

GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES B

B6 / 40556 Worship and Key Beliefs
Report on the Examination

4055
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General Comments

The standard of students' responses to this year's question paper in general was most encouraging. This was best demonstrated in answers to the six-mark evaluation questions. To develop an argument and make effective use of one's religious knowledge and understanding in supporting it is more challenging than the recall of information and the explanation of worship and key beliefs. Many schools and colleges continue to prepare students well in these skills. The strongest answers showed evidence of these skills and also much originality and flair.

There were four marks available for spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG). Students were assessed on these in the six-mark evaluation answers. The majority of students were well prepared in this respect and many achieved all four marks.

This year there were six AO1 questions worth six marks (one on each topic) which required answers about two religions. These questions are, in effect, two Level 3 questions (one for each religion required in the answer). 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.

The most common rubric infringement was attempting more than four questions. When this occurred, all the questions were marked and the marks for the best four were used; however such rubric infringements do not benefit students who waste time on answers which will not count towards the final mark. Although it is fine for students to answer whole questions in a different order from that in the paper, it is potentially confusing for the student when they answer the parts within a question in a different order. The confusion is greatest when students do not label their answers clearly with the number of the part they are answering. Some students missed out parts altogether, presumably because they had not kept track of them.

Question 1 Places of Worship

01 This question was generally answered well, with a variety of reasons given to support the statement. The most common reasons for disagreeing with it were the potential for distracting worshippers from the chief purpose of the building and the greater importance of the spiritual over the physical. Although a two-sided answer was not required, some students explained reasons both for and against the statement and thus were able to gain all three marks.

02 This was another generally well-answered question. The most common pitfall was to describe an activity such as communion, which is worship. This received no credit, but a large majority of students gained both marks with a briefly developed description of, for example, a wedding, a baptism or a community event.

03 The majority of students knew a symbol that can be seen on the outside of a religious building. A few students chose one that can only be seen inside, such as the bread or the wine in a church or the mihrab in a mosque. These responses received no credit.

04 The words 'inside' and 'worship' were key to answering this question. Most students scored at least three marks for their answers, but a significant minority scored two or fewer because they overlooked the requirement that the design of the building be related to helping believers to worship. Answers which took 'design' to mean decoration or furnishing were credited.

05 Nearly all the students who answered this question were able to engage intelligently with the debate about whether religions should have their own buildings for worship. The most common approach was to argue between the benefits of corporate worship in a building and the equal or greater value of personal worship at home, or indeed anywhere, since God is everywhere. An alternative, equally creditable approach was to consider the advantages and disadvantages of religions sharing the same building for worship.

Question 2 Worship

06 Stronger responses referred to specific key forms of worship and linked these to the role of the religious leader in organising or leading them. The Jummah prayer at the mosque, the arti ceremony in the mandir and the Eucharist in church were examples of answers where some students achieved full credit. Vague explanations of leading prayers, sermons or reading the scriptures did receive credit, but did not reach Level 3 because they were not sufficiently developed.

07 Most students achieved at least two marks on this question. Most responses argued against the statement and included references to praying five or three times a day, the need for frequent confession or meditation, or the development of a close relationship with God. Some students misunderstood the statement to mean that believers were not allowed to worship more than once a week.

08 The majority of students knew and could explain what an 'aid to worship' is. This is a key term in the specification. A minority of students appeared to be guessing in their answers. Giving an example of an aid to worship was acceptable for one mark.

09 Only answers which linked the aid to worship with its symbolism could gain credit. This did not mean that a description of the object was irrelevant, but unless it was part of an explanation of symbolism it did not gain credit. Many students disregarded the reference to symbolism altogether and only explained how the object was used.

10 On the whole, this was not tackled as well as the six-mark evaluation on places of worship (05). The best answers gave specific examples of the variety in worship that appeal to people with different personalities and preferences. The argument of many students was that God had created people to be different and so would accept any form of worship which was sincere. On the other hand, stronger responses gave examples of required forms of worship such as communion and salah, or where attendance at a certain place or a certain time was compulsory. Well-chosen examples help responses reach the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Question 3 Pilgrimage

11 The majority of students knew the meaning of this key term, significantly more than knew 'aid to worship' (08). A few thought that pilgrimage referred to the place rather than the journey.

12 Only responses that described **past events** at a place of pilgrimage in each religion gained full marks. Some students knew the reasons why the pilgrims went there and what they did during the pilgrimage, but this could not gain credit unless it was linked specifically to the events that happened there in the past. Some responses described Jerusalem and Makkah where many events took place, and others where more than one place in Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism were covered were also credited.

13 This question was generally answered well with most students arguing against the statement. A few students misunderstood the contrast to be between worshipping at home and going to a place of worship. Unless the reasons given could reasonably be applied to a place of pilgrimage, no credit could be awarded.

14 The majority of students gained both marks for this question. Most did so by explaining two ways the pilgrimage had an impact, but it was equally creditable to explain one way and briefly develop the answer.

15 Some good arguments were produced on both sides of this debate with the stronger answers featuring both. Students linked the reasons together in a logical fashion or attempted to balance one reason in favour with another against. Again, well-chosen examples were a feature of stronger responses. Although a concluding paragraph is not essential in a Level 6 answer, it is sometimes a sign that the student is clearly focused on the statement in the question, providing it does not merely repeat points already made. A clear focus on the statement in the question is vital for writing a good evaluation.

Question 4 Origins and Key Beliefs

16 This question was answered very well by many students, the strongest answers showing evidence of selectivity and a focus on two or three beliefs. In the case of Buddhism, credit was given for answers which explained why many Buddhists do not believe in a god. Beliefs about the Buddha, some of which were relevant in this context, were credited. However, beliefs about founders and prophets like Jesus and Muhammad were not credited unless they were specifically linked to a belief in God. The requirement in the criteria for Level 3 that one of the points must be developed is particularly relevant here: a list of words describing God is not evidence of development, whereas a brief explanation of a concept like 'tawhid' would be.

17 Most students who answered this question knew the key term. A few confused 'soul' and 'conscience'.

18 Only answers which focused on the importance of believing in the soul gained credit. Some students misread the question as being what religious believers think about the soul. While this is clearly relevant, students needed to evaluate these beliefs to really address the statement. The strongest answers explained that believing in the soul brought hope of a life after death and reminded believers to be careful of their actions in this life. Some referred to how people treated each other as a result of believing in a soul.

19 This was generally answered well, with most students opting to explain two reasons why founders or prophets are important. A developed point such as the belief that he started the religion linked to the idea that God sent or chose him was an alternative way to gain the two marks.

20 This evaluation question was generally not answered well. Nevertheless, a majority of students gained at least three marks. A limiting factor was that some answers did not address the end of the statement, 'on the lives of believers today'. While 19 was focused on the importance of

a prophet or founder **to a religion**, 20 was about their impact on **the religious believers**. Only answers which took account of this reached the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Question 5 Belonging and Practices

21 There were many good answers to this question, most of them disagreeing with the statement for a number of pertinent reasons. However, answers which agreed that religious ceremonies are not important could also gain full credit. Some students argued that they themselves had not been adversely affected by not having a religious celebration of their births, while others challenged the fairness of submitting a baby to a ceremony in which he or she had no choice.

22 A significant number of students did not know the key term 'rites of passage' even though it is in the specification. Nevertheless, it was sufficient for one mark to give an example of one and many students were able to do this.

23 This was answered very well by most students, with the majority citing the benefits of getting together with family or the religious community for the festival. Answers that briefly explained a purpose such as to remember an important event, and went on to give a relevant example, also gained full credit.

24 There were relatively few students who demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of behaviour codes. Some wrote in general terms about rules in a religion concerning worship and food. While these answers gained some credit, only responses that explained some moral expectations of believers reached the highest levels of the mark scheme.

25 The responses to this question were some of the most interesting on the paper, the arguments on each side being equally balanced. Many good answers argued that it depended on **how** parents brought up the children, in particular whether the latter were given freedom of choice at a certain age. It was not necessary to refer to religious teachings on how parents should bring up their children; many answers reached the higher levels without doing so.

Question 6 Authority

26 The vast majority of students knew the meaning of this key term or could give an example of a holy book. Either approach was creditworthy. Vague answers such as 'a book about religion' were not credited.

27 Very few students could give a correct answer to this even though 'fundamentalist interpretation' is mentioned in the specification.

28 Students were generally well prepared for this question, many arguing cogently both for and against. A two-sided answer is not required for a three-mark evaluation question, however; the majority challenged the statement successfully, gaining at least two marks.

29 This question is open to a wide range of different responses and all of these were seen and credited. It was recognised that students could give very similar answers on each of the religions and still gain full credit. However, it was not wise to begin by saying 'In both Christianity and Islam...', for example, as these responses tended to provide only enough for one Level 3 answer.

30 A weakness in some responses to this question was not referring to the features of holy books other than the instructions on how to live. An approach that generally reached the higher levels of the mark scheme was to use examples of stories and beliefs from a holy book to argue

that these other parts were of equal or greater value. Some responses adopted a different approach by arguing that the instructions were not important because they restricted the freedom of believers, but unless they suggested an aspect or aspects that were more important, they were unable to make a strong case.

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

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