



---

GCSE

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES B

B6 / 40556 Worship and Key Beliefs  
Report on the Examination

---

4055  
June 2015

---

Version: 1.0

---

---

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

Copyright © 2015 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 centre.

## General Comments

This was the sixth time of examining this unit. In this year there were well over 2,000 entries and the general standard of students' responses continues to impress examiners. This was best seen 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 mere recall of information or the explanation of worship and key beliefs. Many schools and colleges continue to prepare students well in these skills. As usual the best answers showed evidence of these skills in combination with quite an advanced level of theological understanding.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar marks were awarded based on the criteria in the three performance levels. As students were assessed on these solely in the six mark evaluation answers, the latter have become doubly important. The majority of students proved themselves well prepared for maximising their performance in this respect.

Another variation of assessing AO1 in both religions was used this year: there were six AO1 items (question parts) each worth four marks, one on every topic. As these questions are, in effect, two Level 2 questions, one for each religion required in the answer, they were marked with close attention to the question focus. As last year, the focus was a very precise area of the specification (see parts 04, 07, 11, 17, 22 and 27). The requirement for detail in these AO1 answers was balanced by a broader four mark question on each topic. The performance of students was not adversely affected by the change of pattern. Schools and colleges are reminded that a variety of patterns for AO1 parts are possible, but the total marks available for AO1 on all questions will always be nine.

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.

The most common rubric infringement was attempting more than four questions. Although it is fine for students to answer whole questions in a different order from that in the paper – question 04 before question 03, for example – it is potentially confusing 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. There were a few who failed to do this.

## Places of Worship

**01** Most students explained that religious believers spend a lot of money on places of worship because this shows their devotion to God and concern for the public image of their religion. Answers that showed a clear understanding (Level 4) developed the basic points in one way or another. For instance, some mentioned particular features of the buildings which would require considerable expenditure. Others used reasons for extending the buildings, for example to allow various social uses.

**02** The focus of this question was the belief which lay behind the choice of design, so merely stating the symbol of a religion could not be credited. In marking the answers, a wide interpretation of “belief” was adopted. For example, if a belief in the importance of prayer was explicitly mentioned, it could be linked to the presence of a minaret outside a mosque.

**03** The majority of responses were in the affirmative, agreeing that religious buildings should be places for all the community to meet. However, some of these interpreted “all the community” as referring to the body of religious believers in that locality. This was a legitimate approach to the question and was given credit.

**04** This part is an instance of the AO1 questions which required knowledge of two religions as mentioned above. The specific focus on **one** main feature of a place of worship in each of two religions meant that students needed to know some detail about it. Merely naming a feature, eg “altar”, was not credit-worthy. Typically answers that gained full credit gave a physical description linked to the function or way it was used. A common mistake was to describe the place where a sermon is preached in a church as a lectern (or altar), rather than a pulpit. However, since there were no marks for naming the feature, this did not lose credit if the description was accurate, but schools and colleges would do well to teach these three features carefully. There were a few students who wrote about aids to worship in this question but, although these are often found in places of worship, they were not credited as a “main feature of the building”.

**05** Nearly all the students who answered this, were able to engage intelligently with the debate about whether the decoration inside religious buildings was a help to worshippers. There was a tendency with weaker students to stray into the debate about how much money should be spent on decoration but these arguments could only be credited if they focused on how this kind of expenditure might detract from worship in the building. The best answers relied on specific examples of decoration, such as stained glass windows and paintings of the Sikh Gurus, for the development of the argument. Reasons for opposing the statement were greatly strengthened by reference to the dangers of idolatry or shirk.

## Worship

**06** This proved to be an accessible question which was answered well in many cases. Although the majority of the answers agreed that prayer is the most important part of worship, those that argued against this often produced excellent responses. They showed a broad understanding of worship as involving the whole of life, including justice and compassion, and an awareness of hypocrisy, specifically of prayer that is not backed up by action. Some students did not gain full credit because they took the question to be about the importance of prayer in religion as a whole rather than specifically as part of worship.

**07** As with 04 the focus of the answers to this question was crucial: only one act of worship in each religion was creditable but in spite of this some students gave several examples in a list. Again, the name of an act of worship, eg “praying” or “meditation”, gained no credit on its own, there had to be a description of how (or when) this was done. Typically, an answer that was given both marks showed an understanding of why a religious believer worshipped in this way, although this was not required.

**08** Most students could answer this part well. Many reasons were given for why worship is important, some of them backed up with quotations which were very pertinent. However, the Level 4 answers specifically addressed “in the lives of religious believers” for their development and analysis. Some students, on the other hand, wrote answers which were so vague that they were nothing more than explanations of why people worship. .

**09** There were two ways students approached this question, both of which were creditable. They could give a reason why some religions encourage their members to join in community worship once a week or they could give a reason for the day chosen for this by a particular religion. Answers which mentioned a day of rest were credited even though some of these wrongly stated that Christians rested on the seventh day (Christians call Sunday the first day of the week).

**10** Only a few students failed to engage with this debate. Most gave good reasons to support both sides of the argument. The alternative to “a trained leader” was interpreted in different ways: some envisaged that a leader who had no formal training was meant, others that no leader at all was in mind. Both approaches were credit-worthy. It was a pity that a few did not read the question carefully enough and did not refer to the context of worship in a religious building but wrote instead about the many other duties of a religious leader.

## **Pilgrimage**

**11** A common pitfall here was to explain more than one reason in the same religion. Only one reason could be credited and, to gain both marks available, it needed to be a developed reason. The best answers took a particular place of pilgrimage and explained the purpose of pilgrims in going there. This was developed by detailing the action which would achieve that purpose. Some students did not gain full credit because they stated a reason without developing it.

**12** Most students knew a symbol or symbolic action connected with a place of pilgrimage. Some wrote “praying” but this was not credited because it is not a pilgrimage ritual with a symbolic meaning. The standard symbol of one of the six religions on this unit was credited, eg “cross”.

**13** Many different answers could be given to this question. Most students found something to write which was creditable. Some answers were rather vague, merely reiterating the reasons why pilgrims go on pilgrimage, but others gained full credit by explaining how they might be different on their return. This focus was necessary to show adequate development and/or analysis for Level 4.

**14** Equally strong arguments were utilised for and against the statement. Some responses argued that miracles could be expected because they had happened at certain places in the past. Others doubted this because only God could tell where he would do a miracle and it was selfish of the pilgrims to expect him to do one for them. Some students argued that the changes caused by going on pilgrimage were themselves miraculous. This was a valid approach for some credit as long as it was backed up with an appropriate example.

**15** The best answers to this question focused explicitly on whether pilgrimage is worthwhile and argued about whether money, being a material possession, was being used wisely to secure non-materialistic goals. They addressed the many positive things pilgrims would gain from the experience and contrasted these points with the ways that people might receive the same benefits by staying at home and simply worshipping in their local place of worship. Some used the argument that it was unfair to expect believers who couldn't afford an expensive journey to go on pilgrimage but balanced this by pointing out that in Islam they did **not** have to go if they were unable to pay, their intention to go was enough.

### Origins and Beliefs

**16** This question was answered by more students this year (the whole topic attracted more than in previous years) but with less success. This part in particular showed a lack of awareness in many about the “basic beliefs” of religions, in spite of the reminders in the stimulus. Schools in their teaching would do well to clarify the distinction between beliefs and rules of behaviour so students do not confuse them. Some credit could be given for answers that mentioned “love your neighbour as yourself” but few students reached Level 4.

**17** Most students knew an event in the life of a founder or prophet well enough to gain full credit for at least one religion. As with the parallel questions, correct knowledge about the event could be credited even though the student wrongly identified the person. For example, a few students thought the near sacrifice of his son was an event in the life of Muhammad.

**18** Many responses agreed with the statement and gave lucid reasons to explain why it was not possible to know about the afterlife. However, there were also good arguments used to oppose the statement, particularly from students who knew what the sacred texts had to say on the subject. The best answers pointed out that knowledge is different from believing.

**19** Most students knew how religious believers understand the link between this life and the next. Nearly all of them explained this in terms of their behaviour.

**20** This question as to whether believing in God changes people's lives for the better provoked some very thoughtful answers with many students unable to make up their minds in the end. It is worth remembering that students do not have to decide one way or other in order to score full marks on these questions: a response in which the points on each side are skilfully matched against each other, even without a definite conclusion, is equally likely to gain maximum credit.

### Practices and Belonging

**21** Most students understood what a behaviour code is but a few thought only in terms of being well-mannered. Although the key term was better known than “basic beliefs” in part 16, there was a similar lack of depth in many of the answers. The teachings on how people should treat each other were not mentioned as often as would have been expected. On the other hand, there was a tendency to refer to dietary rules and expectations about worship which are not strictly to do with behaviour.

**22** This should have been a straightforward question if students read it carefully. However, too many answered it as if it was about **why** a believer might celebrate. This could gain no credit unless they went on to describe **how** they celebrated. Although Ramadan and Lent are not strictly celebrations, credit was given for descriptions of how they are observed. As with the parallel questions on other topics, merely naming a festival on its own did not gain credit.

**23** The distinction between what is legal and what is religious in the act of marriage was not clearly understood by some students. This was not required to answer the question but it would have hampered those who thought you could only get married legally if you had a religious ceremony. There were many good answers that disagreed with the statement and argued the religious part was not strictly necessary.

**24** This part was the question that had the highest success rate on the paper. A religious reason was not required and nearly everyone could give a creditable answer.

**25** The best responses to this were those which explicitly addressed “in today’s world”. They showed insight by pointing out how the world has changed with respect to food between the time when the religious dietary laws were established and now. A strong counter argument was put in terms of religions needing to preserve their traditions. Surprisingly there was considerable ignorance on the part of some students as to why pork is avoided in some faiths. A few thought the pig was a sacred animal.

### **Authority**

**26** This proved to be a challenging question for students to gain maximum credit. The best answers gave two reasons why the holy books are treated with respect and developed one or both of them with examples from one or two religions. However, there was a slight tendency to describe **how** they showed respect to the book.

**27** Of all the “in each of two religions” questions, this was the least well answered. Students could give general answers about what was in the holy books, but comparatively few knew enough detail to gain all four marks. Again, there was no credit for simply naming the holy book. It is likely that some students did not understand the word “composition” in the question in spite of the “contents” in brackets which was designed to help them.

**28** This question requiring one way in which believers may contribute to their religious community was very well answered, with a great variety of suggestions from different students.

**29** It was clear that students were better prepared to answer this question than question 27, although a few did not know the meaning of “founder”. Many of them disagreed with the statement and gave reasons why God or the holy book had more authority. Two-sided responses were quite frequent, often using the Buddha or Jesus as examples of founders who have ultimate authority for their followers. It is well to remember that although two-sided answers are not required for a three-mark AO2 question, they can be a good strategy to ensure that students get all three marks.

**30** There were many good arguments utilised on both sides of this debate as to whether religious leaders should do more to introduce young people to religious traditions. The best answers focused on both the issue of whether it was the duty of the religious leaders (as opposed to parents or the young people themselves) **and** the value of religious traditions. The question provoked many thoughtful responses about how young people viewed religious traditions and their need for guidance.

## **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](#)