



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Religious Studies B (4055)

Unit 2: Religion and Life Issues

40552

Report on the Examination

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Unit 2: Religion and Life Issues

General Comments

The entry for this year's examination increased to nearly 58,000 and the majority of candidates were well prepared. Candidates on the whole found the paper very accessible with few unanswered questions although there were several of the more difficult concepts examined this year. There is still room for more specific religious teachings to be included in many of the candidates' answers as this helps towards obtaining the higher levels in the 3, 4 or 6 mark questions.

There were a number of rubric infringements as several candidates answered all six questions, usually not very well. The four questions that scored the highest marks were counted, but centres should advise candidates to choose the four topics about which they know the most and concentrate on those. This would allow them to gain a higher overall score by writing more in depth as it is time consuming trying to answer every question.

The AO2 responses showed the biggest improvement on last year. The three-mark evaluation questions were often well done. Full marks could be obtained by offering a well-developed reason, two reasons with some development or three or more reasons for the candidate's opinion. There was also an improvement this year in the answers to the six mark evaluation questions with candidates offering quite substantial arguments on two sides of an issue, including examples of points made and 'informed insights' about religion (for Levels 5 and 6).

Centres should be aware that whole questions on topics will consist of four or five parts, making up a total of 18 marks, 9 marks for AO1 and 9 for AO2. There will always be two AO2 questions, one a 3-mark question and the other a 6-mark question. Marks for individual questions for AO1 may differ from year to year, but, for each whole question, there will always be two or three questions for AO1, totalling 9 marks. Therefore any combination is possible, e.g. 2, 3, 4, or 1, 3, 5, or 3, 3, 3 etc. Whichever combination is chosen will apply to all whole questions on the paper. This enables examiners to examine the AO1 assessment objective in relation to the specification in the most appropriate way, depending on the content being examined from year to year. This is fairer to candidates. It enables technical terms, or more challenging parts of the specification to be examined appropriately and provides candidates with opportunities to write at greater length on issues where there is a greater body of knowledge or explanation available.

Topic I – Religion and Animal Rights

This appeared to be the most popular topic on the paper and was well answered.

The vast majority of candidates scored maximum marks for Question 1 with camels and horses being the most popular answers.

For question 2 some candidates did not appear to really understand what is meant by genetically modifying animals but most obtained some marks for knowing general religious principles about the value of animals and the need to treat them with respect.

Question 3 brought a variety of responses but many missed the opportunity of distinguishing between different types of sport e.g. between bull fighting or hunting where animals are killed with, on the other hand, different forms of racing which normally does not harm animals. The

best answers included the idea that humans have dominion but should not abuse animals and blood sports do this.

There were some good points made explaining how religious people might help to preserve endangered species although a minority concentrated on why rather than answering the question 'what religious people might do' i.e.'how'. A few also just gave a list of actions which might be done without any explanation and so could only score a maximum of two marks.

Question 5 was the best answered of all the six mark A02 questions with over half the candidates able to score four or more marks. Candidates were able to draw on a wealth of religious teachings concerning the treatment of animals, meat eating and vegetarianism from the different religious traditions.

Topic 2 – Religion and Planet Earth

This topic was a popular choice and generally well answered.

In Question 6, the majority of candidates were able to identify two examples of pollution although several answered global warming which was not accepted.

Although some did not understand the term sustainable development, there were some good answers for question 7, drawing on ideas of dominion, stewardship, loving your neighbour (implies future generations as well as present), interdependence etc.

Question 8 did distinguish between those who knew about earth summits and those that didn't. The slogan 'think globally, act locally' was sometimes referred to and many used the Genesis teaching on stewardship to good effect.

Question 9 was very well answered with many ideas about what religious believers can do to help reduce global warming. The majority concentrated on reducing their own carbon footprint by using renewable energy, reusing and recycling although many included ways of campaigning to make people more aware of the issue.

The final question in this topic brought a complete range of responses. There were good secular and religious arguments given for and against. Reference was sometimes made to the Assisi Declarations and the Golden Rules of the religions.

Topic 3 – Religion and Prejudice

This was a popular topic this year and there was a marked improvement in the standard of answers compared to last year.

In Question 11, most candidates were able to identify two types of prejudice although a minority answered discrimination or gave causes of prejudice.

A wide range of ideas were included in explaining religious views about the value of the individual including good reference to Genesis, sanctity of life, reincarnation, the Golden Rules etc.

For question 13 most of those who agreed with the statement referred to women not being allowed to become imams in Islam or priests in the Roman Catholic Church. Those who disagreed generally referred to equality teachings coupled with the different roles of men and women within the chosen faith but many answers were about why it was wrong for religions to discriminate which was not relevant to the question.

There were some pleasing answers to question 14 with many mentioning individuals well known for their work for challenging prejudice such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu and Mandela etc. A minority concentrated on why religious believers should challenge prejudice rather than focus on what they might do.

It was clear that students from some centres had a good understanding of what positive discrimination was and gave appropriate examples and teachings to support their viewpoint. This was in complete contrast to 2010 when few understood the term positive discrimination. However many answers simply explained why any type of discrimination was wrong and so only expressed one view point.

Topic 4 – Religion and Early Life

This was a very popular question and brought a complete range of responses.

Question 16 – although most obtained the maximum two marks for this question many did not seem to understand the term ‘alternative’ and so gave reasons for abortion which was not credited.

For question 17 some students were confused regarding contraception and conception with many mixing up which religion believed what concerning when life begins. However there were some good answers referring to samsara, Galatians 1: 15, fertilisation, development of the heart, ensoulment, viability and birth. A minority of candidates misinterpreted the question and wrote about religious views about human life in general or reasons why abortion should not be allowed.

Most candidates were able to give some reasons for their opinion concerning whether or not ‘Every new born baby is a miracle of life.’ Most referred to the wonder of birth, a gift from God or if their answer included a Buddhist perspective to the turtle story. Some did not focus on the statement but wrote about abortion which was not relevant.

For question 19 answers which interpreted the Law as making abortion difficult were accepted and most candidates were able to include specific details about the law and relate them to compassion and the Golden Rule.

Many found question 20 difficult but most answers supported the rights of fathers and included reference to Christian teaching about equality linked to the father’s rights. This was contrasted with the opinion that the father should have no rights in the case of rape.

Topic 5 – Religion, War and Peace

This was a popular question and generally well answered.

Most candidates were able to name two recent wars and although recent was interpreted in the mark scheme as within the last 100 years, some did refer to ancient wars which were not accepted.

For question 22 most gave two causes of war but many just listed them and did not give any explanation and so failed to obtain the third mark.

Nearly all the candidates understood the term weapons of mass destruction and were able to give reasons to support their opinion.

In answering question 24 the best answers referred to Holy Wars or the Just War criteria. Many just referred to defending their country or their religion and so did not reach the higher levels.

Question 25 gave candidates an opportunity to include many of the religious teachings which they had learnt but many failed to do so although most were able to give arguments for and against the statement.

Topic 6 – Religion and Young People

This was the least popular topic and brought the most disappointing responses. This was often due to candidates attempting this topic when they had probably not studied it as many who answered this topic attempted all the questions on the paper.

Most candidates were able to identify two ways in which young people may learn about religion in the home.

Question 27 proved to be a challenge as few could explain in any depth the importance of coming of age or membership ceremonies. Those who did reach the highest levels identified a specific ceremony such as Bar or Bat Mitzvah and explained the significance within the chosen faith.

Most agreed with the statement for question 28 and focused on the problems of teasing, bullying or marginalisation. Unfortunately many answers did not go further than making the obvious points.

For question 29 the focus should have been on what faith groups do to provide activities for young people. Most candidates appeared to have little idea other than saying that they provide education in, for example, Sunday schools. The better answers focused on the activities of the Brigades, Taize, Spring Harvest or youth camps or a range of activities which faith groups provide.

Many candidates argued that assemblies should not be religious but gave a one-sided response based on the ideas that many students are not religious and others might belong to a different faith. The best answers included ideas about the need for a time of reflection or meditation on a moral or spiritual theme and the importance of learning about the country's religious tradition and values.

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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