



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
June 2012**

**Religious Studies**

**RSS10**

**(Specification 2060)**

**Unit K World Religions 2:**

**Christianity**

**Judaism**

**Islam 1 The Way of Submission**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **General comments**

As in previous years the majority of students entered for this unit were entered for the Islam section. Once again there were some very high quality responses. Clearly many students (particularly on the Islam and Judaism sections) had been well prepared for this exam and displayed some excellent knowledge and understanding throughout. The paper seemed accessible to all, and in particular, responses to A02 questions seem to have improved generally with many more students seemingly able to discuss the issue and develop their own well-thought-through conclusions.

## **Section A Christianity**

### **Question 1 *Some beliefs about God: Trinity and salvation***

- 01** Answers to this question varied; the very good ones dealt with original sin, the fall and redemption; other responses suggested the concept of salvation was unfamiliar to students.
- 02** Students generally suggested that salvation was irrelevant either because Jesus had abolished the effects of original sin or because baptism removed it. Thanks to the work of Jesus, a few argued, baptism was no longer necessary. Very few suggested that human nature has not changed and therefore the need for salvation has not changed. Even fewer talked about salvation in the context of a more secular state.

### **Question 2 *Christian Scriptures: nature and purpose***

- 03** This was not a popular question and not answered particularly well by students. Mention of Christianity arising out of Judaism was common and set the scene, though few went on to give detail about either the moral teachings or even progressive revelation.
- 04** Very few students homed in on the phrase ‘do not need..’ in the statement and many limited their discussion as to whether the New Testament could be understood without the Old Testament and did not develop their answers any further.

### **Question 3 *Aspects of Christian worship***

- 05** Very few students answered this question. Most responded well, looking at a range of beliefs and practices, which was encouraging. Communication with God, the Lord’s Prayer and the variety across different denominations were all well considered.
- 06** Students seemed to ignore the vital phrase in the statement ‘most significant aspect...’. Some responses considered prayer as a central practice of a Christian and far more significant than reading and preaching of the Word. There were some well-judged responses overall.

### **Question 4 *A Christian way of life; initiation, marriage and death***

- 07** Most students who attempted this question addressed aspects of Christian marriage, but not really the importance, and most also tended to dwell on matters of reproduction but rarely went on to say how marriage is the starting point of a Christian life for many. Others just responded by going through the marriage ceremony. It was an accessible question. However, the key words in the question need to be focused on by the students who attempt it.
- 08** Some students argued that one cannot make the same marital vows to two people while both are still alive. They then went on to balance this out with the observation that God may not want people to suffer in destructive relationships. A few mentioned the Roman

Catholic practice of annulment without perhaps understanding the technicalities. Some students could not really distinguish between the different denominations and how they might view the married state.

## **Section B Judaism**

Question 5 was the most popular in this section of the paper; few students attempted question 6.

### **Question 5 *God and his people***

**09** The majority of students who answered this question responded very well and were extremely competent in the challenges to the traditional Jewish ideas about God. Many sound and comprehensive responses went beyond the aftermath of the Holocaust and described contemporary challenges to all forms of theistic belief. The very able students were able to weave these other events in with their ideas about God from a Jewish perspective. More students could have said something about what the traditional idea of God is in Judaism and married that in with their overall response.

**10** The evaluative responses to this question were mostly sound with almost all suggesting that the vicissitudes suffered by the Jewish people make it look like God has not kept covenant. Other students suggested that the very fact Jews have survived shows that he has, and this proved to be an interesting line to take. Some responses were a little formulaic along these lines too.

### **Question 6 *Scripture***

**11** Few candidates attempted this question and the focus was kept within the confines of practical usage rather than in a Jew's daily life. Not enough to access the higher levels of the mark scheme.

**12** The evaluation responses clearly looked at the relevance of scriptures but did not discuss 'to what extent'.

### **Question 7 *Aspects of worship and festivals: Shabbat, Yom Kippur and Pesach***

**13** This was a question that allowed students to describe matters of fact and they responded well. The majority of responses were in the main purely descriptive, saying what Jews do at Pesach with few looking into the explanations of the symbolism involved regarding the seder plate but only a few examining the meaning of Pesach itself. It would have been good to see more students exploring the beginning of salvation history and Israel being totally reliant on God's help. Equally the meaning tended to be confined to a mention of the freedom from oppression and it would have been good to see this developed further too.

**14** Very few students who answered this question looked into the necessity to teach future generations inbuilt into the liturgy. On the whole, though, students did consider, through the symbolism, how the period of Pesach is a time for Jews to reflect on who they are and what God has done for them. Most students stated that even today, the value includes both the educational and the spiritual aspects and the most able suggested that some things that are educational do not necessarily preclude having spiritual value.

### **Question 8 *Styles of Judaism: Orthodox and Reform beliefs and Practices***

- 15** This was the second most popular question on the Judaism section of the paper and was answered very well in the main. Clearly there has been a good level of teaching and learning taking place in preparation for this type of question. Frequency of services, the roles and language used as well as music and the particular layouts between Orthodox and Reform were tackled well.
- 16** Some impressive responses really showed that students in the main understood the need for tradition and continuity. Some students took Reform practices in a broader sense. A typical schema seemed to be the Orthodox position of how difficult it is to be Orthodox with busy lives and schedules versus how there should be conformity to the tradition and not simply a doing as one pleases.

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

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

#### **Question 9 *The Qur'an***

- 17** This question was very popular and produced some good responses. Both the Hadith and the Sunnah were commented upon by many. Only a small number could not distinguish between the two. What students need to avoid is the inclusion of background details that are not really relevant to the question set. Information presented that was linked to Muhammad was very well argued and effective. Many acknowledged that some regard it as impossible to understand the Qur'an without reference to the Hadith and also how the Sunnah is the practical demonstration of the precepts laid down in the Qur'an, all of which was creditworthy.
- 18** The detail given by many students in response to this question was commendable and weaker responses were rare. Both sides of the argument were explored and a conclusion offered with students being able to discuss the value of the Qur'an and then the value of both the Hadith and the Sunnah. Perhaps links to more modern movements could have been explored more. It was pleasing to see that the stress of the question on 'to what extent' was recognised by a number of students with an attempt to debate the issues.

#### **Question 10 *The Five Pillars***

- 19** This was a popular question and produced some very good responses. Students saw the need to look at both Shahadah and Salah and most attempts were effectively balanced. Although responses to Salah were often longer, this did not appear to be at the expense of some good material offered on Shahadah. There was no requirement to introduce any of the other pillars of faith and this is an important note for all students: answer the question set. Links to the actual question are vital, in particular with Salah, as some students gave too much background information and did not, therefore, address properly the question asked.
- 20** This question produced some very detailed responses from many students. Many students saw that both are fully part of the Five Pillars of Faith and should be treated as such equally. Some students observed that as Shahadah is the first pillar it may have greater significance than any other, and fewer students this year displayed the tendency to say, 'I agree with this statement because...' followed by 'I disagree with this statement because...'. There were a few students who had previously argued that Shahadah was

the most important pillar who, half way through their responses, now claimed it wasn't. It was pleasing to see some thoughtful and reasoned argument.

### **Question 11 *The doctrine of God***

**21** This question was not very popular with students. There were no standard responses as such from those students who did attempt this question. Some gave vague responses and did not go into a discussion of 'humanity's relationship' with God and some simply listed the names of God including Lawgiver and Judge perhaps anticipating a different question altogether. Some students felt that humanity has no relationship with God as that would be shirk. Better responses explored the role of humans in Islam and some used ideas of Tawhid and judgement to very good effect.

**22** Students offered mostly competently written responses to this question with only a few slightly caught up by going through the names of Allah to see if Lawgiver and Judge were or are the best descriptions but then having no real conclusion. Discussion of the word 'best' as used in the evaluation statement tended to produce the better responses. Some connected the whole issue with what a Muslim might do to enable him or her to get to Paradise. Some students covered the argument that Muslims live under God's law and this should never be challenged, so this becomes the best description of God—a lawgiver.

### **Question 12 *Key Beliefs***

**23** This question often produced very factual and detailed responses which occasionally ended up as anything in Islam that touches on judgement. 'Explain what Muslims believe...' was the question and sometimes the belief angle was ignored for simple factual descriptions. Material offered in responses to this question was a little varied in content but most responses were solid. Interestingly, many students made the point with some clarity that it is really responsibility for one's actions now that counts. Some responses kept to discussion of the Day of Judgement rather than on judgement itself. Again a reminder to focus on the actual question asked.

**24** This question appeared to be the most problematic of all the evaluation questions on the Islam section of the paper. Some did not understand the word 'reasonable' and were not really able to discuss the issues raised in sufficient depth to reach the higher levels. Some did bring in wider issues, though, and even compared Muslim beliefs with the beliefs of other world faiths which added another dimension. Some schools and colleges just gave a standard disagreement to the statement because of the Qur'an and then discussed why atheists would agree. Some of the more sophisticated responses touched on what might be meant by rationality, especially given positivist ideology. Again, in the context of the Muslim outlook on life, many students' responses thought that the beliefs are reasonable overall.

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

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

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