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GCSE

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES A

8062/2A

Report on the Examination

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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**

There was a much smaller entry than the usual summer examination and many of the AO2 responses did not reach the highest level. Very few questions were not attempted although several tried to answer all six sections instead of the four as required. This usually meant that in these cases the answers were rather superficial, lacking the quality and depth for the higher marks.

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### **Theme A: Relationships and families**

This was the most popular theme on the paper and was generally well answered.

- 01.1 Nearly all those who entered the exam answered this question correctly.
- 01.2 Most were able to give two religious reasons in answering this question although a few said that sex before marriage was wrong without saying why. Answers included the idea that religious believers view sex as a gift from God that should be confined to the commitment of marriage. Others mentioned that believers may view sex before marriage as irresponsible as people run the risk of unwanted pregnancy, etc.
- 01.3 The ideas that most religions teach that marriage is intended as a faithful, lifelong-commitment for the sharing of love and companionship and provides the context for the raising of children were popular responses. Some mentioned that within some branches of Christianity it is a sacrament and 'That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh' (Genesis 2:24). Others included the idea that it is seen in some religions as a duty to get married and have children.
- 01.4 Many answers focused on the idea that most religions teach that male and female are of equal value but may have different roles and responsibilities in the family and society eg traditionally the man went out to work while the woman looked after the home and children. Others mentioned that historical interpretations have given superior roles to men, eg leading worship. Many did not include reference to a source and so missed out on the fifth mark.

- 01.5 Few reached the top level for this question with most answers not getting far beyond the idea that it is important to pass on the parents' faith to future generations but at the same time to provide a loving and stable family home.

### **Theme B: Religion and life**

This was not a popular section on this occasion although answered by many who attempted more than the four themes which were required.

- 02.1 Although the majority got the answer to this question right several put the incorrect answer of 'creation and evolution'.
- 02.2 There was a variety of correct answers to this question ranging from reduce, recycle, reuse, raise awareness to use public transport or walk or cycle.
- 02.3 For this question most contrasted the Genesis creation story with the Big Bang theory. Some missed out on two of the marks as they stated the Big Bang theory as a non-religious/atheist response when the question specifically asked about religious views.
- 02.4 Although the question did not ask for contrasting beliefs many answers were written in that way. For example, comments like God gave humans dominion and put animals on the earth for the use of humans for food were contrasted with the belief that animals are part of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth and so should not be eaten. Many did not include reference to a source and so missed out on the fifth mark.
- 02.5 Most candidates scored reasonable marks on this question but many concentrated on giving an AO1 type answer where they described the beliefs of Christianity or Islam about the afterlife. In support of other views the main reasoning centred around the lack of definite proof.

### **Theme C: The existence of God and revelation**

Those candidates who had studied this topic performed reasonably well but unfortunately it appeared that many who attempted this section had not so studied the topic. Usually these were those who attempted to answer all the questions and they found this section a real challenge.

- 03.1 This question was answered correctly by most candidates.
- 03.2 The answer to this question concerning the transcendence of God was not well known with only a small number obtaining the maximum two marks.
- 03.3 Most were able to give **two** beliefs about evil and suffering with many referring to the idea that if God is all loving and all powerful why does evil and suffering exist. This was contrasted with the idea of humans having freewill with the example of the disobedience of Adam and Eve at the Fall often being quoted.
- 03.4 Many that knew what is meant by Special Revelation were able to answer this question well with examples given from different religions although some did not relate the incidents as a source of knowledge of the divine (God). Some confused Special Revelation with General Revelation.

- 03.5 This question brought a mixed response. Some did not know the First Cause Argument and consequently struggled. Those that did were able to say that everything appears to have a cause and this includes the universe. However, if this is the case, who caused the existence of God?

#### **Theme D: Religion, peace and conflict**

This was a very popular question and was generally well answered.

- 04.1 Most candidates were able to identify the correct answer for this question.
- 04.2 This question was well answered as most knew two of the criteria for a Just War. The most popular responses were as the last resort, avoidance where possible of injury to civilians, to defend faith and freedoms and in self-defence. The idea of getting revenge was not credited which was the most popular incorrect response.
- 04.3 There were some good answers to this question concerning two similar religious beliefs about peace keeping. Many wrote about working for peace may result in bringing about forgiveness and understanding. Several included the idea that Peace and non-violence are core beliefs in Buddhism and many who answered from Christianity included the quote “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God”.
- 04.4 This question brought the response that nearly always religious beliefs condemn violent protest but there may be exceptions under extreme circumstances e.g. in opposing apartheid in South Africa. Some missed out on the fifth mark by not referring directly to a source of religious belief and teaching.
- 04.5 There were some good responses to this question with some students contrasting the motives of selfishness and greed with the need for a better life for those struggling with extreme poverty and living conditions. It was pleasing to note that those who quoted “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” – 1 Timothy 6:10 nearly always got it correct. In previous exams many have missed out the first part of the quotation and started with the word ‘money’.

#### **Theme E: Religion, crime and punishment**

This section was attempted by many of the students and there was a wide range of responses.

- 05.1 This proved to be the most difficult of the one mark questions with many choosing ‘Good Intentions’ instead of ‘Principle of utility.’
- 05.2 Most scored highly on this question about why believers opposed hate crimes as answers included the idea of equality, created in the image of God, it is against the law, may lead to violence, etc.
- 05.3 Some found it difficult to come up with a contrasting view to the idea that theft is morally wrong, breaks the law, the Ten Commandments etc. Many referred to Shari’ah Law and Qur’an 5:38. The alternative view usually stated that there may be sympathy towards people committing theft out of need rather than greed, however, the needy should be cared for by the community, so they have no reason to steal and break the law.

- 05.4 Many wrote that a criminal should be encouraged to recognise the suffering they have caused and hence change their ways in order to become a useful member of society. Some included the idea that reformation allows an offender to go some way towards repairing their karma. A few contrasted the merits of reforming a person with other aims of punishment such as deterrence or retribution.
- 05.5 Many candidates struggled with this question as they confused corporal punishment with capital punishment. As a consequence this proved to be the most challenging AO2 question on the paper. Those that knew the meaning of corporal punishment were usually able to use examples from different religions such as Shari’ah law in Islam, “Spare the rod and spoil the child” in Judaism and the first moral precept in Buddhism.

### **Theme F: Religion, human rights and social justice**

This was a popular section and many questions were well answered.

- 06.1 Nearly all the students answered this question correctly
- 06.2 There was a wide range of correct responses to this question requiring examples of human rights. Popular answers included the right to life, education, freedom of opinion and freedom of religion.
- 06.3 Most responses to this question about the right use of wealth focused on giving to charity and related the answers to the teachings of the religion(s) they had studied. Most focused on the western faiths.
- 06.4 There were some good answers concerning religious beliefs about discrimination. Many quoted the idea that we are all made in the image of God and so discrimination is wrong. Some included points about positive discrimination.
- 06.5 Most scored marks for this question and made general points about what more could be done to stop exploitation of the poor. The higher level answers usually explained what religious believers are already doing to assist those who are struggling with poverty and backed up their arguments with religious teachings.

#### **SPaG**

Most candidates are writing in paragraphs and are using complex sentences. Some specialist terms are being used appropriately and generally the answers are clearly understood. The punctuation and spelling was often of the level of intermediate performance.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Please note that it is important for the part four questions to name the source and not simply quote from the sacred text or a religious leader without stating who it is. Many missed out on the fifth mark in those questions. For the AO2 evaluation questions it is important to include reasoning and not simply use AO1 type material. The number achieving level four AO2 was limited this time. However, overall it proved to be an accessible paper for most students.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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