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GCSE

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES B

40551 Religion and Citizenship  
Report on the Examination

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4055  
June 2016

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Version: 1.0

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## 40551 Religion and Citizenship

### General Comments

This year saw the number of entries match that of previous years and once again the full ability range was in evidence with the paper being accessible to the vast majority of students.

Examiners commented positively on the quality of the work seen in the majority of exam scripts and were encouraged by the breadth of religious teaching that is now appearing, in contrast to earlier years of the specification where many students relied on a few select quotes which were used in numerous questions. This increasing use of a variety of religious teachings is obviously welcomed and has allowed students to show a greater level of understanding of the issues. As a result they have gained more credit for their responses.

The AO1 (Knowledge and Understanding) questions returned to a 1,4,4, mark format and as has been noted in previous years, some students wrote far more than they needed to for the one mark questions, 01, 06, 12, 19, 21 and 27.

The AO2 (Evaluation) questions once again elicited many excellent, thoughtful responses. The three mark evaluation questions were generally well answered with most students giving well-argued one-sided responses whilst others gave two sided responses which were also creditable.

The six mark evaluation questions produced many well-argued responses and made good use of religious teachings in supporting the points of view being put forward. Where students scored less well on the six mark questions, it was often due to a lack of evaluation in the response. In some instances there is evidence that students state arguments for the point, arguments against it and then give a paragraph of religious teaching which may or may not be tied into a viewpoint being presented. It often appears as a paragraph of knowledge and understanding that sits isolated in the answer. As a result rather than a well-rounded evaluative response that 'shows informed insights and the ability to apply knowledge and understanding of religion effectively' (Level 6 criteria) the answer often appears as 'several simple reasons with slight development of one' (Level 3 criteria). Where students have been more successful in gaining the full six marks their answers have often had the religious view or teaching built into the points made, either for or against, rather than standing as a separate paragraph.

### Question 1 – Religion and Relationships

As ever this was the most popular question on the paper. This year it also provided a surprise to examiners with question 01, requiring a definition of the term covenant, being generally very poorly answered. Examiners were able to credit a definition of the term or an example of a covenant, such as a quote from the marriage vows eg 'to have and to hold from this day...until death do us part.' Whilst there was evidence that this key term had been well taught in some schools and colleges, it was apparent this was not the case in others. Overall only just over half of students were able to correctly explain the meaning of this key term. Common mistakes were to mix the term up with convent, congregation and in a few cases coven.

02 This question was on the whole answered well, with the most popular response being an explanation of a Christian marriage service. Where students lost marks, this was often due to describing tradition rather than religion such as the wedding reception. Students who wrote about a non-Christian ceremony often scored very well as they focused far more on the religious elements of the ceremony and less on explaining what happens at a wedding.

03 This question elicited variable responses. The best answers acknowledged that parental approval for a marriage was a generally positive thing as the partner would be joining the family and would have to get on with parents. Many students argued that giving approval was OK but parents should still stand by their even if they did not like who they intended to marry as it was ultimately their decision. Where students did less well, they tended to focus on arranged and forced marriages.

04 This question Produced varied responses. Some students read the question as homosexual marriage and answered accordingly, giving details of how the law had changed and marriage was now permitted. There was great confusion over whether homosexual marriage was allowed in church. These students tended to score few if any marks. Students who scored less well tended to give sweeping statements about a religion's attitude. Where the question was especially well answered different views were cited for example, explaining that homosexual relationships were regarded as being wrong and giving religious teaching in support before moving on to say that attitudes were changing. In many cases citing religious teaching to support this.

05 was probably the best answered evaluation question on the paper. The majority of students focused on sex before marriage with only a minority considering adultery. Where students did less well they lost focus on the statement, having explain issues around contraception or having children outside of marriage and the impact this might have on them. Examiners commented very positively on the variety of religious teachings that were used in responses to this question.

## **Question 2 – Religion, Sport and Leisure**

In contrast to question 01, over ninety per cent of students who answered this question were able to gain the mark available in 06 for giving a reason why healthy living was important.

07 required students to give religious attitudes to the use of performance enhancing drugs. This was generally very well answered with many relevant teachings being cited to explain why religions would not support the use of PEDs. A minority of students argued that, as humans had been given the technology by God to create PEDs they were acceptable. Others argued that some drugs occurred naturally and so were God-given and therefore were acceptable. Whilst these may be arguments for the use of some drugs and possibly be relevant for the Religion and Drugs section in Unit 3, they are not acceptable arguments for the use of PEDs as their use would give unfair advantage to some competitors and be both against fair play and unjust. Therefore they would not be supported by any religion.

08 was generally a well answered question with many students able to give good reasons why sport may or may not have become a religion. In many cases students wrote more than was necessary to gain the three marks available. Where students scored less well they tended to write about whether religious believers should participate in sport.

09 required students to explain religious attitudes to the use and purpose of leisure time. This was well answered with good use of relevant religious teachings to support points, an increasingly popular example being the Parable of the Rich Fool. Many students considered the misuse of leisure time.

10 asked whether sport was the best way to overcome prejudice. Some students focused on sport being an escape from prejudice talking about how it was possible to forget about your problems whilst playing sport. Other students did not seem to understand the term prejudice and many wrote about discrimination against women because Muslim women were required to keep their bodies covered. The best answers argued that sport could overcome prejudice giving examples such as the Paralympics, women in sport and equal pay in some sports. They also acknowledged that sport could also be the cause of prejudice, such as women in sport and unequal pay in some sports and that perhaps better ways of overcoming prejudice might be to worship together, or sit down to a meal together.

### **Question 3 – Religion and Work**

11 asked students to explain religious attitudes to business and enterprise. Where this was answered well students often talked about using God-given talents and were able to talk about work being a duty and an offering to God necessitating honesty and integrity in all business practices. Many students also talked about acceptable and unacceptable jobs. There were a number of students who had a misunderstanding of enterprise, viewing it as a form of gambling and therefore being wrong. Other students in quoting ‘the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil’, tried to argue that religious believers should not be involved in any form of business, rather than arguing for honest conduct in business and seeing the quote as a reason to avoid exploitation and the pursuit of money at all costs.

12 presented few difficulties with the vast majority of students correctly explaining what an employee is.

13 was well answered with many responses having far more in them than was needed to gain the three marks available. Many students argued that it was not just a religious person’s duty to help the unemployed with the most popular teachings appearing to be ‘Love your neighbour...’ and ‘Right Intention’.

14 asked for reasons why a believer should do voluntary work. A number of students confused ‘voluntary’ with ‘vocation’ and so gained fewer marks than they might otherwise have done. Weaker students tended to reuse material from question 13 or turned the question into another evaluation response and explained why religious believers should not do voluntary work. Others talked about the benefits of voluntary work rather than giving reasons why it should be done. Some students appeared to assume that religious believers could not work for money and could only do voluntary work. In the best answers students made good use of a variety of religious teachings to explain why religious believers should do voluntary work.

15 produced some very good answers arguing that worshipping God on a holy day was more important than earning money with plenty of very good answers arguing the reverse. There was a full range of religious teachings in evidence.

### **Question 4 – Religion and the Multicultural Society**

16 asked for a description of how a religious festival was celebrated in the community. This elicited a wide range of responses. Many students selected Christmas and talked in general terms about the celebrations. A common weakness was to talk at length about why the festival was celebrated. In a number of cases students did not pick up on the community aspect of the question and talked about how they celebrated Christmas at home. Where students did better they were able to talk about the community dimension in detail including street decorations, carol singing on the streets, church services that welcomed non-regular church goers such as Christingle services, Nativity services and re-enactments, Midnight Communion etc. It was noticeable that if a student selected

a non-Christian festival they quite often gained good marks with many good descriptions of, for example, Diwali being seen. Some students did select non-religious festivals such as the Notting Hill Carnival and as a result gained no credit.

17 required an explanation of beliefs and teaching about tolerance. Many students tackled this well and were able to make use of teachings such as 'love your neighbour', 'treat others as you wish to be treated' and 'do not mistreat an alien' to list only a few.

18 produced a mixed set of responses. Some students did not know what was meant by blasphemy laws and so struggled to give a coherent response. Quite often they would write about religious discrimination instead. Other students did not focus on the protection of religion but discussed the laws stopping racism. Where students did understand blasphemy laws many argued that they were not needed today as they might prevent freedom of speech which was more important. A minority of students recognised that blasphemy laws in Britain were unfair as they only applied to the Church of England and in a multicultural society this should not be the case.

19. Most students were able to gain the mark for explaining immigration. In many cases students described migration but in what was said the explanation of immigration was apparent. A significant number of students did appear to think that all immigrants were illegal.

20 Examiners have commented very positively on the reasoned and balanced approach that was taken by the vast majority of students who answered this question. Many students recognised the terrible situation that asylum seekers found themselves in and why they may need to leave their home countries. A popular argument against accepting them was that it should not just be the United Kingdom and that other countries should accept them. There was evidence that some students did not fully appreciate the situation asylum seekers find themselves in on arrival in Britain. A frequent argument against accepting asylum seekers was about them taking jobs but in Britain asylum seekers are not allowed to work. In the best responses students recognised that there are many reasons a person may become an asylum seeker and acknowledged that, in many cases they have a wish to return home when conditions allow. They also displayed an excellent knowledge of relevant religious teachings and were not limited to the Golden Rule and 'love your neighbour' etc.

### **Question 5 – Religion and Identity**

As in previous years this question was once again the least popular on the paper.

21 asked for a definition of self-worth which was correctly answered by the majority of students.

22 caused some difficulty. Students were asked to explain religious attitudes to what it means to be human. In the best answers students talked about being created in the image of God, with quotes from Psalm 139 and how humans are special and unique with creation. Mention was made of the idea that life is precious and sacred and that to be human is a great rarity with the Buddhist story of the turtle being cited. Where students did less well, they talked about the purpose and meaning of life or the physical and spiritual dimensions to life which are different sections of the specification or in general terms about how being human meant the ability to love and show compassion.

23 produced many good answers with students giving convincing arguments both for and against the statement.

24 asked for a description of items that believers wear to show commitment to their religion. Almost all students who attempted this question gained some credit. However there was a wide range of responses. Some students listed four items and were unable to gain full marks as they had not met the Level 4 descriptor which requires, 'clear knowledge and understanding with some development'. A simple list was usually limited to two marks. Other students talked in a lot of detail about why particular items were important and so again limited the marks they were able to gain. A lot of confusion was apparent amongst students particularly over who wore scarves, how much of a person's face or body must be covered and who wore turbans, to highlight a few points.

25 produced some mixed responses. There appeared to be some students who did not know what was meant by the term 'sacred writings' these struggled with the question. Other students seemed not to know what other sources there might be to help make decisions and also struggled. In the best answers students were able to consider sacred writings alongside other sources such as reason, conscience, advice from religious leaders and / or family and friends and come to a reasoned conclusion as to which was the best for decision making. Quite frequently students acknowledged the importance of sacred writings but made the point that they were generally very old and could not deal with modern day issues and so what was needed was a joint approach of sacred writing and advice from religious leaders or acting according to conscience based on what had been learnt from sacred writings.

### **Question 6 – Religion and Human Rights**

26 asked students to evaluate whether the right to religious freedom was the most important human right. In the majority of responses students were able to put forward good arguments quite often against the statement and often cited a human right that they considered to be more important. When students did not score well, their most common mistake was to misread the question and talk about freedom rather than religious freedom.

27 presented few problems with the majority of students being able to define the term 'citizen'.

Question 28 asked for a description of the work of a pressure group that had been studied. Some students made the mistake of describing in detail what the organisation stood for or how it had come into existence rather than focusing on the work that they do. Another common error was to select an organisation that was not a pressure group or to select an individual such as Martin Luther King and write about their work and, in some cases, life. If students, had chosen an incorrect organisation, did gain marks if they were able to show how that organisation might apply pressure on issues. The most popular correct answers focused on the work of either Amnesty International or Greenpeace.

29. This question was generally done well with the majority of students understanding that the non-religious pressure groups shared the ideas of the religion even though they were not a religious organisation. There were many excellent examples of the use of religious teachings to back up why a believer would support these groups.

30 asked students to decide if it was ever right to break the law to protect human rights. The responses to this were varied as students did wander off at various tangents. Quite a common error was to assume the statement was about the rights and wrongs of non-violent protest. Other students focused on the first part of the statement and discussed whether it was always wrong to break the law. However in the strongest answers students often considered the example of Martin Luther King and / or Gandhi and how they had broken the law to change human rights. Some

students discussed the difficulty of trying to support human rights which would give people a better life and so would follow the principles of the Golden Rule, Right Action etc, whilst also taking note that according to Romans 13, the authorities in a nation are put there by God. In general students seemed to come to the conclusion that breaking the law to protect human rights could sometimes be justified.

### **Spelling Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG)**

An extra four marks were available for SPaG. Up to four marks were awarded for each of the six mark AO2 questions and the best mark given was then counted. More students are now writing in paragraphs and the standard of SPaG was generally good this year. As last year, several students were unable to correctly spell important technical terms including the different faiths and in particular Buddhism or Buddhists.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

## **Converting Marks into UMS marks**

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

[UMS conversion calculator](#)