



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

Religious Studies

RST4B

(Specification 2060)

Unit 4B Topic I Religious Fundamentalism

**Topic II Religion and Contemporary
Society**

Topic III Religion and the Visual Arts

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on the Examination are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2012 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Copyright

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools and colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools and colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the school or college.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

General comments

There were some very impressive scripts and many students were obviously well-prepared. In contrast, there were scripts in which students appeared to be trying to fit prepared answers to the question set – sometimes with little success. Even some high-achieving students followed this path, and it is worth noting that, for AO2, levels 6 and 7 offer reward for independent thought and that many of the highest achieving answers displayed this quality. A number of students answered more than one question, so wasting time, and there were a good number of scripts that were difficult to read. Students can only be rewarded for what can be read.

Section A: Religious Fundamentalism

Question 1

01 This was the most popular question on the paper, and some excellent answers were seen. The best answers focused on exploring why fundamentalism originated in the USA and why it developed in the way it did. Weaker answers tended to provide an outline history of one or two specific movements with little or no focus on reasons. Others took 'rise and development' to mean only 'increase in numbers' which limited the scope of their answers.

02 There were some very well-informed and well-constructed answers to this part of the question and most students dealt with both impact on religion and impact on society as required. The best answers considered what might count as an 'impact', both positive and negative, and used specific examples from the fundamentalist movements they had studied to make their case. Some weaker answers simply offered some reasons to agree and some reasons to disagree with the given statement without any explanation or discussion.

Question 2

03 A range of fundamentalist movements were used to answer this question, the most common being Southern Baptists, Plymouth Brethren, the Taliban, Khomeini's Revolutionary Islam and the Lubavitch. Weaker answers tended to focus on listing distinctive features of the movement without distinguishing between beliefs and practices. Better answers focused on specific beliefs, often including beliefs about the nature and status of scripture, creation of the world and eschatology. In contrast many weaker answers dealt only with some teachings relating to a selection of social, moral and political issues, although the specification requires study of key beliefs alongside these.

04 Some of the best answers argued that fundamentalism was in part a reaction against liberalising tendencies in mainstream religions, and that such liberal tendencies were most evident in attitudes to moral issues such as abortion, euthanasia and homosexuality. In addition, they were also able to give specific examples of differences in beliefs between the two – including beliefs about the revelation and authority of scripture, miracles, and eschatology. Some less successful answers had little to say about beliefs, or lacked a clear understanding of the difference between beliefs and moral values and/or showed little awareness of what the mainstream values and beliefs might be.

Section B: Religion and Contemporary Society

Question 3

- 05** This was another popular question and the best answers were correctly focused on religious teachings about models of family life and about the role of the family. Weaker answers tended to describe both the family and its role without any specific attention to religious teachings. A few seemed to have no understanding of the word 'model', but here, as elsewhere, the vocabulary of the question was taken directly from the specification and should have been familiar to all students. Some students wrote about secular models of family life, but these were relevant only if religious teachings about these models were being explained.
- 06** This question focused on the idea that today some religious teaching about the family is contentious, that it is seen to cause divisions both within faith communities and between faith communities and secular communities, and that it is dismissed, by some, as being without value. It also picks up the specification requirement for students to consider 'challenges to religious teachings and practices from secular sources and other faiths'. Some students, however, did not appear to recognise the issues raised and wrote only in very general terms. Some better answers considered which groups within society the teachings did /did not have any value for and argued that within some traditions these teachings were a source of unity and stability even if they set them apart from other social groups.

Question 4

- 07** The best answers focused, as required, on the effect that the different levels of organisation have on UK society while weaker answers described those levels in some detail, but made no, or very little, reference to their effect. A number of students tried to apply material on interfaith dialogue to this question, often failing to make it relevant. It appeared that some had prepared essays on this topic that they were trying to make relevant to the question. The levels of organisation of the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and the religion of Islam were the most often used and there were some well-informed answers.
- 08** The best answers showed clear ideas about how the various levels of organisation could be important to individual believers and were able to evaluate the relative importance of each. For example, some argued that the international figureheads of a religion or tradition were too remote from their everyday lives to have any importance, while the local representatives of the faith who lived alongside them were crucial. There were some very good examples of tension between the various levels of organisation as a result of which individuals might align themselves with one over the other (for example local over national, or national over international). Current disputes within religions about, for example, gay marriage, women Bishops, women's rights and homosexuality provided a good focus here.

Section C: Religion and the Visual Arts

Relatively few students attempted this section of the specification but there were some excellent scripts.

Question 5

09 Most answers drew on one religion only. The best answers dealt separately with the two ideas: the role of art in a religion and its importance. Such answers also discussed different types of art and used a number of works of art knowledgeably as examples. In contrast, many weaker answers did not distinguish between role and importance and referred to a very limited number of works of art as examples to support their points.

10 The best answers considered what constitutes “impact” and “relevance” and how these might be measured, then evaluated the quotation using specific artworks as evidence. Most offered a simply-structured ‘for’ and ‘against’ argument rather than unpacking the issue to consider, for example, how far the impact depends on the context of the image or the access people have to it, or whether it comes from the quality of the art or the identity of the artist, rather than its subject matter.

Question 6

11 Relatively few students attempted this question. The majority of those who did focused on Lucas Cranach the Elder and William Holman Hunt. The best students were able to consider in some detail a range of symbols, and different types of symbolism, in a number of works of art by their chosen artists; less able students merely listed symbolic elements in a limited range of artworks. Only a few students tackled the religious significance of works of art really well: most gave one or more simple reasons why each specific work had some religious significance.

12 The best answers clarified what was understood by ‘challenge’ and ‘impact’ and how it might be measured before considering a range of religious art which presents, or presented in its time, varying degrees of challenge to beliefs. There were some very good examples of the ‘shock of the new’ including Leon Ferrari’s ‘Western-Christian Civilization’. Some noted that the subject matter of or ideas expressed in a work of art might only have an impact on a small group of believers, while the art itself has great cultural relevance and that this suggests that whether an artwork challenges existing ideas or not is largely immaterial to its lasting impact. Some weaker answers debated whether religious art should challenge beliefs - which was not the issue raised.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion