



GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES B

B1 / 40551 Religion and Citizenship
Report on the Examination

4055
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General Comments

Once again there was a slight increase in the number of students entered for the examination and again the full ability range was in evidence, with the paper being accessible to the vast majority of students.

This year there was a change in the allocation of marks for the AO1 (knowledge and understanding) questions with a 1,3,5 combination being used. This did not seem to cause any problems for students but did allow many to write at greater length and demonstrate a greater depth of knowledge and understanding. It was noted that once again many students wrote far more than was necessary in response to the one mark questions, 02, 08, 11, 18, 22 and 26. These questions in most cases only require a simple phrase or sentence to secure the mark.

The AO2 (evaluation) questions continued to allow students to consider a range of religious questions and support their views with reasoned argument. Again the three mark evaluation questions were generally well answered, with most students giving well-argued one-sided responses whilst others gave two sided responses.

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. It was pleasing to note a continuing trend towards using varied religious teachings rather than relying on a few key teachings that are applied to all situations. This trend is to be encouraged allowing, as it does, students to demonstrate a greater depth of understanding of the issues and the religious teaching. However a note of caution should be sounded when using religious teachings; it is important that quotes used are relevant to the topic. On occasion, what appears to be a relevant teaching may actually not be at all appropriate if it is seen in its correct context in the relevant holy book.

Where students scored less well on these questions, it was often due to a lack of religious teaching or religious views in the answer which limited the marks that could be awarded. In other instances, students scored less well due to the approach taken in answering the questions. 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.

Schools and colleges should be aware that whole questions on topics will consist of four or five parts, making up a total of 18 marks, 9 marks for AO1 and 9 for AO2. There will always be two AO2 questions, one a 3-mark question and the other a 6-mark question. Marks for individual questions for AO1 may differ from year to year, but, for each whole question, there will always be two or three questions for AO1, totalling 9 marks. Therefore any combination is possible, eg 2, 3, 4, or 1, 3, 5, or 3, 3, 3 or 1, 4, 4 etc. Whichever combination is chosen will apply to all whole questions on the paper. This enables examiners to examine the AO1 assessment objective in relation to the specification in the most appropriate way, depending on the content being examined from year to year. This is fairer to students. It enables technical terms, or more challenging parts of the specification to be examined appropriately and provides students with opportunities to write at greater length on issues where there is a greater body of knowledge or explanation available.

Question 1 Religion and Relationships

This was the most popular question on the paper and elicited many good responses from students.

01 – Required an explanation of religious attitudes towards marrying someone of a different race. In many cases this caused no problems at all with students explaining that religions generally had no issue with people marrying others of different racial backgrounds and used relevant quotes such as Galatians 3:28 to support the point. Many students added that race did not matter but religion did, for which some credit was given. Where students went wrong on this question was ignoring 'race' and giving an entire answer about attitudes to marrying someone from a different religious background. In many of these cases, few if any marks were gained.

02 – Required an explanation of the term contraception. The vast majority of students gained the mark with no apparent difficulty. Where the mark was not gained, students often had confused contraception with conception. In a few cases some students had no idea what the term meant.

03 – Produced many well-argued responses both supporting the statement and arguing against the statement that religious believers should not have sex before marriage.

04 – Produced a mixed set of responses. In the best answers students focussed, as requested, on family life and considered the raising of children in a stable environment with children learning respect for the elders and being brought up in the faith and attending Sunday school or the madrassah etc. They also considered the role of parents in providing for the children with many students noting the traditional roles of women as homemakers and men as breadwinners and acknowledging that in many modern families roles were often shared. The importance of the family as a caring and nurturing environment where all were cared for, particularly elderly members of the family, was also explained. Where students did less well on this question, they frequently looked at other issues such as adultery, divorce, contraception, arranged marriages and in some cases made use of their sociology knowledge with explanations of the nuclear and extended family concepts. It is perhaps worth noting that whilst many Christians in Britain do live in a nuclear family situation, there is no Christian teaching that makes this a requirement and many Christians in other areas of the world live in extended family units. Likewise not all Muslim families live in extended family units.

05 – Required students to consider whether divorce was always wrong. In the best answers, students gave thoughtful responses considering the social and religious implications of divorce and the impact that divorce may have on individuals and families. They also considered the alternatives to divorce before reaching their conclusion. Whilst many advocated divorce where one partner had been unfaithful, significant numbers argued that couples should try to work things out in all other situations including violent or abusive relationships. Relatively few students considered, for example, the Christian marriage vows and what they meant and how they might have applied in a situation of domestic abuse or violence. If a couple have promised to 'love and cherish' their partner but then resort to abuse, who has broken the vows, the one who leaves the relationship or the one doing the abusing? Where this debate was considered, students frequently demonstrated excellent levels of informed insights and knowledge and understanding of religion. Weaker responses often referred to religious teachings without any real attempt to integrate them into an evaluative response, meaning relatively few marks could be gained.

Question 2 Religion, Sport and Leisure.

This question began with 06 which required an explanation of why some people say sport has become a religion. There were many high quality full mark responses seen with students giving excellent examples of similarities between sport and religion. Many students gave five or six examples with a little bit of explanation about each whilst others wrote in greater depth about three or four examples and also gained full marks. Weaker students were frequently able to score at least three marks through their explanations of the similarities. Where students did not perform as well, this was often due to them taking part of their answer to explain why sport may not be seen as a religion for which they were not able to receive credit.

07 – Prompted much thoughtful discussion about whether natural ability was a gift from God. Discussion frequently considered whether natural meant that it was the result of genetics or whether it was from God, as religion teaches that we are formed by God. This then raised the question of whether God would treat some people more favourably by giving them special gifts and talents.

08 – Presented no issues with the overwhelming majority of students being able to correctly identify a benefit of leisure time.

09 – Required students to describe the work of a religious organisation that works within sport and leisure. This was met with a mixed response. The specification lists Christians in Sport and also refers to chaplains and where students used these examples they frequently were able to score full marks with little difficulty. The interpretation of chaplains included imams and rabbis and other religious leaders who work with that role. Other examples that were used included Girls / Boys Brigades and youth clubs where there was a clear link to a religion. Students who did less well often used examples of organisations that were not religious or used an example of a sports team linking up with an organisation such as Barcelona's link with UNICEF. UNICEF is not a religious organisation and the focus of the question is on the work of an organisation within sport and leisure.

10 – Elicited many thoughtful responses regarding whether it was always wrong to gamble. The question presented few issues with most students able to present arguments for and against and include some relevant religious teaching.

Question 3 Religion and Work

11 – Required students to give a definition of the term career which the vast majority were able to do successfully. Students who gave incorrect responses frequently read career as 'carer' and gave a definition of 'carer'.

12 – Produced a mixed response. It was evident that some students had not encountered the term vocation previously and thus they struggled to gain credit. Other students read vocation as vacation and explained why being at work could be like being on holiday. Where students knew what vocation was, they were able to give clear explanations why religious believers regarded their work as a vocation. Examiners allowed some range in response, crediting students who talked of people receiving a call from God to a job as well as those who felt that by working within, for example, a caring profession they were following a vocation as they were following religious teachings in helping others. In some cases students did not gain full credit as they allowed themselves to be side-tracked into giving a description of the work of an individual, for example, Jackie Pullinger, rather than focussing on the reasons why work could be regarded as a vocation.

13 – Produced some interesting responses with many students arguing that religious believers should not always have to give money to their religious communities, particularly if the individual concerned was struggling for money. Many students talked of the requirement to pay a tithe or to give to charity whilst others argued that if an individual was part of a religion, then they should be supporting their ‘team’ by giving money to support it.

14 – Presented few difficulties with most students able to explain problems faced by an unemployed person. Where students did not gain full marks this was often due to them presenting their responses as a bullet point list which meant that the top level was not able to be reached as there was no development of any point. An interesting development this year was the number of students who felt that a problem the unemployed faced was being lazy.

15 – Required students to consider whether all holy days should be spent with the family. Many students argued that holy days were the best times for families to get together and cited God resting on the seventh day as a reason for taking time out from work. There were equally many good points made along the lines that it was impractical today to spend all holy days with the family as many people had jobs which meant they could not take time off, or the pace of modern life was such that people did not have the time and not everybody followed the same religion, meaning taking time off for a holy day in a religion that was not followed was pointless.

Question 4 Religion and the Multicultural Society.

Of all the questions on the paper it is perhaps this one where the most noticeable change has come in terms of the points and arguments put forward by students. Responses to both 19 and 20 have in some cases shown a less tolerant attitude towards multiculturalism and multi-faith issues, with some students retreating into stereotypical views and attitudes towards these topics.

The question began with 16 asking students to decide whether it is wrong to have a state religion, a term which is within the specification. This appeared to be an unknown idea to a number of students who struggled to make any meaningful points in their response. Where students were familiar with the term they were generally able to give thoughtful responses to the question and tended to argue that it was wrong in today’s multi-faith society whilst others argued equally forcefully that in the UK it was part of our tradition and its existence did not stop others from practising their own faiths.

17 – Required students to explain different attitudes towards religious believers’ involvement in politics. There was a mixed response to this with relatively few full mark answers. Many students were able to make some simple points and gain credit; however in-depth responses were few and far between. This coupled with the relatively poor response to other political questions in previous years does suggest that this is an area of the syllabus that may benefit from greater attention in teaching and/or revision.

18 – Presented few problems with the majority of students able to give a simple explanation of diversity.

19 – Asked students to explain religious attitudes to multiculturalism. In many cases this was well answered with relevant religious teachings being cited to support religions being generally supportive of multiculturalism. Where students did less well, they often included some of the benefits of multiculturalism such as variety of food etc rather than focusing on the religious attitudes. As mentioned above, some students did respond to this question by singling out particular religions and embraced stereotypical views in answering the question.

20 – Asked whether celebrating religious festivals strengthened local communities and elicited many thoughtful responses from students who considered that it was a positive way to meet and get to know people and find out about other faiths and cultures, whilst also acknowledging that it may cause isolation for people with no faith or for those who felt unable to share in the celebrations of another faith or who just found it to be disruptive due to fireworks etc. Some students did also question whether it was truly possible to celebrate a festival from a different tradition as the true meaning may not be fully obvious to an ‘outsider.’ Once again a number of students did take the opportunity to express their thoughts about those of other religions, though frequently they did not remain focused on the target of the question and thus gained few if any marks.

Question 5 Religion and Identity.

This question was once more the least popular of the six questions on the paper.

21 – Required students to explain religious teaching about the physical and spiritual dimension to life. Students responded well to this question and there were some excellent answers showing detailed understanding of both aspects of the question. Where students were less sure on one of the areas, they were often able to gain marks with a good explanation of the other area.

22 – Required an explanation of the term personhood and was met with a variety of responses ranging from those who had obviously learnt the key terms for the specification to those who had not.

23 – Asked students to describe ways a believer might show commitment to their religion and produced many good examples of ways commitment could be shown through the wearing of particular clothes, symbols of the faith or by keeping rules of the faith, such as keeping kosher, as well as attending worship regularly. Where students did less well on this question, they often did not focus on the ways a believer could show commitment and explained instead why it was important to be committed.

24 – Produced some well-argued responses assessing whether national identity was more important than religious identity. There seemed to be no definite consensus, with many arguing that national identity was more important as that was how you got a passport and were able to travel whilst others argued that national identity was only for this life and religious identity showed your true commitment and would continue beyond death.

25 – Also produced no definite consensus on whether the most important aim of life was to find its purpose and meaning. However students did produce thoughtful and insightful responses arguing for the importance of having an aim in life and it being necessary for each person to find that for themselves. Some argued that the only purpose was to enjoy yourself as there was nothing beyond this life, whilst others made the point that for many religious believers, they did not have to find their purpose and meaning as it was to serve God and so rather than worrying about finding purpose, a believer should just get on and do God’s work.

Question 6 Religion and Human Rights

Continuing the trend from last year, the popularity of this question appears to have once again increased.

26 – Required an explanation of the UNDHR and presented few problems, with the vast majority of students being able to explain what it was.

27 – Also elicited many good responses, with students being asked to describe the work of a religious believer who had supported human rights. The most popular answers were Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu and Gandhi. A wide range of other examples were seen and credited, provided that it was clear what the work was that had been done and there was evidence of their religious belief. Where students did less well, it was usually due to them not focusing on the work of the individual. Often they gave a biography and only incidentally mentioned the work that person had done.

28 – Asked whether religious believers should support all human rights campaigns. Responses varied, with many students arguing that believers have a duty to support all those in need whilst others argued that believers should only support human rights issues which did not go against a religious believer's faith. The issue of gay marriage was the example that seemed to be most frequently discussed.

29 – Asked students to explain religious attitudes towards the law and human rights. This was approached in different ways. Some students spent part of the answer dealing with one topic and then moved to the other whilst other students took the whole together and others only dealt with one of the topics. Students who took the more orderly approach of focusing on one area and then the other tended to produce a higher standard of answer and often exhibited excellent levels of knowledge and understanding of the areas, with excellent use of relevant religious teachings from across the different religions. Those who dealt with the law and human rights altogether often focussed more heavily on one of the areas and so produced a rather unbalanced answer. Often these answers were also quite confusing and necessitated several readings to be able to ascertain what was being said. Students who only dealt with one area rarely gained more than a few of the marks available.

30 – Required students to consider whether being a good citizen is the most important responsibility for a religious believer. A variety of responses were elicited, with many students arguing that religious teachings to look after those who were in need in some way meant that if a believer followed those teachings, they would be a good citizen. Others argued that a religious believer's priority should be their family and bringing them up in the way God would want and that was more important than being a good citizen. Few students made the link that raising children correctly so they could take their place in society in the future was arguably being a good citizen. Others argued that religious believers could not always be good citizens as, if something took place that was against their beliefs, they had a duty to speak out or even take action and that might mean they were not regarded as good citizens.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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