



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2011**

**Religious Studies**

**RSS10**

**(Specification 2060)**

**Unit K World Religion 2: Christianity, Judaism,  
Islam 1 *The Way of Submission***

***Report on the Examination***

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## General Comments

In general, although many candidates (particularly on the Islam section) had some excellent knowledge and understanding to display, several candidates seem to have difficulty with the dialectical 'for and against' structure of the 15 mark AO2 questions. Of course the better answers discuss the issue and either come down on one side or the other, or say that both views have merit, supporting their stance with reasoned arguments. However many seem to have difficulty with the very notion of rational disagreements that might be settled by *arguments*.

## Section A Christianity

There were very few candidates for this section of the paper.

### Question 1

- 01** Candidates who attempted this question varied between the very good dealing with Augustine and original sin alongside talking about sin as deliberate separation from God and more mediocre or weaker responses focusing narrowly on baptism. Surprisingly few had much to say about Jesus and the Protestant emphasis on faith, which went more or less unnoticed. At the very weak end a few candidates did struggle to write anything of substance on sin and salvation.
- 02** This question was addressed poorly by some candidates and most responses were rather general. Stronger candidates suggested that if you do not accept sin, it doesn't make much sense to talk about salvation. Very few grasped the point that salvation may mean healing and well-being and that this can be detached from the concept of sin. There was a disappointing lack of consideration of whether the idea of sin *is* outdated which was the question posed, so there were some imbalanced responses.

### Question 2

There were very few answers to this question.

### Question 3

- 05** Some candidates referred to Roman Catholicism and something indeterminate called 'Protestantism' (which was taken to mean the Church of England but clearly they overlooked the internal diversity of that 'denomination'). Catholics believe in transubstantiation but some candidates were at a loss to explain what others believe. Some candidates' knowledge of practices (and symbolism) was hazy whilst others found it fairly straightforward and were able to offer explanations about beliefs and practices with a good range of knowledge and understanding.
- 06** Candidates on the whole seemed to write from a radically individualist perspective. Weaker candidates offered little knowledge or understanding of what happens in church services.

### Question 4

- 07** Some bizarre claims from a few candidates here, e.g. marriage is a contract to which God is a party or marriage is a sacrament and that Christians are required to participate in sacraments for salvation – so only married Christians can be saved. It must be said that knowledge of practices seemed to be rather vague.

- 08** Lack of specificity from a few candidates in the analysis but most candidates did discuss the legitimacy of divorce. Some said that divorced people had broken a contract with God. Some balance in analysis was evident from the candidates who understood this question better but as in previous examination sessions, some responses did not access above Level 3 because of a lack of depth.

## **Section B Judaism**

Questions 5 and 7 were again the most popular in this section of the paper.

### **Question 5**

- 09** Most candidates who answered this question responded well, although less about covenantal theology than one would expect. A few candidates misread the question and tended to ignore the fact that there were two commands to look at, namely that God is loving *and* merciful. Some candidates explored the two-way nature of a relationship with God. There were also some excellent responses which were given from more able candidates, with a thorough examination of the Jewish concept of God as loving and merciful. The quality of some of the answers revealed a very thorough treatment of the topic which was pleasing as has been the case in previous exam sessions.
- 10** Some candidates tended to overlap their material too much from 09. Most were fine, although it must be impressed upon candidates that they do not have to come down hard on one side or the other to access the higher levels. Most said that the existence of Israel shows that God is 'still there for his people' despite the Holocaust.

### **Question 6**

Only two answers were seen.

### **Question 7**

- 13** Most, if not all, candidates really knew about practices and what they symbolise (and about differences between Reform and Orthodoxy which is encouraging to see). Pesach was well understood. Responses were mostly of a good quality and were characterised by clarity, focus and direction. This proved to be a very accessible question.
- 14** Better responses understood that such performances express and perpetuate what it means to be Jewish. Generally candidates gave much weaker responses, though, to this part of the question and appeared to struggle with the issue of 'to be a faithful Jew'. Answers lacked depth and often vague ideas were offered with little discussion. Few responses seemed to say anything about a Jew being a Jew by bloodline not just by following a festival procedure, counter-argued perhaps with the point that no other festival seems to express a sense of belonging to a people chosen by God and depending on him as Pesach.

### **Question 8**

Few answers to this question.

## **Section C Islam 1 *The Way of Submission***

This was, as in previous examination sessions, by far the most popular section of the paper, with Questions 9 and 10 being the most popular questions.

### **Question 9**

- 17** Candidates offered mostly at least satisfactory responses to this question, though a number were content to say that the Qur'an is very important and its importance is manifested in its reverent treatment. Such candidates tended to overlook the point about Shari'ah. Overall, it would be fair to say that many candidates were content to mention a list of points (it's the source of law and social teachings, it tells us about God, it's good to hear it) without much elaboration. Some candidates failed to respond to the actual question set and included lots of information about how it is kept on the highest shelf etc and little else, whilst some candidates seemed to have prepared for a different question, commonly how the Qur'an is used in worship.
- 18** A number of candidates took 'little meaning' as 'little importance' and so missed the point. Others said that it means something (is important) because it connects you with God even if you don't know Arabic. Many got bogged down by narrowly construing interpretation as translation. Better candidates observed that it's often hard to understand or ambiguous (in Arabic or any other language) and that it is therefore interpreted via the Hadiths and Sunnah. Hardly any made the point that there is a long scholarly tradition of interpretations in the interests of application to concrete situations within Islam and that this is not considered controversial – except by those who call themselves fundamentalists and claim privileged access to the meaning. Many recognised that 'extremists' were imposing their own interpretations.

### **Question 10**

- 19** Some good explanations of monotheistic belief here. Almost all recognised that it is a central pillar. Surprisingly not many said much about Muhammad, so not all candidates addressed the question set accurately. That said, this appeared to be a very accessible question to many candidates who had clearly learnt the Five Pillars of Faith well.
- 20** Good candidates saw that both are needed – although God will reward right intentions in cases where one is prevented from fulfilling them. Some candidates did not recognise the point that 'intention' here is to be taken as meaning the act sincerely and identify it with the mere statement of niyyah. Examiners expected a little more focus on the practice of the five pillars, though stronger candidates explored this area. Many candidates also tended to stress the importance of 'living for God' and not for oneself.

### **Question 11**

- 21** This seemed to be the least popular question with candidates and the range was huge between those who responded about the religion of Islam and submission to God' and others who tended to repeat variations on a theme of 'to believe in Allah'.
- 22** Better candidates said that living in terror wasn't a very good way of realising God's will for people. On the other hand, a dose of fear is no bad thing if fear of punishment deters one from evil and that the Qur'an speaks of the horrors that await evil-doers. Almost all recognised that God is merciful and compassionate – but that we should not test his patience. Some candidates offered some very good responses to this evaluation question with the very best being both balanced and thoughtful. Some candidates were a little more simplistic in their response, only looking at the vivid pictures of reward and punishment in Islam and little else.

## **Question 12**

**23** Not as much detail about prophets other than Muhammad as one might have expected. Stronger candidates recognised that prophets were not so much sent as chosen because of their admirable human qualities and concluded that their authority lies therein. They also recognised that God chooses not to communicate directly, but uses intermediaries appropriate to the human situation.

There were some weaker responses and some candidates did struggle on authority. In the weaker responses a list of prophets was often produced with a vague link to the question.

**24** This question seemed to provide some difficulty for the weaker candidates, who often struggled to grasp the issues that the question could raise. Usually these weak responses argued that all prophets have authority. These candidates also appeared not to know that there were prophets before Muhammad and talked about some modern persons claiming prophetic status. That wouldn't work because Muhammad is the last one. Other more able candidates offered some good, thoughtful responses suggesting that as Muhammad is the seal why do we need the others? Well, they were chosen by God and may speak to some contemporary situations. So although Muhammad is the most important, this does not deny the authority of the others.

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

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