AQA

ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies 1061

RSS05 The History of Christianity OR
Religion, Art and the Media

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – January series

RSS05 *The History of Christianity* OR *Religion, Art and the Media*

General comments
There were no entries for the History of Christianity option; all 35 candidates entered for the examination answered the Religion, Art and the Media section of the paper (Questions 5 to 8).

There were a small number of rubric infringements; some candidates attempted to answer three questions and one candidate only wrote an answer to one question. Centres are asked to remind candidates of the requisite number of questions that should be attempted. Four topics are identified for study in the Specification and there will be one question based on each topic. Candidates must answer **two** questions.

The standard of scripts varied widely across the range of marks available. The AO1 objective was usually addressed well where candidates knew their material. Some of the answers to questions which assessed the AO2 objective appeared to be of a standard of evaluation more appropriate to GCSE; candidates need to appreciate the demands of AS in order to access the highest levels of the mark scheme.

There was a distinct preference shown by candidates towards the two questions focussing on Religious Art (Questions 5 and 6), although there were some very good answers to Religion and the Media questions (Questions 7 and 8).

Question 5 (Topics 1 and 2 *The nature and purpose of religious art*)

This was a popular question and drew a variety of responses from candidates.

Part (a)
Candidates who were able to identify and explain clearly the key purposes of religious art and substantiate their explanations with accurate reference to a range of specific examples scored well. Nearly all candidates identified three key areas of devotional, didactic and iconographic purposes and wrote about them with varying degrees of accuracy and exemplification. The candidates who accessed the highest levels of response descriptors could write clearly about the obvious purposes of religious art, and select relevant material, but they also went on to examine and explain other purposes of religious art with reference to specific examples. It was clear from answers that centres had engaged in visiting specific examples of religious art in museums and / or places of worship, and this is to be encouraged.

Part (b)
This was the AO2 question that elicited the best responses on the whole paper. Most answers offered an attempt to sustain a line of argument that demonstrated recognition of more than one point of view. There were some very pleasing answers that accessed the highest levels of the mark scheme and which demonstrated a process of reasoning and which also showed depth of understanding. Answers which were rewarded at the lower end of the mark scale were typified by two basic and superficial points that were clearly on the right lines and, had they been developed, could easily have accessed the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Question 6 (Topics 1 and 2 *The nature and purpose of religious art*)

Part (a)
Every candidate who attempted this question wrote from a perspective of Christian art. Many candidates focussed on the obvious distinctive symbolism of Christian art, although some referred to less obvious examples. Disappointingly few answers showed breadth and depth. There was a tendency amongst less able candidates to not engage fully with the demands of the question and to repeat material produced in answer to Question 5.

Part (b)
This question drew an interesting variety of responses, and some candidates engaged with the evaluation very well indeed. There were some very good answers that made reference to modern religious art; others examined the ambiguity of religious art to similar good effect. Those answers that approached the question with a simple 'for or against' or 'yes / no' formula rarely progressed beyond Level 4.

Question 7 (Topic 3 *Religion, art and popular culture*)

Part (a)
Many of the answers to this question failed to examine sufficiently the variety of, or the depth to which, religious themes are presented in their chosen works of fiction. The variety of material chosen was safe and predictable and *The Da Vinci Code* was clearly a popular choice, though not always one that was used to good effect. The biggest problem evident in answers was the tendency for candidates to become far too narrative, focussing on retelling the plots of the works chosen rather than giving clear analysis of religious themes and how they were presented in the works. One centre did, however, use reference to Smart's 'dimensions of religion' as a way into the study of religious themes and did so to good effect. The choice of material cited in answers was often too similar in its portrayal of religious themes and this led to the repetition of ideas without any critical analysis or comparisons in approach.

Part (b)
Again, this question produced some good answers but many candidates made only basic points for and against without any further development of them. The ideas were often quite sound but lacked development.

Question 8 (Topic 4 *Cyber religion and TV religion*)

Part (a)
The question specified that candidates should make "reference to a **range** of TV programmes." The vast majority of candidates did **not** do this. Answers were often confined to *The Vicar of Dibley* and *Father Ted*, or *The Vicar of Dibley* and *The Simpsons,* without any further extension or range offered. Such a narrow selection of TV programmes proved detrimental to candidates, not least because such examples were of the same genre: comedy. Similarly there was insufficient range in *types* of programmes referred to. There was seemingly a misunderstanding of what is meant by 'popular'. Candidates who examined popular documentary-type programmes such as *Root of All Evil* were rare. A small number of candidates made reference to specific religious programmes such as *Songs of Praise*, but none made reference to the broadcasting of other religious services, e.g. from a Christian perspective the seasonal broadcasts of Nine Lessons and Carols, Midnight Mass, Easter Day services. There were a small number of answers that showed some evidence of identifying a distinction between programmes that were about religion and those where religion or religious themes were incidental (predominantly soap operas); whilst these had the potential to develop into good answers they rarely progressed beyond a superficial and narrative level.

Part (b)
Disappointingly, the AO2 element of the question was, in the main, poorly addressed. Answers were narrow, repetitive and narrative in their approach, rather than analytical and evaluative. Most candidates who attempted this question focussed on discussing whether or not 'comedy' trivialised religion, rather than considering a range and depth of popular television broadcasts.