

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

H573

For first teaching in 2016

H573/03 Autumn 2020 series

Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.



Reports for the Autumn 2020 series will provide a broad commentary about candidate performance, with the aim for them to be useful future teaching tools. As an exception for this series they will not contain any questions from the question paper nor examples of candidate answers.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 3 series overview

The paper is an optional paper for GCE Religious Studies as candidates can study the course from the perspective of any one religion. Four essay titles are set, and candidates must answer three. Success in this paper comes from being able to answer all three essays equally well.

The full range of candidate responses was seen in this session. In general, candidates had successfully mastered key topic areas that were being tested and showed a good understanding of key scholars or scholarly thought as found on the specification and occasionally beyond. It was always possible to achieve full marks from using material solely from the specification as the quality of argument is about engagement with material and not the listing of different scholars' views.

	AfL	As a very general guide, an essay answer that simply lists a range of scholars' views as its AO2 is unlikely to achieve beyond Level 4 for AO2.
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All questions received a range of answers, although there were fewer responses seen for Question 3. A common issue was the over-reliance of some candidates on material from topics other than the one being studied – for example, in the question on election, over-reliance on material on exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism; or, in the question on knowledge of God, over-reliance on material from the philosophy paper. Although this does gain credit, the pattern seemed to be that these candidates lost their focus on the question specifically set.


Another common concern for some candidates was about timing. Some candidates did not limit themselves to (just under) 40 minutes per essay and so the third essay that they attempted was either very short or even missing. Candidates should be reassured that the examiner is aware of the time constraints facing them.

<i>Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:</i>	<i>Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focused on the question set • selected material in the knowledge of the time constraints of an exam • wrote AO2-driven essays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ran out of time on the third question attempted • lost focus on the question set • relied too much on strings of information (AO1).

Option overview

In some questions, candidates did not fully hone in on words within the questions. For example, in Question 1, the focus on election was sometimes not fully appreciated and other material on salvation or life after death or from the Augustine topic was used. In Question 2, answers sometimes simply used generic material on natural and revealed theology to try to answer the question, rather than exploring creation specifically. In Question 3, the focus on methods and aims of the Scriptural Reasoning movement was sometimes lost and candidates did not avail themselves of the opportunity to show understanding of both. Credit is always given when this happens (and the ability to draw material from across the specification is a positive trait) with candidates often able to access some of the higher levels but the loss of focus does mean that the precise question is not being fully answered.

Question 4 could have been answered in two different ways: one which focused on Freud and one which focused on whether society would be happier without Christianity. Both were acceptable approaches.

	Misconception	Some candidates did not realise that the scriptural reasoning movement refers to a specific movement, which is studied as part of the specification and answered in general terms about the nature of Scripture. This led to some candidates receiving 0 marks in places.
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Key teaching and learning points – comments on improving performance

The range of responses does show the need for regular practice of 40-minute essays, done without knowing the question in advance. Where teaching time limits this, it is possible to write a focused paragraph in timed conditions to develop candidate confidence.

Teaching and learning that focuses on techniques to help candidates to focus on the question set would improve performance long-term.

Guidance on using this paper as a mock

All OCR past papers are useful for use as mock examinations. In marking this particular paper, it is important to understand the range of approaches allowed for Question 4.

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01223 553998

general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

Vocational qualifications

02476 851509

vocational.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

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