



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Religious Studies (4056/4057)
Full and Short Course
Specification B

Unit 2 Religion and Life Issues (40552)

Report on the Examination
2010 examination - June series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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Unit 2 Religion and Life Issues

General Comments

This was the first year of the new specification and a large number of candidates took the examination for this unit. The standard achieved was extremely encouraging and showed that the majority of candidates had been well prepared for this new examination. The vast majority of candidates completed the required questions in the time allocated and the only rubric infringement was where candidates had attempted more than the four questions (twenty parts). Some actually answered all thirty questions.

A few centres were concerned that the allocation of marks for the AO1 questions was not what they expected but there was no evidence that this disadvantaged candidates. On the contrary it appeared that candidates responded well to the 2, 3 and 4 mark questions. Please note that there is the flexibility with Specification B to vary the mark allocation per part for the AO1 questions. Each exam for 40552 will have three AO1 parts adding up to a total of nine marks but the way this is done will vary, e.g. 1,2,6 or 1,4,4 or as this year. In contrast the AO2 will remain in two parts with the same allocation of marks i.e. 3 marks and 6 marks. So 50% of the marks are given for AO1 and 50% for AO2.

Apart from the two mark questions, each question was marked according to the levels of response for either AO1 or AO2. Most candidates performed equally well in writing AO1 and AO2 responses when the marks were comparable. The levels of response criteria are important for ensuring that the candidates are well prepared for the exam and can be seen in the mark scheme or the specimen assessment materials. For the AO1 three or four mark questions, some candidates did not include enough ideas or develop them to obtain the maximum marks. Several were content to make one or two points and then move on to the next question. This also applied to the three mark AO2 questions where many candidates obtained two rather than three marks. Some, however, did develop their answers and so obtained the maximum mark and this included those who gave two points of view (This is not a requirement for a three mark AO2, but those who did generally wrote more developed answers). However, it is important that candidates understand the difference between the length of response required for a three mark AO2 answer and that required for a six mark AO2 answer and do not spend too long on the AO2 three mark questions.

For the first time the Quality of Written Communication was assessed alongside the six mark AO2 questions and this is where the big differential was seen. Only a small number of candidates obtained the top level for these questions. The reasons for this included failure to address the statement, one sided responses, lack of coherence, lack of depth in the answers, lack of reference to religion or an AO1 type of response where the candidates listed the information and/or religious teaching but did not evaluate it.

Question 1 *Religion and Animals Rights*

This was one of the most popular questions and most candidates scored high marks.

- 01 The majority of the candidates gained the two marks which were available for this question but several incorrectly used Christian / Jewish teachings which apply to humans rather than animals such as the Ten Commandments 'Do not kill'. Others were under the misapprehension that all Christians are vegetarians. Some correctly referred to Muslim and Jewish teachings about particular meats.

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- 02 Many answers referred to stewardship or dominion and being made in the image of God as well as making more secular points linked to being top of the food chain and more intelligent. Most candidates were able to score two or the maximum three marks.
- 03 Most answers referred to stewardship in order to answer this although again many candidates tried to argue that sanctity of life from a Christian perspective could be employed here. Although candidates usually wrote enough to gain good marks, not enough emphasis was placed upon “extinct” as the question did not really refer to farm animals or pets.
- 04 The best answers distinguished between hunting for survival and for sport. Many were able to explain the different positions within Christianity and Islam. Answers that scored high marks often referred to two religions with good use made of the teachings of ahimsa in Buddhism and Hinduism.
- 05 There were some good answers which included some informed discussion of the pros and cons of testing linked clearly to the concepts of stewardship and dominion and the idea of the sanctity of life applying mostly to humans. Most could make at least some simple points here and many distinguished between experimenting to test medicines to save lives and the testing of cosmetics. The majority of candidates obtained levels three or four and further development would have enabled them to reach the top levels.

Question 2 *Religion and Planet Earth*

This was a popular topic and the answers were generally encouraging.

- 06 Many candidates made one point about stewardship / khalifah but often did not expand on this. The potential was there for three marks but few candidates achieved the top level.
- 07 Most candidates gained full marks giving a range of effects of global warming. Many answers mentioned the melting of the ice caps and the threat to polar bears. Those who did not score full marks usually described how pollution is damaging the world and/or concentrated on the causes rather than the results of global warming.
- 08 This question brought a variety of answers ranging from explanations based on Genesis in favour of the statement to detailed explanations of the Big Bang / evolutionary theories against the statement. Some candidates made use of the philosophical arguments of first cause and design. Most were able to give at least simple reasons either for or against.
- 09 Many answers to this question were very general but the commonly used religious teaching was stewardship and the need to look after the world for future generations. Some good answers used Islamic teachings about judgment.
- 10 Most candidates managed to give some arguments for and against the statement. Good use was made of the distinction between stewardship and dominion with some bringing in the idea of free will. Good points were made about the impact on future generations and a minority mentioned the Assisi Declarations or Ohito. The majority stalled at levels 3 or 4 with a disappointing number reaching the higher two levels.

Question 3 *Religion and Prejudice*

This was a popular question but was not well answered. Many answers did not focus on the question and there was a distinct lack of religious teachings.

- 11 Many candidates gave results or types rather than causes of racism. There was some duplication/development, rather than separate points which resulted in many failing to obtain the second mark.
- 12 This question was not well answered. Very few candidates appeared to understand the term 'positive discrimination', even though it is in the specification. Even those who could give a definition, showed through their examples that they did not fully understand the term. Most gained marks by default as they put in any Christian teachings related to prejudice and discrimination without really knowing why. This proved to be the most difficult question on the paper.
- 13 This question was well answered by many candidates with good reference to religious teachings and a range of other arguments. Most obtained at least two marks.
- 14 Martin Luther King was the most popular example given with good knowledge demonstrated by many candidates. Other popular choices included Rosa Parks, Desmond Tutu, Gandhi, Malcolm X and Jesus. Some candidates gained only limited credit as they focused on the beliefs of the person and not enough on their work. The question asked for a description of the work of one religious believer not why they did it.
- 15 Some candidates tried hard to address the question and to offer arguments for and against but many forgot to refer to religious arguments and therefore failed to gain the top levels. Less able candidates struggled to offer many arguments and just stated that all prejudice is bad or that religious prejudice is not as bad as racism. It is important to remember that marks are not given for opinion but for reasons and many missed the opportunity to compare the problem of religious prejudice with that of other types of prejudice.

Question 4 *Religion and Early Life*

This was a very popular question and was well answered by most, although some candidates wanted to write about abortion in every part, even when it wasn't relevant.

- 16 The vast majority gained full marks for this question with popular reasons being the effect on the mother's health and the possibility of disability and rape.
- 17 Most candidates used the idea that children are a gift from God and some were able to expand on this by referring to humans being created in God's image. Many linked this to the idea that some are infertile and therefore people are chosen to have children with a few linking this to biblical figures such as Abraham. There were also some good answers which referred to reincarnation and the Buddhist turtle story and the idea that it is rare to be born as a human. Several candidates brought in material about abortion which was not relevant to this question.
- 18 Most used religious teachings to support this statement while offering secular reasons against. The sanctity of life, Ahimsa, the First Precept, God's gift, made in the image of God, etc. were teachings which were often used. Weaker answers did not focus on the rights of the unborn child or the mother but simply offered arguments against abortion.

- 19 This question differentiated well between candidates with the complete range of marks being given. Most candidates referred to life starting at conception but some struggled to offer religious attitudes beyond this. Good use was made by some of the Muslim view of ensoulment. Some candidates appeared to guess and Buddhists in particular were credited with believing that life begins at all different stages from conception through to birth.
- 20 This was the best answered of the six mark AO2 questions. Better answers showed good understandings of the current law which helped them to argue for and against the statement. Many religious arguments focused on the sanctity / quality of life distinction. Weaker answers offered rehearsed arguments for and against abortion without relating this to religion or to the law which meant that no more than Level 3 could be obtained. It is vitally important to focus on the statement in the answer or candidates prevent themselves from reaching the top levels.

Question 5 *Religion War and Peace*

This was a reasonable popular section but the standard of the answers was rather variable.

- 21 Most candidates had a clear idea of different ways in which organisations help victims of war with many referring to the work of Help for Heroes. Some candidates failed to gain credit as they wrote about why organisations should help rather than how they might help. This shows the importance of reading the questions carefully.
- 22 Several candidates found this question difficult although some used the religious believer they had studied for the prejudice question. Better candidates could make use of similar material providing they focused their answers on peace, but others simply wrote about Martin Luther King without referring to peace. Good answers seen referred to Irena Sendler, Gandhi, The Dalai Lama, Jesus and Buddha. A minority concentrated on why a religious believer worked for peace rather than their work, as asked in the question.
- 23 Many candidates used teachings about peace from different religions to argue that Holy War should not be a part of religion and so agreed with the statement. Others had a grasp of the conditions of Holy War and were able to give reasons for and against the statement.
- 24 Most answers to this question were quite general with little use made of religious teachings. Some good answers used the pacifist arguments or Just War rules or conditions of Jihad quite effectively. A minority of candidates interpreted the word 'prepared' in terms of military preparation and explained why religious countries would not have large armies or stockpiles of weapons and allowance was made for this. Some wrote about conscientious objectors without specifically linking this to religion.
- 25 The main arguments focused on the role of nuclear weapons as a form of deterrence as opposed to the potential for destruction. Surprisingly few candidates used the argument of proportionality. Better answers often referred to the Just War conditions and the Golden Rule. Some candidates referred to weapons of mass destruction but many failed to reach the higher levels as they only gave general arguments for and against warfare or forgot to include religious teachings.

Question 6 *Religion and Young People*

This is the completely new area of the specification and not as many candidates answered this topic. Some that did were those who attempted every question on the paper so the standard was variable.

- 26 There were some good answers to this question referring to RE, assemblies, visiting speakers, visits to places of worship and the importance of multicultural schools. However this was another question where several candidates did not gain credit as they wrote about why rather than how.
- 27 Most candidates referred to the new/deeper understanding of religion gained through celebrating religious festivals and the element of fun. Very few referred to specific festivals. A minority did not know what a religious festival is, for example, some seemed to believe that they are days in school devoted to studying different religions while others thought that they are religious events or places such as Spring Harvest, Taizé and Greenbelt.
- 28 This question brought a wide range of responses. It was interesting to see that most candidates wrote of the value of Religious Studies in school for its diversity and unbiased approach. Others argued that expert teaching in the church, mosque or place of worship would be better. Some were concerned that teaching religion at home would be an excuse for racism or would promote prejudice or result in little teaching taking place.
- 29 This question was not answered well on the whole. Most candidates' answers offered general comments about welcoming new life and gained some credit but few referred to specific birth or initiation ceremonies. Only a minority of candidates obtained the top two levels.
- 30 Answers to this question proved to be the most disappointing of the six mark AO2 questions with few candidates obtaining five or six marks. Most candidates could offer some arguments but very few made reference to the activities currently being provided by faith groups. This was disappointing as this question allowed candidates to evaluate the activities which already exist. Most saw any activities to keep people off the streets as a good thing, others argued that all ages should be encouraged to mix but some argued that it was a means for faith groups to indoctrinate young people.

Overall most candidates performed well and found the paper accessible. The main focus for improvement should be the six mark questions, reading the questions carefully and developing the points made e.g. by using examples.