



GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES A

8062/13 Paper 1: Christianity
Report on the Examination

8062
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General Introduction to the November Series

This has been another unusual exam series in many ways. Entry patterns have been very different from those normally seen in the summer, and students had a very different experience in preparation for these exams. It is therefore more difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the range of student responses seen in this series and those seen in a normal summer series. The smaller entry also means that there is less evidence available for examiners to comment on.

In this report, senior examiners will summarise the performance of students in this series in a way that is as helpful as possible to teachers preparing future cohorts while taking into account the unusual circumstances and limited evidence available.

Overview of Entry

The entry for this exam was measured in hundreds, whereas entries for this paper for a normal summer series have generally been in six figures. Nevertheless it is possible to compare the 2021 entry with that of the normal summer series in several ways:

- time management was generally good. There was sometimes a tail-off on Question 02.5, but no more than 'normal'.
- the length of responses was generally commensurate with previous practice. Most students continue to write appropriate amounts for all questions.
- the diversity in answers to Questions 01.2 and 02.2 remains the same.
- the quality and accuracy of textual references were broadly similar for Questions 01.4 and 02.4.
- marking criteria continued to differentiate effectively between Levels 1 to 4 for the 12-mark evaluations.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 01.1

This asked for the word that describes the Christian belief that Jesus returned to heaven. Most students were familiar with the key vocabulary (*Ascension*), which allowed for a comfortable start.

Question 01.2 asked for two Christian beliefs about Jesus' crucifixion. Most wrote about the pain of crucifixion, the mockery of Jesus on the cross, and the well-expressed idea that Jesus' crucifixion was an atonement for sin. Most gained 2 marks on this question.

Question 01.3 asked students to explain two ways in which belief about creation influences Christians today. The influence was often described by psychological criteria, for example: *seeing* God's power and divinity; *understanding* or *being shown* God's omnipotence, omnibenevolence and omniscience, these being influences to forming or maintaining a belief. Most students gained full marks. Most of those who did not ignored the word 'influences'.

Question 01.4 asked for two Christian teachings about sin. Most wrote well about original sin and its removal by baptism; some wrote eloquently about free will and responsibility. Reference to sacred writings was mainly about the biblical story of Adam and Eve. The question was answered well, with more than one in five students achieving 5/5.

Question 01.5 asked for an evaluation of the statement that ‘For Christians, it is impossible to understand the nature of God.’ There was a very wide range of answers, most of which revolved around whether or not God’s attributes are understandable. Favourite among the text references was John 3:16: ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only son’. Most students gave the full quotation verbatim, linking it to arguments concerning the nature of a God who is known to be omnibenevolent.

Question 02.1 asked students to identify the particular saint associated with Lourdes. By comparison with 01.1, a significantly smaller number of candidates correctly identified the saint as St Bernadette.

Question 02.2 asked for two reasons why prayer is important for Christians. This was answered well, with most students collecting both marks from a wide range of answers.

Question 02.3 asked students to explain two contrasting ways that Christians can support food banks in the local community. Most suggested that Christians can do this either by donating money, food or other resources, or else by working in the foodbanks. Whether 2, 3 or 4 marks were awarded depended on how well ‘donating’ and ‘working’ were explained.

Question 02.4 asked students to explain two reasons why Christian churches help people who are being persecuted. Some misread the question, and wrote about ‘reasons *how*’ instead of ‘reasons *why*’. Many understood ‘persecution’ to mean ‘prosecution’, and talked about the need for churches to pray and help people being prosecuted for their crimes. Where the question was accurately read and understood, most responses collected 3, 4 or 5 marks.

Question 02.5 asked for an evaluation of the statement that ‘The celebration of Holy Communion (Eucharist) is the most important part of Christian life.’ Knowledge of the Eucharist was clearly the defining factor in judging a response to be at a specific level, and there was some variety here. The most common opposing argument related to the celebration of Easter, with its focus on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, together with the implications of this for life after death. Marks for this question were generally lower than for Question 01.5. This was probably an issue of time-management, since both questions were clearly accessible to students.

Concluding Remarks

- Students should always make sure that they read questions carefully, since not doing so can lead to irrelevance, as with Question 02.4.
- Coverage of the Specification was generally good, although the confusion between *persecution* and *prosecution* in Question 02.4 might imply that many had not revised ‘how Christian churches respond to persecution’. This underlines the need to cover the whole Specification.
- In Questions 01.5 and 02.5, some students did not access Levels 3 and 4, which require reasoned consideration of different points of view together with logical chains of reasoning. Many stopped short at recognising different points of view (Level 2).
- One significant improvement was the use of appropriate texts to support Question 01.4. The same was true with Question 01.5.
- Students were clearly well taught, which showed itself in enthusiastic writing. Given current circumstances this was highly commendable.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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