



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies (2060)

RSS08 Religion and Contemporary Society

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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General Comments

The entry represented a range of abilities, and it is pleasing to note the standard of work received from many centres. In general, more candidates seem able to organise their time effectively across the two answers. There is still a strong tendency for candidates to fail to recognise that they will not gain credit for AO2 discussions in part (a) of their answers, and many penalised themselves by giving lengthy arguments in part (a) where they could not be credited.

Question 1

This was the most popular question on the paper, and it elicited some very good responses from candidates who were aware of a range of studies on the topic, and were also able to draw on evidence of declines in weddings and baptisms, as well as evidence from, for instance, disused Churches, and declines in vocations to the priesthood. The question asked for 'evidence'. A number of candidates wrote more about 'reasons'; whilst such answers gained some credit, they slightly missed the focus of the question. A few other responses wrote at length about, for instance, the decline in morals. Some credit was gained for this, but candidates and centres need to be aware of the specification context of this topic, which is focussed in demographic and societal issues.

Part (a)

This question was one where the tendency to enter into unnecessary discussion was strong. A lot of candidates presented material that was evidence of the rise in religion, or started to debate. Such material could not be given credit, and the time used on this detracted from later parts of the paper.

Part (b)

There were some good answers here, with candidates being able to argue a range of points of view. Many picked up Grace Davie's idea of 'believing without belonging' and most used this successfully. Some gave interesting answers about the role of cyber religion. A significant number of candidates approached this in terms of 'you don't have to go to Church to be a Christian'. This approach could lead to some very satisfactory responses, but tended to miss out on the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Question 2

This was the least popular of the questions.

Part (a)

There were some good responses here, with candidates able to write in breadth or depth about a variety of buildings and their functions. Some tended to use their prepared answers on alternative forms of Church life, which did not really fit the requirements of this question. Some weaker responses merely listed types of building without any attention to their functions.

Part (b)

Some candidates were able to give good answers which contrasted the idea of the 'sanctity' of places of worship with the functionality of other buildings. Others talked of relevant aspects of the concept of worship. Weaker answers tended to be a more simplistic contrast.

Question 3

Part (a)

Many candidates here were concerned to use their prepared material on issues of dress and dietary rules, and some did so effectively. Better responses came from those candidates who read the question, and who kept their focus on the concepts of religious and cultural identity. Such responses tended to start with some definition of identity, such as the labels people put upon themselves, who they associate with, etc. There were some perceptive responses which considered, for example, British Muslims, as well as the nature of Muslim identity, or the ways in which identity is expressed in different Muslim cultures. Such answers readily dealt with the issue of the relationship between religious and cultural identity.

Part (b)

There were some good answers which really attempted to tease out the implications of retaining various forms of identity, and the extent to which this might be divisive. This included a discussion of ways in which social networking might transcend such problems. A lot of answers however, tended to take a rather simplistic approach of urging assimilation, and only limited credit could be gained for such discussion.

Question 4

This was a popular question, and was often done well.

Part (a)

This part of the question required some knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of New Religious Movements (NRMs). Many were able to give a good range of these, including, for example, the origins of such groups, their fundamentalist principles, charismatic leadership, millenarianism, close knit communities, and the relative deprivation theory. They were able to make appropriate illustrative reference to particular movements. The question asked for the characteristics. A number wrote about the classification of world-affirming, world-rejecting and world-accommodating movements. This response led to some reasonably good answers, but candidates needed to go beyond this to access the highest levels of the mark scheme.

Part (b)

This was generally quite well done. Many candidates were able to write about the transitory nature of many such movements, or the dependence on one particular leader, and were able to contrast this with, for instance the 'celebrity' nature of some such movements. A number wrote about the passing of the millennium 10 years ago, and suggested that millenarianism was therefore discredited. This suggests a misunderstanding of the teaching of many NRMs.