

GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES B

B5 / 40555 Religious Expression in Society
Report on the Examination

4055
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General Comments

This year, students continued to expand the range of examples they used in the examination, most using Christian examples.

The most popular question this year was Question 1 (Religion and Art) which has consistently been the case since the start of the paper. Question 3 (Religion and Literature) was the least popular question this year. In previous years, Topic 6 (Religion in Contemporary Society) has been the least favoured by students. This year, it was much more popular.

Many students did not explain or develop enough of the points they made in answers. To access the higher levels of the mark scheme students need to be able to explain the points they make clearly and fully. The strongest students also used examples regularly to illustrate the points they were making – even when not specifically asked to provide these. Schools and colleges may find students respond more effectively if they know they must provide a set number of reasons or points in each answer, dependent on the marks available (for example, a four mark question benefits from an answer with at least three points made). This will give a breadth to the answer which helps students reach the higher levels of the mark scheme.

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 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 Art

01 Work by Gospel Graffiti Crew and Muhammad Ali (Aerosol Arabic) were the most commonly used examples in answer to this question.

02 Many students used generic reasons to explain why art is important. Stronger responses focused more on religious graffiti art and its importance, mainly pointing out the appeal to youth, and the ubiquitous nature of this art. Some students answered in an 'agree / disagree' format, which meant that part of their answer was not relevant. For students who tend to do this, it may be helpful if they underline the key words on the question paper.

03 Students found this question straightforward in its demand. Many were able to achieve full marks from a one-sided answer. It was interesting that few students focused their answer into particular kinds of art, as some – icons, for example – are obviously better suited to agree with the statement. It was also the case that few students included comments on the specifics of the piece, ie the actual content of a piece of religious art. Responses tended to be generic, even for those who showed detailed knowledge in other parts of the question.

04 Students often wrote about the recent Islamic blasphemy cases where images of Prophet Muhammad have been published in the press or on the Internet. Many responses did not go

further than this, and described the blasphemy rather than explaining **why** it was blasphemy. The strongest answers used examples to point out specific reasons for blasphemy, ie the weight of their answer was focused into 'why' rather than 'what'.

05 Students were generally able to write well in response to this statement. They usually followed the format of why calligraphy was the most important form of religious art, then why other forms of art are more important. The best answers also posed the argument that actually 'most important' was a subjective idea, so it is up to each individual. This is really the nature of art itself, and as such is a good argument to pose in most evaluative questions.

Question 2 Religion and Architecture

06 Christ the Redeemer in Rio was the most popular response to this question, perhaps because of the nightly views of it from World Cup football coverage.

07 Responses to this question focused on the visual impact monuments have. Only a few students made use of the stimulus, which would have lent weight to their arguments. Schools and colleges are advised to encourage students to make good use of the question stimuli, as they are often not used to help in responses, and could help students to achieve marks.

08 Students generally responded well to this question. Many of the good responses used the symbolism of the example chosen to demonstrate knowledge about the architect; for example, since the building was so magnificent, we could surmise the architect to believe God to be powerful or glorious, etc. This was a significant shift from previous years where students were sometimes only able to say an architect, poet or artist was religious and devoted.

09 This question was answered most successfully when students wrote about the aspects of religious architecture which inspired people, as well as what it inspired them to do. These students also used examples to illustrate their points. Where a question asks about 'religious architecture', students may use the full scope of genres within the topic. Some students wrote about being inspired by something other than architecture to create architecture – this was not the focus of the question, so no marks were awarded for those parts of their answers.

10 Some excellent answers explored both sides of this argument. Often students overlooked that the question was about only 'buildings', and not 'religious buildings'. The strongest answers did identify this, and used it to their advantage to create a line of argument additional to the ones usually seen. Most responses wrote about the spirituality ingrained into the buildings through their symbolism, the inspiration and devotion of their construction, and the transfer from activities within them. The alternate view was usually based around buildings being a material opposite to the very idea of spirituality. Some students did write about whether buildings were needed for worship, which was not within the scope of the question.

Question 3 Religion and Literature

11 Providing an example of a religious poem posed few problems for students.

12 Students seemed to find this question straightforward to answer. Some chose to use an atheist argument to counter the statement, which is valid, but may leave little room for development. Most students explored the ideas of inspiration or revelation to show God's involvement, disputing that God had actually dictated (as per the question). Very few students gave responses in support of the statement, but this was not a limiting factor and did not affect marks. For three-mark evaluative questions (AO2), it is valid to write from one side only and full marks can be gained with appropriate arguments.

13 Responses which used the 'Chronicles of Narnia' ('The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe') often did not focus on the question, so went through the symbolism of the book. This meant they did not draw out the religious message of the book, and so could not access the higher levels of the mark scheme. Students using other books tended to focus better on the religious message.

14 Most students referred to holy books to answer this question. Responses tended to focus on the idea that a person received a revelation, and from that wrote their book. This reliance on one single point meant that few gained the highest marks for the question. The Qur'an and Bible were most often used as examples. Some students wrote about the revelations within a piece of literature, which was not within the scope of the question which focused on 'in **the writing** of some religious literature'.

15 Responses tended to discuss how clear a message was within a specific book, in which case they repeated the symbolism to show they had understood the message. Some students chose to counter with the fact that messages were clearer from other forms of literature. Many students explored who might or might not understand the message – young or old, religious or not. Few answers explored the idea of what the message might entail, ie that a simple message such as 'good defeats evil' is easy to identify, whereas more complicated messages are less so. Stronger responses did try to address this idea in some way.

Question 4 Religion and Media

16 A number of students gave examples of newspapers, rather than magazines, in response to this question, which were not credited.

17 Most responses listed the benefits or aims of religious magazines, but stronger responses clearly stated how these benefits or aims actually supported belief – ie the impact they had.

18 There were many very good debates around this statement. Students often made the distinction between the internet being an inanimate object (not encouraging blasphemy) and its ability to facilitate the misbehaviour of people (encouraging blasphemy). A number of students wrote about immorality on the internet (pornography, gambling, etc) which is not blasphemy, though is against religious belief or teachings.

19 Students found this question very straightforward, and answers ranged from the very specific of why someone might set up a website for a religion and its believers (eg to provide virtual services or tours for those unable to attend or to travel), to those wanting to educate and challenge attitudes of the religious and non-religious alike, to generic ideas about enjoying making websites and making money. Most students were able to give four or more reasons. In answering this question students demonstrated that they were able to use examples to develop their answers, so responses often reached the highest levels of the mark scheme.

20 Students generally did not see the distinction between a 'religious film' and 'one with religion in it'. However, many students were able to access the highest levels of the mark scheme regardless of this nuance. Some students did write about films which they said mocked or ridiculed religion (ie were anti-religious), which was not relevant to this question. Schools and colleges may want to do some further work on the distinctions between 'religious films' and 'religion in films', and may also focus on the impact of irreligious films.

Question 5 Religion and Music

21 This was an accessible question, with many students seeming to recall hymns from Primary school, as well as other well-known hymns.

22 Students generally did well on this question, and were able to write eloquently about why a place of worship is the best place for hymns (given its spiritual nature as the 'home of God' and the fact that hymns are an act of worship to God). In agreeing with the question, many students touched on the desire by non-religious people not to be forced to hear hymns, though most tended to point to the ubiquitous use of some hymns at sporting events.

23 Students used a wide range of examples for this question. It is very pleasing to see that students themselves frequently choose the piece of mainstream music. Students were able to write well and in detail about the religious messages in these pieces. Where responses were less successful, it was usually because they retold the lyrics, rather than drawing out the actual religious message.

24 The strongest answers broke spirituality down into inspiration, revelation and devotion, which gave three immediate points within the answer. Where students developed these more, they usually gained full marks. Questions asking for the application of spirituality (or inspiration, devotion, revelation) are regularly used on this paper, and schools and colleges should ensure students know their definitions. This question focused on the 'writing of' religious music, so references to how listeners are affected were not relevant and gained no marks.

25 Answers to this question were often exceptional. Students really engaged with the argument, and freely wrote about music which obviously led to thoughts of God, as well as that which did not. A third strand of responses explored whether music which is essentially blasphemous, or with immoral lyrics (according to religion), makes one think of God because it triggers thoughts about how people should behave. Additionally, many students made the link of God's creation and immanence to influence all, regardless of lyrics. Finally, many students included references to music which has no lyrics, and the emotional or spiritual response of listeners. The range within the answers seen was fantastic, with little formulaic writing – responses differed student by student, showing good originality of thought and argument.

Question 6 Religion in Contemporary Society

26 This was a very accessible question which the majority of students answered correctly.

27 Students generally answered this well and could give many reasons why people choose to show their beliefs. The most commonly used reasons were out of pride, or as a religious duty. Students used examples to illustrate their points when writing about religious duty. Some students wrote about the need to proselytise which exists in some religions.

28 Most answers listed the benefits from attending acts of worship. Many students did not develop these points, so is perhaps an area for schools and colleges to address on this specific topic.

29 Students did not always answer this question well. Stronger responses posed the question of what is meant by a 'true believer', whilst others asked what it meant to be a 'full member'. However, many did not try to do either and so wrote vague responses.

30 Students wrote extensively about symbols, and gave many good reasons why they are or are not important. Some recognised that an important issue might be the people to whom the

symbol was intended to be important and they discussed this well. Less successful responses often slipped into arguing whether they should be worn or not, which usually did not directly answer the question.

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](#)