Candidates who answered the question by giving examples of a religious experience were not awarded marks.

Examiner advice: Candidates should write three sentences containing one piece of information in each. There is no need for development: it will not receive credit.

Question 1 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of God

Bullet point 1.1 Revelation as proof of the existence of God; revelation as shown in the Bible, including in the **covenants with Noah** and Abraham and through Jesus, including Hebrews 1:1–4; divergent understandings of **what revelation shows about the nature of God** for Christians. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked candidates to ‘Explain two things the revelation of God in the covenant with Noah shows about God’s nature.’

Most candidates answered this confidently. Candidates had been well prepared to identify examples of the nature of God and could link these to the covenant with Noah. A minority of students appeared not to know who Noah was or the story. Some candidates recognised the way the flood could be used to identify possible negative aspects of the nature of the Old Testament God. These were awarded positively.

Question 1 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of God

Bullet point 1.2 Visions as proof of the existence of God: the nature and importance of visions for Christians; **biblical and non-biblical examples of visions**, including Genesis 15 and Matthew 17:1–13; reasons why they might lead to belief in the existence of God and Christian responses to non-religious arguments (including atheist and Humanist) which maintain that visions are hallucinations and provide no proof that God exists; divergent understandings of what visions show about the nature of God for Christians.

The question asked was: ‘Explain two examples of visions found in the Bible.’ In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.’

Candidates are asked to ‘Explain two’ on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra

information, a reference to a source of wisdom a quotes or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a source of wisdom

- The candidates do not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word.
- If markers of candidate work in centres are unsure if the quote will be accepted, use a search engine. Enter the gist of the paraphrase and 'Bible' or 'Christian teaching'.
- If the candidate states that it is in John 1:18 and then states another verse from John – then this can be awarded. We are not holding candidate to 'verses' but it must be the correct book.
- If the candidate gives the paraphrase and then puts (John 1:18) in brackets the paraphrase can have the mark and the bracketed reference is ignored.
- If a candidate quotes Jesus and it was Paul or vice versa; and the quote is not accredited to them, it is not awarded.

Most candidates answered this question well. Candidates identified and explained many different examples from Noah to the transfiguration. Where candidates were not as successful was when they referred to non-biblical examples such as St Bernadette.

Question 1 (d)

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the (d) items. The candidates are assessed on AO2, Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief. This constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

The question is '**Evaluate**' this statement **considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion** – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise, judge the value of, the arguments to reach the higher levels).

Many candidates gave excellent answers citing reasons for and against but not considering the value of them or analysing/evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting candidate's progression to the higher levels.

Many centres had attempted to introduce a writing frame to encouraged appraisal, but the candidates did not appear to understand the demands of the skill required.

Some candidates wrote 'This is a strong argument because ...' and repeated the previous point or giving another point, or reason referring to the statement not the argument given.

In other examples, Candidates wrote 'This is a weak argument because...' and gave generic statements such as, 'it's not in the Bible'.

The majority of answers did not address the reasons for the diversity within the beliefs of Christianity.

In some cases, students focussed on the strength/weakness of an argument but had not demonstrated any understanding of religion and belief.

Examiner advice: centres should refer to training materials online. Candidates require the religious understanding of the diversity within the religious tradition, and the arguments for and against before they can begin to evaluate.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of God

Bullet point 1.8 Religious upbringing: Christian teachings about raising children to believe in God, including reference to Proverbs 22:6; **features of a Christian upbringing and why they may lead to belief in God; Christian responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments about why a religious upbringing may result in a rejection of God's existence** (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was *(d) "A religious upbringing leads to belief in God."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Christian teachings
- refer to non-religious points of view
- reach a justified conclusion

In response to this question many students gave generic answers of 'yes because its all they know' opposed by 'they might reject it'. This did not lend itself to the use of non-religious arguments.

The best responses approached the question by arguing that non-religious people agreed with the statement and claimed that a religious upbringing led to belief in God, citing indoctrination etc. Whereas Christians did not agree, because they felt that the upbringing, although it is promised in proverbs children would not divert from it, did not lead to belief and any young people rejected God as soon as they were able.

Question 2 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

Bullet point 2.5 Christian teaching about family planning and regulation of births: divergent Christian attitudes about contraception and family planning, including **teachings about the artificial methods of contraception by some Protestant Churches and the Catholic Church**, with reference to *Humanae Vitae*; different non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to family planning and the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Christian responses to them. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was 'Outline three reasons Christians may accept the use of artificial methods of contraception.'

Candidates answered this question well, they had knowledge of the reasons why some Christians would accept the use of artificial contraception and the majority of candidates gained 3 marks.

Question 2 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

Bullet point 2.1 The importance and purpose of marriage for Christians: Christian teachings about **the significance of marriage** in Christian life; the purpose of marriage for Christians including Mark 10:6–9; **divergent Christian** and non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) **attitudes to the importance of marriage** in society; including the sanctity of marriage, a lack of importance, cohabitation, and Christian responses to these attitudes. *(bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was 'Explain two Christian teachings about the importance of marriage.'

In an example of a 4-mark response the candidate gives two developed differences. For example:

- Marriage was created by God (1). He instructed the man to leave his family and be united with his wife in one flesh (1)
- Marriage is for life (1) Mark 10:11 says 'Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery' (1).

In some responses students were able identify why marriage was important and develop this. However, a number of candidates referred to the wedding ceremony not the

marriage. Many of the responses were generic and lacked evidence of Christian teachings.

Examiner advice: Refer to the specification bullet point and cover all the different parts of it. These bullet points are the basis of question setting.

Question 2 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

Bullet point 2.7 Christian teaching about the equality of men and women in the family: Christian teachings and attitudes about the role of men and women in the family, including reference to Genesis 1–3 and Ephesians 5:21–30; divergent Christian attitudes about the equality and role of men and women in the family and Christian responses to them. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was: ‘Explain two Christian teachings about the roles of men and women in the family.’

Candidates are asked to ‘Explain two’ on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then should be supported with a ‘reference to a source of wisdom’, this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source.

Most candidates responded well to this question. On occasions answers referred to roles within the Church rather than family. Most candidates were able to supply a source of wisdom.

Examiner advice: Centres struggling to find sources of wisdom should refer to the specification and/or previous mark schemes.

Question 2 (d)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two. Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

Bullet point 2.2 Christian teachings about the nature and importance of sexual relationships: divergent Christian teachings about sexual relationships; Christian attitudes towards sexual relationships outside of marriage and homosexuality, including interpretations of 1 Corinthians 6:7–20; **divergent Christian** and non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) **attitudes to sexual relationships, including the acceptance of**

sexual relationships outside marriage and homosexuality and Christian responses to them. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was ““Christians should allow same-sex relationships.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Christian teachings
- refer to different Christian points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

This question engaged candidates of all abilities and produced a wide range of marks. All candidates should be encouraged to answer every question because every mark is important. Many candidates did not gain more than level two because they did not consider the value of the arguments given in answering the question.

Some candidates referred to same sex marriage rather than the broader ideas arguments of same sex relationships

There were some candidates who took this as a personal quest to argue for same sex relationships and did not address the question in terms of Christian teachings or attitudes.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Answer (a) items in outlines need to be full sentences. Incorrect words or sentences should be crossed out with one neat line through
- Provide three sentences for (a) items, each on a separate line
- (b) items should have only two developed reasons
- (c) items are like (b) items but should also use a source of wisdom and authority as a fifth mark
- (d) items should appraise the reasons given, for and against the statement
- Candidates need to know the command words, particularly describe
- Candidates need to ready the questions carefully to ensure that they are answering the question set.
- Candidates need to look at the bullet points in the d style question to ensure that they are meeting all the demands of the question and to avoid adding alternative views that the question does not require.