



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Religious Studies
Level	Standard Grade

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the Examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

It is encouraging to see the continued quality of candidate answers, especially within the Evaluation sections at all three levels. Candidates are to be congratulated for their insightful and at times deeply reflective answers. There does not seem to have been any major issues with any of the Evaluation questions in this year's exam.

All papers seemed to give candidates a positive start and it is clear that the adoption of the emboldened 'two reasons' in the General paper has helped the candidates. The three papers, on the whole, appear to have been clear and balanced in their questions and this has helped to settle and encourage the candidates.

There is, however, still a concern with regard to the levels of Knowledge and Understanding (KU) that some candidates demonstrate. Questions involving either source texts or just some basic information that should be known were, on occasions, poorly answered. Some examiners have suggested that this may be due to some centres presenting candidates for Standard Grade Religious Studies based on their limited core RME time. Another factor may be non-specialist teachers teaching parts of the Standard Grade Course in core RME time. Further reference will be made to these issues in the 'Advice to centres for preparation for future candidates' section of this report.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Foundation candidates appeared to give good attempts at all of the relevant questions and there were few candidates who attempted to answer all sections of the paper. With the exception of the Angels/Shepherds question, Foundation candidates performed very well in the Christianity section, which is encouraging. Evaluation questions at Foundation level continue to be very well answered and candidates obviously enjoyed the freedom to develop their own thinking.

Across all levels, candidate responses to Section E — Issues of Belief and Morality were well answered and the style of question appears to have helped candidates to give more extensive answers.

The General paper was much more positively handled than in previous years, especially in the Christianity section. Changing part of the question layout appears to have helped and a holistic approach to marking meant that the candidates could be given credit for material that they used to support any answers that they gave.

Credit candidates as usual performed well despite some apparent confusion with questions 1 (a) and (b). Evaluation at this level was extremely good and candidates enjoyed the controlled freedom that these types of question brought. Good, solid reasoning was to be found throughout, from both sides of any viewpoint, or indeed when candidates presented a one-sided view. The generic questions about funerals at Credit level were extremely well answered and developed.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Whilst the marking team believe that all three papers were well-balanced and accessible to all candidates there were some responses that raised concerns that are addressed below.

Foundation candidates appear to have been ‘thrown’ a bit by the use of the ‘Nativity Play’ picture in Question 2 (a), and this seemed to confuse some candidates, despite that fact that this had been included as a prompt. In future, the use of images will be looked at carefully. Other Foundation candidates seemed to struggle with giving four things that happened at religious funerals — many of their answers were generic and therefore not worth marks according to the agreed marking scheme. This is a concern as these questions dealt with basic knowledge about religious practices.

However, the biggest problem in the Foundation paper appeared to centre on Question 9 (a). This was a surprise to the setting team who believed it to be a very clear question. Many candidates read the question as asking for more examples of superstitious beliefs and therefore lost marks. Strangely this also happened at Credit level. The setting team will reflect on this when planning for future questions in this area.

Candidates appeared to find certain KU questions across all sections of the General paper demanding (Questions 2 (a), 3 (c), 5 (a) and 7 (a)). Having looked at these questions again, it is the opinion of the markers that this is due to poor knowledge about some of the key parts of the Religious Studies Course in each religion.

At Credit level Question 1 (a) seemed to cause some candidates difficulty and they automatically started to answer based on a resurrection answer and their 1 (a) answer became almost the same as their 1 (b) answer. This would seem to suggest that knowledge of Christian beliefs about the death of Jesus was limited, as this type of question had been used before successfully.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres are to be congratulated for presenting the vast majority of candidates at the correct level. They were well prepared and therefore performed to the best of their ability.

A priority for centres should be to make sure that all candidates are aware of the relevant sources for each of the religions studied as this can often make a difference in grade levels.

Candidates should continue to be encouraged to give two-sided answers to Evaluation questions, but a well argued one-sided answer will not be penalised.

Centres should encourage candidates to practice ‘reading’ the exam questions, including emboldened words so that questions like 9 (a) (Foundation 2010) and 9 (a) (Credit 2010) are not misread.

Finally, it is the belief of markers that candidates are disadvantaged from performing at their best if they are presented by centres having only had core RME time to study for Standard Grade Religious Studies. These candidates cannot be as well prepared as other candidates due to the reduced time that they have been given and the possibility that they have been

taught by unqualified subject teachers. Standard Grade Religious Studies needs to be taught within a time frame that every other Standard Grade subject has.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	1200
Number of resulted entries in 2010	1566

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	18.1%
Grade 2	22.0%
Grade 3	16.0%
Grade 4	17.4%
Grade 5	12.9%
Grade 6	8.2%
Grade 7	2.3%
No award	3.2%

Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
KU	36	29	20	36	22	13	30	16	12
RE	36	27	20	36	23	17	30	18	14