

## Sample Assessment Specification and Exemplars

### Scholarship: Religious Studies (93603) 2019

#### Preamble

Religious Studies will be offered at Scholarship level for the first time in 2020. To assist candidates and teachers in their preparation, a sample 2019 exam question has been supplied. Here, commentary and exemplars are provided in response to the 2019 sample question. The assessment specification, as would be found on the NZQA website, is also included.

The sample question uses the idea of “Godzone” country. This idea can be interpreted in different ways. For example, it could be understood as a question about whether today most people in New Zealand profess a belief in God. It could be interpreted as a claim that New Zealand’s history and culture depend on and are influenced by Christian ideas. It could be interpreted theologically as a question as to whether God owns, reigns or is sovereign over New Zealand in theory or practice. It could be a combination of these lines of interpretation. The candidate should be clear about how they have understood the question and answer accordingly; they need to be consistent in their answer and not equivocate.

The question also asks for “grounds”, that is, reasons or arguments. Candidates should offer an argument for the conclusion they are proposing, and discuss its strengths and weaknesses. The candidate should also discuss reasons that might be given *against* the conclusion they are defending. They should be able to present these alternative viewpoints accurately, show they understand the assumptions behind these viewpoints, and provide reasons why they disagree with these alternative viewpoints.

Candidates are expected to interpret the question in light of the beliefs, history and practices of one or more specified religious traditions.

#### Religious Studies assessment specification

Scholarship Performance Standard (93603)	Religious Studies
Mode of assessment	Written examination
For year	2019

#### Format of the assessment

The examination will have one section. Candidates are required to analyse and interpret a single question that draws from a previously advised area of learning, with reference to Religious Studies. Candidates are expected to answer in essay format.

#### Content/context details

The context of the essay question/s will vary each year. For the purposes of the 2019 example material, the area of learning is “Religion in Aotearoa New Zealand”.

## Exemplars

### Outstanding Scholarship

*“Clean, green and religiously tolerant is our country’s advertising card. The holy land should be everywhere and yes, Aotearoa New Zealand should be God’s own country. But the current reality is anything but. I will argue that from the Catholic tradition’s perspective, while our ideals always aim for the kingdom of God on earth, that both within our tradition and in our public mission, there have only been pockets of “Holy Land” in evidence and that our country is not a “Godzone” paradise.*

*Let me clarify what I understand the concepts of “Holy Land” and “Godzone” to be. While Godzone is often used in a secular way to refer to a great country that is clean, green and tolerant, and this might be grounds for its self congratulation, from the Catholic perspective we are all “God’s own” people, we are his creation. But we need to acknowledge that we are God’s own to be able to say we have, with God’s help, made Aotearoa New Zealand God’s own country. I will argue that by census analysis and societal observations that this is not the reality. New Zealand is not Godzone because the way people use Godzone is just about it being a great place, but they don’t understand the holiness of God and us needing to be God’s own people.*

*Black Elk’s quote about the holy land being everywhere is an ideal of indigenous people that is not appreciated in a secular world. Likewise our own indigenous people, the Maori, have strong beliefs about the sacredness of the land and the tapuness of the person. To them the holy land is everywhere despite what outsiders might think or act like. Mount Ngarahoe is tapu, yet ignorant hikers continue to attempt to climb it. After a death on the Tongariro crossing a rahui was place on the track to honour the death. But so many people do not understand this belief and practice. In the Catholic tradition it is more in our practice as individuals and a community that the “holy land” can spread – it is more a living community than a populated piece of land. We are called to be holy as Catholics, but the holy community is not everywhere, and people’s understanding of what holiness looks like is a problem.*

*I am not being exclusively Catholic in my critique of our country’s poor Godzone/Holy Land consistency. Vatican II teaching about how Catholics should appreciate and acknowledge other Christian traditions and other religious traditions allows me to combine their influence with ours to emphasize that despite all our best intentions we haven’t created a holy land together. But there are some grounds for us to call ourselves Godzone if we take our collective ideals and practices of Maori and religious groups. So my argument will be that overall one does not get a great picture of this being a holy land, but in pockets there are lives and communities bringing holiness into Aotearoa New Zealand.”*

**This introduction sets up the overall argument and tries to clarify key concepts. This is an example of setting up Skill 1, analysis and critical thinking, right from the beginning. It has the potential to be an outstanding essay if that is consistent throughout (Skill 3) and is backed up by strong examples from history, scripture and practice (Skill 2).**

## Outstanding Scholarship

*For us Allah is holy in his oneness. This informs our actions, particularly in our wudu preparations for salat. We are literally and symbolically making ourselves clean to honour that holiness. Surat al-Fatiha, always part of our prayers, refers to one of Allah's names, Al Barr, the beneficent, or all good. One of Allah's other 99 names is Al Quddus, the most holy. Allah is all good, most holy and merciful and all that we are blessed with, our very existence even, comes from him and returns to him. In our preparation for prayer, in our prayer, and in our living after prayer, we are showing it's all about him and not about us. It does not matter where we pray, but wherever it is it is Allah's holiness we are in touch with. So yes, the holy land, the land that Allah created, is everywhere. We ask Allah to guide us on the straight path in our lives that continues to honour his holiness.*

**This paragraph is an example of Skill 2: integration, synthesis and application which uses evidence from scripture and practice to support the ongoing argument – showing highly developed religious knowledge and skills as they substantiate their ideas and argument. However, if the overall essay is mostly made up of aggregated examples like this, while showing deep understanding of the religious tradition's scripture and practice in relation to the concept of holy land/godzone, and also possibly showing logical development (Skill 3), but lacking a strong analysis and critical thinking (Skill 1), the Skill 2 mark out of 8 will pull the essay out of outstanding contention.**

## Scholarship

*“The idea that New Zealand is Godzone country is ambiguous. According to Christian Jewish and Islamic traditions, God is omnipresent and so present everywhere. According to these traditions God is the creator and sustainer of all things. He is the ruler or sovereign of the world. So, it is an implication of these traditions that God is present moment by moment and sovereignly working in every square centimetre of New Zealand society, that, given the concept of God employed by these traditions how could New Zealand not be Godzone?”*

*On the other hand, common to each of these traditions is the idea of something being holy or sacred — holy means to be “set apart” by God for a specific purpose. A standard example is teaching of the Old testament that Israel is a holy nation. But it is also found in Islamic attitudes towards Mecca and Christian ideas that the church is a holy nation. In this answer, I will draw upon New Zealand's history to assess whether it is plausible to see New Zealand as holy or set apart in this fashion. I will argue such a claim is implausible and is, in fact, presumptuous Blasphemous according to these theological traditions”*

### **This response:**

- **gives a clear, precise interpretation of the question**
- **provides a clear, consistent answer to this question**
- **is aware of the multiple ways religion and culture combine in New Zealand society that could support different answers to the question**
- **draws from a mixture of history, tradition, doctrine, and ethics in their answer.**

## **Not scholarship**

*“The idea that New Zealand is Godzone country is frankly ridiculous. In this 21st century world, no one believes there is a sky fairy who owns New Zealand. New Zealand has never had an Inquisition, which hunts or engaged in Crusades. We have liberal democratic institutions such as freedom of speech and have never been a theocracy.”*

### **This response:**

- **fails to identify any alternative points of view or present them accurately**
- **is dismissive of other points of view and fails to engage them with an argument but simply expresses a point of view or resorts to rhetoric and slogans or stereotypes.**