



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Religious Studies 4050

Unit 1: Christianity

405001

Report on the Examination

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Unit 1: Christianity

General Comments

A good number of entries for the 2012 examination produced a full range in the standard of scripts. There are some general points to make before addressing individual questions. It is important for schools and colleges to cover all sections of all topics in the specification so that their students are not disadvantaged. Some notable areas where many students were disadvantaged in this way were:

- Reception into membership, under the subsection of ceremonies of commitment in Section 2, Commitment and Membership, in the Specification
- Liturgical worship, under the subsection of different forms of worship in Section 4, Worship, in the Specification
- Epiphany, in Section 6, Festivals, in the Specification
- Maundy Thursday, under the subsection Holy Week in Section 6, Festivals, in the Specification
- Study of Easter, under the Section 6, Festivals, in the Specification, specifically “how this belief is stressed in the church services at this time, including the Easter Vigil”

Examiners noted that there was a significant number of students who failed to achieve full marks through inaccurate interpretation of the question. This was particularly the case in questions A2c, A4a, B6a (further comments below). Teachers should ensure that students understand how to interpret the demands of a question accurately.

Formulaic responses to AO2 questions remain a concern. The Principal Examiner’s Report in 2011 stated: ‘Teachers should ensure that students understand the requirements of both styles of AO2 questions. 3-mark questions do **not** necessarily require two differing points of view to achieve full marks. 6-mark questions **do** require two points of view and clear reference to Christianity (belief or practice) for Level 4 or above.’

Many students write to a formula or template. Such a template needs to be flexible enough to allow students to produce top level answers, which require further ‘evidence of **reasoned consideration** of two different points of view’. Answers which adopt a simplistic binary approach, ‘I agree with... / I disagree with...’ rarely showed sufficient evidence of reasoned consideration or informed insights to progress beyond Level 4. Schools and colleges are encouraged to work on the technique of answering AO2 questions effectively. Study of the top levels of the Levels of Response criteria, included in the mark schemes, would assist students in this respect.

Part A

Question A1: Holy Communion and Festival

In Part (a), around two thirds of students achieved 2 marks, but a disappointingly large number of students were unable to give a single accurate alternative name. Some of those appeared to misunderstand the question and offered “transubstantiation” and “consubstantiation”, neither of which is a valid **name for the service of Holy Communion**.

Part (b) produced a range of marks. Students who had a confident knowledge of Maundy Thursday were frequently able to incorporate development and/or analysis into their answer, but there were also many who attempted the question but were unable to offer anything relevant or worthy of credit.

Part (c) was the first of the six-mark evaluation questions, and was generally well done, with around two thirds of students achieving 4 marks or more. Two legitimate interpretations of the question were credited, that Christians should celebrate *together* as opposed to alone; and that *all Christians* should celebrate together rather than separately by denomination. The best answers went beyond binary or thesis / antithesis / synthesis models to produce a “well-argued response ...showing informed insights”.

Question A2: Places of Worship and Pilgrimage

Part (a) was done very well, with almost all students achieving at least two marks and most gaining the full three marks.

Part (b) was the first three-mark AO2 question on the paper, and many students wrote considerably more than was required for full marks. Those who fell short of full marks tended to offer simple reason with no development in support of views. There were also quite a few who rephrased or restated the initial statement in the question rather than responding to it.

Part (c) showed up a worrying number of students who seemed unable to name one main feature of an Anglican church. Many described an iconostasis, which is not an Anglican feature, and many were unable to say anything at all about **the use** of a feature of the church **in worship**. Examiners allowed descriptions of features of the Anglican denomination (for example, episcopal structure) and Anglican practice (for example, hymn books). The best answers showed sound knowledge and understanding by describing briefly the function of the altar, pulpit, lectern or organ during worship services.

Part (d), again, produced many answers that were much fuller than was required for a three-mark AO2 question. Those who fell short of full marks tended to offer simple reason with no development in support of views.

Question A3: Festivals and Beliefs

In Part (a) a little under a third of students were unable to score a single mark. The majority of those who attempted the question but failed to achieve a mark conflated Epiphany and Christmas.

Part (b) was the question which exposed the weakest performance across the board. Nearly half of all students failed to achieve a single mark. The biggest single error was that large numbers of students who attempted the question confused the Easter Vigil **service** with the practice of keeping a vigil after the commemoration of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday. However, there were also some excellent answers which showed development and analysis well beyond the demands of a four-mark question.

Part (c) was generally well done, with around two thirds of students achieving 4 marks or more. The best answers were well argued and showed informed insight. Many low to mid-range answers focused on fundamentalist/liberal interpretations of the Bible rather than addressing the issue of the resurrection, and were therefore unable to show “informed insights” and “knowledge and understanding of religion” relevant to the question sufficient for the top levels.

Question A4: Commitment and Membership

Part (a) asked students to **explain** how believers' baptism differs from infant baptism. The majority of students did this question well, but a number merely listed features of believers' baptism without reference to infant baptism. To achieve top marks on this question, students needed to explain differences with reference to **both** practices.

Part (b) exposed weaknesses in many students' knowledge of the practices of specific churches. Reception into membership as practised in the Methodist Church was the most frequently cited example, followed by The Rite of Christian Initiation by Adults (RCIA). The question did not require a specific example, but those students who could reference the practice of individual churches were generally better able to show "sound knowledge and understanding" sufficient for Level 3.

Part (c) required students to be able to consider the various roles specific to the office of a bishop. There were some good answers to this question, but fewer top level answers as students failed to reach the higher levels by basing their argument on a range of non-episcopal duties, thus failing to demonstrate "informed insights".

Part B

Question B5: Beliefs and Sources of Authority

Part (a) was generally done very well, with the majority of students able to describe the three persons of the Trinity in sufficient detail. The top levels were distinguished by a clear understanding of the monotheistic nature of the doctrine of Trinity.

Part (b) differentiated well. Some students had a good understanding of the charismatic gifts of the Spirit and were able to show how they might be used in the life and worship of Christians, but many merely enumerated the gifts of the Spirit without reference to their **use today**, and some did not appear to have any specific understanding to draw on. The Fruits of the Spirit as listed in Galatians were credited in the few papers in which they were offered.

Part (c), like A3(c), produced a large number of answers that discussed fundamentalist / liberal interpretations of the Bible rather than addressing the issue of the virgin birth and the incarnation, and which were therefore unable to show "informed insights" and "knowledge and understanding of religion" relevant to the question sufficient for the top levels. Students who did focus on the quotation were divided between those who focused on the incarnation, and those who focused on the virginity of Mary: either approach was equally capable of achieving the top levels. See also General Comments on AO2 questions above.

Part (d) did require students to consider a variety of understandings of the Bible, and many did so well. This question differentiated effectively at the upper levels: the best answers showed a sophisticated understanding of biblical interpretation, while mid-range students offered a more limited discussion of the extremes of literalist and liberal approaches. It was noted by all examiners that students' used of correct terminology was very poor in this question. The majority referred to "liberalist" interpretations and many then confused this with "literalist". We would advise teachers to ensure that students learn the correct vocabulary to avoid this confusion.

Question B6: Worship

Part (a) was effective at differentiating. Students who knew what a liturgical service is, and who read the question carefully, described such a service (most commonly Holy Communion, but many also chose baptism) and highlighted what was liturgical about it. Mid-range answers described a service without comment on it being liturgical, or described with some basic development the generic features of liturgical worship without reference to a specific act of worship. The weakest answers to earn marks merely defined liturgical worship.

Part (b) was within the scope of weaker students, but many failed to highlight the **importance** of prayer, merely enumerating types and functions of prayer with or without development or exemplification. As a result, there were few very poor responses, but also relatively few top-level answers. Students needed to focus on the exact requirement of the question (the importance of prayer). Students need to read all questions with care to avoid losing marks in this way.

Part (c) differentiated effectively. Some students did not appear to understand the term “private worship” and so failed to address the question accurately. Mid-range responses focused on the advantages and disadvantages of public and private worship, and the best answers clearly addressed the importance of different kinds of worship **in the life of a Christian**. Please also see General Notes above for further advice on AO2 questions.

Part (d) produced some of the most individual responses from the whole paper. Many of the relatively weak students were able to offer justified opinions on the purposes of worship which went beyond the minimum requirements, and there were some excellent responses at the top levels. Students with good evaluation skills were able to argue from personal experience as well as classroom knowledge to produce responses that were well beyond the demands of Level 6 in terms of insight and argument.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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