



2003

Texts and Traditions GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, the knowledge of students who completed the Texts and Traditions examination in 2003 was of the same high standard as has been shown by the general cohort over past years. Students still lose marks for poor examination technique and a lack of willingness to explore topics in a complex and complete manner. Rather than taking information for granted, students are encouraged to demonstrate the depth and breadth of their knowledge in answers. At the same time, they need to balance this with the requirement of answering the question as it has been asked. There are still quite a few students across all the Traditions in this study who come to the examination with pre-prepared responses which do not tackle the question – this is most notable in the essay questions but also in general comments on authorship and dating in the exegesis sections.

It was particularly pleasing to note that students of the *Qur'an*, who were the first to study this text in Texts and Traditions, had a wide body of knowledge which they used well to answer the examination questions.

A *VCAA Bulletin* early in second semester of 2004 will give a detailed marking schema for exegesis questions in Part C which should help both teachers and students approach these questions in a more structured manner than has been apparent in previous years.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Comments on John's Gospel

Part A – Essays

Generally, essays were well completed and used a number of examples in providing proof of the points made. More successful essays developed extended explanation of the points made, with clear paragraphs relating to well chosen examples. Strict continued reference to the question also achieved higher scores. Responses that received lower marks often used many examples, but with only one or two sentences for each. The essay became a list rather than an analysis of the question.

Part B – Extended responses

Paragraphs were generally well completed. Students need to ensure that they make the set number of points asked by the question. For example, a two part question is marked as 5 each. There was some evidence that students had not fully studied the details of the story. For example, when answering the question on the faith journey of Mary and Martha, some students put them together in their faith journey, while the more successful answers were able to communicate the incidents where differences between the two were evident. Some students used Chapter 12 – the anointing – in their analysis of Mary's faith when the question only asked for Chapter 11. It is important that students use only the information required by a particular question in their responses.

Part C – Exegesis

Well-developed responses showed thorough knowledge of all areas of the required task. Completing all sections of the exegesis was a feature that led to higher results. Students who were awarded the highest results also showed in their knowledge of the passages that they had read widely. For those teaching Texts and Traditions, access to the highest level of commentaries should be made available for students, as this showed in the most successful answers. The main reason for lower marks for the Exegesis was due to sections being left out, which became costly for the overall result. This was very often the result of students not reading questions carefully.

Comments on Jeremiah and Ezekiel

There are no specific comments provided for the students of these books. A number of comments for the other parts of the paper should be considered useful to guide students with examination technique.

Comments on Luke

Generally, students of this text responded well to most questions. The general comments for the examination as a whole are worth noting for students of this text.

Part A – Essays

Most essays were fairly well written – students were able to use the number of examples suggested and had a fairly good knowledge of the texts. However, students who wrote on John the Baptist and Jesus in Question 1 often did little more than retell the story and note the contrast rather than discussing the author's use of this literary device. Question 2 needed a well defined notion of discipleship to allow justification of the women chosen as examples. A lot of students chose Mary, as portrayed in Chapter 1 of Luke as an example of a disciple but were not able to justify this inclusion

convincingly. To answer Question 3, many students chose passages which were not obviously healing or miracle stories – students need to be aware of literary types in the Gospel and be able to nominate various passages as fulfilling the accepted criteria of a literary form.

Part B – Extended responses

Most students wrote well on Question 4 but a large number did little more than retell the story. It needs to be pointed out to students that there is a focus given for questions in this format, in this case the Pharisees, and that some parts of the presented passage may not be directly relevant to answering the question. Other students erred to the other extreme and wrote a mini essay on Pharisees with no reference at all to the selected passage. This problem should not arise if students read the question carefully and respond to it accurately.

It should be noted that Question 5 was of a different style than previous examinations but was still well answered by most students who attempted it. The question was open to many styles of answers – some students chose to write about translation as a means of interpretation, others took a more thematic point of view about various ways the text could be interpreted according to the pre-set notions of the reader, some also spoke of different commentaries or commentators' discussions of the variety of interpretations of the text.

Students who did not do well in Question 5 only gave one interpretation or gave the same interpretation twice. A question such as this is unlikely to appear in future examinations unless a verse of particular controversy which has a large body of commentary on it appears in the selected texts. A large part of both Questions 6 and 7 relied on recall – those students who answered well did so using as many examples as they could from the selected passages; others never referred to texts at all.

Some students chose to focus only on Chapter 24 for Question 6 which was perfectly acceptable; others mentioned the Transfiguration as a post-resurrection narrative which was also a suitable passage for discussion. Many students wrote a long discussion of Peter's denial of Jesus (which was not in the Passages for special study) but failed to refer to the calling of Peter in Chapter 5. Students who do well in this study recall the stories of the Passages for Special Study with ease – often students show signs of having learnt memory triggers for recalling the order of stories in the Passages for Special Study. This is to be encouraged if it assists students in being able to choose suitable passages for discussion in questions such as Question 7.

Part C – Exegesis

Students were able to answer the exegesis questions fairly well but in all sections of the paper this is an area where there still needs to be some improvement by most students. The marking guide which will appear in a future *VCAA Bulletin* should assist with this.

Comments on *Qur'an*

This was the first group to undertake this study in the Islamic tradition. As is always the case, the first group approach the examination with no previous touchstone to assist them in their preparation. This group did exceptionally well and demonstrated a firm knowledge of the text but lacked some understanding of the way to approach examination questions.

Students used the first person too much; making the responses less academic and more personal. This should be avoided and students need to detach themselves from what they write.

Part A – Essays

Question 1

No student attempted Question 1.

Question 2 and 3

In general, responses were adequate; however, sometimes they lacked references to 'specific examples'. Many students who answered Question 3 were able to retell stories effectively but lacked analysis which would have led to a more appropriate discussion of the portrayal of Satan.

Part B – Extended responses

Question 4

The responses were often too general. They did not relate to the given verses as required and some seemed to have missed the main point, providing, at best, just a paraphrase of the given verses.

Question 5 and 6

The responses were adequate. For Question 5, students needed to consider the issue of multiple 'occasions of revelations' for a given verse and not ignore one in favour of another.

Question 7

Some students confused 'character' with 'characteristics'.

Part C – Exegesis

Generally, responses were adequate, although quite often disparate and structurally weak. Most students did well in explaining the context and historical setting, but they did not relate these to the exegesis as required and present it as a single coherent piece. Although the question asked students to comment on the highlighted parts in the course of their exegesis, most students ended up giving explanations of the highlighted parts as if they were insular, having no connection to the exegesis.

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