

---

GCSE

# Religious Studies B

Unit 2: Religion and Life Issues

Report on the Examination

---

(Unit code: 40552)

June 2013

---

Version: 1.0

---

Further copies of this Report are available from [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

Copyright © 2013 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the school or college.

## General Comments

It is pleasing to report that the vast majority of students found this year's paper very accessible with most attempting every question for the topics which they had chosen. More students included specific religious teachings this year. This was important as it helped towards obtaining the higher levels in the 3, 5 and 6 mark questions. There were many outstanding answers which showed that the students had been very well prepared and had taken the examination seriously. As in previous years, some students made good use of the diversity of opinion within the Christian tradition whilst others made excellent use of teachings and beliefs from two or more religions. Many were able to contrast the beliefs and teachings of Christianity or Islam with Hinduism and Buddhism in particular. Unfortunately several students were confused about the different faiths and wrote about Allah being the God of Hinduism and Muslims believing in reincarnation, karma etc. Also there were some inaccuracies in the knowledge of Buddhism with several students writing about Buddhists believing in God and the soul.

There were few rubric infringements; however some students answered all six questions. In these cases most of the answers lacked depth as it is time consuming trying to answer every question. Many would probably have scored higher marks if they had concentrated on four questions as required by the examination. Some students attempted the parts of the questions out of order. Although this is allowed it is probably not a good idea to do all the six mark AO2 questions first. This often resulted in a failure to complete the exam because so much time had been taken up writing longer answers than those required for these questions. In addition the parts are normally designed to lead logically from one part to another in a way which should be helpful to those taking the exam. Furthermore several who did not follow the numbering as printed on the exam paper ended up missing one or two questions. This may have been because they hadn't realised that they had not answered all the question parts. Only a small minority remembered to list the numbers of the questions they had answered on the front of the answer booklets.

This year, for the first time, there were five mark AO1 questions. This did not prove to be a problem because the topics examined enabled students to use a wealth of material. As we have stated each year, 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, e.g. 2, 3, 4, or 1, 3, 5, or 3, 3, 3 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.

The main change this year was the reintroduction of marks for SPaG (spelling, punctuation and grammar). Overall an extra four marks were available for SPaG. With regard to spelling many students were unable to correctly spell important technical terms including the different faiths and in particular Buddhism or Buddhists. Believe was often spelt as 'belive' and there were numerous variations on the spelling of dominion and stewardship. Many did not write in paragraphs for the six mark AO2 questions and some wrote incredibly long sentences. Commas, semi-colons and capital letters were often left out and or put in the wrong places. 'Could of' and 'would of' were sometimes used instead of 'could have' or 'would have'.

The 'give' questions were generally answered better than the 'explain briefly' as some of the terms were not clearly known. Many are now able to gain the maximum marks for the three mark AO2 questions by including three reasons or developing one or two reasons for their opinion. However, for the six mark AO2 answers many treated them as though they were AO1 questions. In order to obtain the top levels, the statements of what different faiths believe, in these questions, needed to be used to back up the arguments the students made rather than just listing them. In response to the statement, many wrote, "Christians believe ..." or "Buddhists believe ..." with perhaps a brief reference to his or her own opinion. This isn't showing informed insight and using the material effectively.

### **Question 1 Religion and Animal Rights**

This was the second most popular question on the paper and was generally well done. However, many attempted to use Christian teachings which apply only to humans to justify their opinions concerning the treatment of animals. Also further inaccurate religious teachings included the idea that humans and animals are equal.

01. Most knew that vegans do not eat meat but a minority did not make it clear that they do not use any animal product. Where the latter was the case, they failed to obtain the second mark. Many gave examples to back up their definition, such as dairy products or leather and this enabled them to obtain the second mark.

02. This question was well answered with many mentioning loyalty, relieves loneliness, shows affection or specific examples such as guide dogs for the blind, pets or guard dogs being the most frequent responses. A few ignored the word 'companions' which led to answers which were not relevant e.g. the idea of eating them for food was not credited.

03. It wasn't always clear that students understood the procedures involved in cloning with several concentrating on animal experimentation and suffering but the majority focussed on the ideas that it is not natural, playing God, tampering with God's unique creation and the Sikh belief that God is present in all living creatures. Some mentioned the benefits of science, prevention of the extinction of a species, stewardship and dominion. Some made inappropriate use of the idea of sanctity of life and when referring to Buddhism suggested that cloned animals, unlike other animals, would not have souls.

04. There were some very good answers focussing on religious attitudes to free-range, organic and factory (intensive) farming. Ideas about stewardship and dominion, the need to feed the world and the sacred cow in Hinduism were evident. Several, however, showed a lack of understanding of intensive farming, accusing farmers of beating and starving their animals and some made the mistake when writing about Christianity of stating that animals and humans are equal as they are all made in the image of God. A significant number misread the question and concentrated entirely on the slaughter of animals with particular reference to Islam. A maximum of two marks was given for such an approach.

05. This proved to be one of the best answered of the six mark AO2 questions although many answers were very general. The best answers used the examples of fox hunting or the hunting of endangered species for their fur or ivory. Most did refer to the need of some people to hunt for food and the idea of dominion. On the other side of the argument, many suggested that hunting for sport and entertainment was not acceptable. Unfortunately many, when using Christianity, tried to apply biblical teachings which refer only to humans e.g. The Ten Commandments - “Do not kill”, “love your neighbour as you love yourself” and “treat others as you wish to be treated”. This was not credited. Good reference was made to Buddhist beliefs in answering this question.

## **Question 2 Religion and Planet Earth**

This was the fourth most popular choice with the first three parts being very well answered.

06. This question was very well done with littering, deforestation and building being the most common responses. Those that missed full marks usually did so because of ignoring ‘people’ and so said, for example, ‘global warming’ rather than linking this to the actions of people. Students need to remember that in these short answer questions, whilst brevity is useful they do need to ensure that they are not so brief with their response that they end up not answering the question. They should also make sure they read the question carefully and select appropriate ideas.

07. Generally students showed good understanding of acid rain by referring to its causes and effects. Some did exaggerate how dangerous this rain can be but the harmful nature was generally understood.

08. Most focussed on the need for everyone to be concerned about climate change and the problems associated with global warming. Many referred to dominion, stewardship and taking care of the planet for God and future generations. Some missed out on good marks by failing to give reasons to back up their opinions.

09. This question brought a mixed response as some did not understand ‘origins of life’. It is important to understand the terms which are used in the specification. The creation story from Genesis was often well used and also Hindu ideas. The Big Bang theory and evolution were both accepted when students made the link to say that some religious believers accept ideas from science.

10. Many answers to this question agreed with the statement and gave reasons to back up their opinion although sustainable development and earth summits were rarely used. Including opposing views appeared quite challenging as many failed to mention improvements and focused on why we should ‘care’. Eliminating poverty and preventing or stopping war were the most popular alternatives.

## **Question 3 Religion and Prejudice**

This was the third most popular choice of students but was not as well answered as most of the other questions.

11. This question was not as well answered as expected as many misunderstood ‘oppose’ and wrote about ‘why’ racism is wrong and/or gave a religious teaching rather than giving ‘two ways’ i.e. ‘how’ religious groups may oppose racism.

12. Several struggled to define tolerance in anything more than a superficial manner which could have been applied to many concepts but most included an example which helped to clarify their definition and gain the mark/s.

13. This three mark evaluation question was reasonably well done with reference being made to it being wrong to judge people and that prejudice is wrong as people are created in the image of God and should be treated as equals.

14. This question brought responses that included a good range of religious teachings. Especially well used included the parable of the Good Samaritan and the example of Jesus and the Golden Rules. Some included the idea that positive discrimination may be supported by religious believers as it brings a positive outcome as opposed to the harm caused by negative discrimination.

15. There were several thoughtful responses to this question and fewer answers which were simply AO1 based. Many focused on loving your neighbour and being caring and sharing but often the 'can do little' aspect of the statement was ignored. The best answers drew on their knowledge of religious believers who had campaigned for peace to illustrate their reasoning that believers can do quite a lot e.g. Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement or Gandhi.

#### **Question 4 Religion and Early Life**

This was the most popular question on the paper and was often well answered, although there was a tendency to write about abortion even when the question did not demand it.

16. This question was generally well answered but there were some very strange reasons given for wanting a child. Students tried to give 'religious' reasons and sometimes came up with implausible ideas rather than the usual ideas for wanting children. Students need reminding that religious believers do things for secular as well as religious reasons and wanting to have a family was, for example, a perfectly acceptable answer.

17. Pro-Choice was well known although some confused it with Pro-Life. Some simply defined 'pro' and 'choice' and thus rather missed the point. This is a technical term in the specification and just defining the words as separate entities was not answering the question.

18. This question was well done by most students but some did get confused with the wording of the question and argued e.g. they are wrong to oppose abortion because the baby is a gift from God – which is obviously the opposite of 'wrong to oppose'. Many ignored the reference to poor quality of life and gave generic reasoning for / against abortion, thus missing the level 3.

19. Although students generally scored high marks on this question, many gave the counter argument which was not required. Many explained why they could/should have an abortion if the mother's health is at risk or the pregnancy was the result of rape but this was not answering the question and so was not credited.

20. Several students insisted on yet another argument for/against abortion which was not what the question was about. Many just listed different ideas of when life might begin, with variable accuracy on what religions teach on this issue. It is worth noting that when evaluating a 6 mark AO2 question students are allowed to make an argument that has religious content only on one side. It appeared that several were making up ideas for Christianity and Islam in particular about when life begins which included everything from conception to birth. Good use was made of the Jewish belief that life begins half way down the birth canal but many of the answers included little actual evaluation.

### **Question 5 Religion, War and Peace**

This was the fifth most popular question and was generally well answered.

21. Red Cross / Red Crescent and Help for Heroes were the most popular answers to this question.

22. This was the least well answered question in this section. Many answers were superficial and vague although the idea of bringing about what is right and fair featured in many answers. The best definitions included some specific examples.

23. Several students gave a two sided response which was not asked for but was credited. Some ignored the 'should campaign' and wrote entirely about what specific religious believers have done in campaigning for peace.

24. Many knew the Just War criteria but a lot of answers consisted of lists of the rules without any development. Some concentrated on examples of what would be a 'just' war without actually explaining the criteria. Others gave reasons for going to war without explaining where it might fit into the Just War theory. Several of those who knew the criteria got very muddled on the concept of proportionality. Their idea was that the two sides of a war got together and agreed to have the war using equal weapons.

25. Although often very well answered, some students drifted off the topic in answering this question into general reasons for and against weapons. The best answers showed awareness of the specific issues raised by weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weaponry and the whole proliferation / disarmament debates. Some good arguments were included but unfortunately, in many instances, students got engrossed in their reasoning and forgot to consider religious views or they thought that religions would accept nuclear war on the basis of the 'eye for an eye' idea.

### **Question 6 Religion and Young People**

This was the least popular section on the paper but with the exception of question 27 was well answered.

26. This was one of the best answered questions on the paper with most getting maximum marks.

27. In complete contrast to the previous question, very few knew the meaning of secular society. Even fewer gave sufficient detail for two marks as most students confused it with either theocracy or multicultural societies.

28. This question brought a wide variety of responses. There were some excellent answers focusing on food laws, holy days, rules etc. Others argued that young people wouldn't wish to be involved in drugs or crime anyway and they are given a whole new list of choices and opportunities when they belong to a religion.

29. This was another very well answered question with a wide range of benefits of belonging to a religion explained, including the diversity of activities offered by faith groups and the support and guidance given to young people. Good reference was made to the Girl's and Boys' Brigades, Spring Harvest and Taize.

30. There were some well-argued answers for and against for birth ceremonies. However, many focussed on arguing whether or not parents should choose a religion for their child or whether or not a person should be religious rather than actually honing in on the relative significance and merit of having a 'ceremony'. Some of the reasoning was quite superficial and rather contrived. The best answers understood the significance of these ceremonies in relation to religious belief e.g. original sin for Christians and the importance of the rite of circumcision in Judaism and Islam.

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

Most students gained 3 or 4 marks from the 4 marks available. Students should be reminded to use specialist vocabulary where possible, write coherently, use paragraphs and appropriate punctuation and ensure that key words are spelt correctly.

### **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](#)