

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCE O Level

GCE O Level Religious Studies (7560)

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O Level Religious Studies (7560) Report

General remarks

The standard of entry was generally pleasing. Students had, on the whole been well-taught and were almost universally familiar with the texts and factual material specified. There were very few rubric errors.

Levels of understanding and evaluation were therefore the factors which largely determined the grade achieved by each student.

The most popular sections were: The Hebrew Scriptures from Abraham to David; The Life and Teaching of Jesus; Personal and Social Relationships and Problems; Islam. This is in keeping with a long-established pattern.

Section 1

Part (a): Abraham to David

Q1a showed that stronger candidates could give fuller and more accurate answers. Q1b exemplified the varying levels of understanding of candidates. Good candidates appreciated that Rebekah's behaviour at the well showed that she was generous and hardworking in that she offered to water the camels and that she was fit and healthy enough to undertake the task. Other candidates gave less specific responses.

Q1c again attracted varying responses in that stronger candidates gave much more analytical assessments of the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah.

Q2c elicited some nuanced evaluations of the importance of family relationships vis a vis relationships with friends or with God.

Q3a attracted very detailed responses. In fact, many candidates retailed Joseph's previous interactions with Pharaoh's butler, which was not required by the question. The inclusion of superfluous material gains no additional credit and wastes a candidate's time.

Q3c gave rise to some interesting responses about the veracity or otherwise of apparently prophetic dreams from some candidates, although most failed to grasp the thrust of the question.

In Q4b, stronger candidates gave fuller answers, showing deeper understanding.

Q4c usually attracted the response that it is indeed "impossibly difficult" to keep the 10 Commandments today - and a worrying number of candidates seemed to believe that adultery is a purely modern problem, and, by implication, that it is in some sense unavoidable!

Few candidates attempted Q5 in this section.

Part (b): Elijah to Jeremiah

Few candidates attempted this section.

Section 2

The Life and Teaching of Jesus

Q11 presented few difficulties, although it was not the most popular question in the section.

Q12b revealed that few candidates realised that Pharasaical law exceed the requirements of Mosaic law and that this was the root of the disagreement. Q12c was widely misunderstood, “spiritual health” apparently being an unfamiliar concept to many.

In Q13b, many candidates did not grasp that the Gerasenes acted out of fear of the unknown.

Q14a, unusually, showed that some candidates were unfamiliar with the text. In Q14c, weaker candidates overlooked the crucial “love of” in the quotation and wrote as if money were in itself evil.

Section 3

The Early Church

Few candidates attempted this section.

Section 4

The Qur’an

Few candidates attempted this section.

Section 5

Personal and Social Relationships and Problems

In Q26a, a few candidates overlooked the crucial word “religious” and wrote about reasons for choosing to reproduce in general. A large number of candidates commented on the unalloyed joy which children bring to their parents - a view which their parents might wish to mitigate!

In Q27a, Some candidates overlooked the word “modern” and wrote of such issues as adultery, alcohol and gambling - none of which are in any sense due to present-day conditions. Q27a elicited a large number of responses along the line that the assertion is self-evidently true. Part c questions require an evaluation, which entails that candidates should be aware of opposing arguments and show, if appropriate, why they feel that the evidence is in favour of their preferred response.

Q28b again demonstrated the importance of answering the question precisely. Many candidates ignored the word “lawful” and wrote about such “occupations” as being a hired assassin, drug-dealing and blackmail.

Q29a was best answered by those who had the knowledge to give detailed responses. Some candidates just wrote in general about collecting money and giving it to the poor.

Q30c a few candidates failed to realise that “to accept” is not synonymous with “to copy”.

Section 6

Some Other World Religions

In Part (a), stronger candidates gave thoughtful and nuanced answers to Q32c, showing an appreciation of both immediate and long-term needs, and the differing requirements of various sectors of society.

Q33c simply produced flat disagreement from some candidates, who seemed unaware of the need to be aware of the variety of views on contentious issues.

For Q35b, stronger candidates appreciated the wider problems (including those for the extended family and society) of cross-cultural marriages.

Q35c, by contrast, elicited little critical thinking or awareness of the possibilities open to women in much of the modern world.

Candidates who attempted questions from other sections were, on the whole, equally well-prepared for the specification.

Statistics

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	63	56	50	45	41

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