



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Religious Studies B (4055)

Unit 3: Religion and Morality

40553

Report on the Examination

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Unit 3: Religion and Morality

General Comments

It is pleasing to report that the standards achieved by many candidates who took this examination were very impressive. Most candidates appeared to have been well prepared, with many displaying good knowledge and understanding of the specification content. The full range of marks was used with more than 100 candidates earning the full 72 marks and less than 1% of the total entry scoring less than 10 marks.

There was an almost four-fold increase in candidate entries over last year (over 47,000 entries) with many centres transferring from the nearest equivalent legacy paper – B4.

Assessment Objective 1

Many candidates displayed good knowledge and understanding, particularly of the moral issues involved, but there were some specialist areas where subject knowledge of, for example, life support machines, embryology and repentance was weak.

It is pleasing to report that many candidates coped with questions requiring knowledge and understanding of religious attitudes, beliefs and teachings quite well. Some used a variety of beliefs and teachings supported by quotes or paraphrases from sacred texts. However many candidates were over-reliant on just a few quotes such as ‘love your neighbour’ and ‘an eye for an eye’ often taken out of context and twisted to fit the particular belief or attitude with varying degrees of success. Some candidates wrongly attributed their quotes and in some cases appeared to invent their own.

In the AO1 questions asking why religious believers may agree or disagree with a certain moral issue, answers do not have to include a specifically religious point of view. However it is pleasing to note that many such answers did include a religious response rather than a general secular or social response that may also be appropriate to a religious believer. This ‘religious’ approach produced a sharper focus to answers, especially in question 02, and should be encouraged throughout.

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; 1,3,5; 3,6 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.

Assessment Objective 2

This is where the main changes to the method of assessment in comparison to the legacy papers are found. The three mark evaluation questions (questions 03,08,13,18, 23, 28), asking what a candidate thinks together with an explanation of their opinion were new to centres entering candidates for this specification for the first time.

Many candidates earned the full 3 marks for each such question but some seemed unsure about what was expected of them. It would be helpful when preparing candidates for such questions if teachers could make them aware of the level descriptors used when marking them.

To earn the full 3 marks, candidates need to express their opinion about the quote and support their opinion with a well developed reason or several simple reasons. Unlike the 6 mark AO2 questions, no alternative response is required to balance it although an alternative on some occasions did help some candidates to achieve Level 3 because it helped provide more reasoning in their answers.

Responses to the 6 mark evaluation questions (questions 05, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30) were better than last year with more candidates reaching Levels 5 and 6. It was pleasing to see so many well written and coherent answers containing a reasoned evaluation of two different points of view. The majority of these higher level answers contained relevant religious arguments as an integral part of the answer rather than being ‘bolted on’ at the end in order to meet the requirement for religious arguments. Using religious arguments as a part of the discussion allowed the best candidates to analyse beliefs and teachings and to justify their relevance to the topic.

A small proportion of candidates added a simple religious belief or teaching in isolation at the end of several of their answers. Just writing something like ‘love your neighbour’ as a stand alone phrase to conclude an answer, is a waste of time as *on its own*, it does not qualify as ‘refer to religious arguments in your answer’ as no links are made.

Some able candidates did not reach levels 5 and 6 in their answers, mainly due to a lack of evaluation. Many of them preferred to treat these questions as AO1 by writing and explaining what believers may think, together with some related ideas of their own (often repeating what they had written as the view of some religious people) without the proper application or analysis of these ideas that helps to produce good evaluation. AO2 should build upon AO1 by using knowledge and understanding to display informed insight and effective application of that knowledge and understanding to the statement in quotation marks in a well argued response.

It is not easy to achieve either Level 5 or 6 if candidates simply use a structure or writing frame that doesn’t require them to argue their case. Models such as ‘*opinion; reason; evidence; other opinion; reason; evidence; religion*’ lead to AO2 answers that tend to restrict higher ability candidates, preventing them from using their evaluative skills properly. However, this approach is helpful to some lower and middle ability candidates as they may achieve level 4 relatively consistently by using this method.

For higher levels, candidates need to do more than giving an extended opinion which includes little reasoning of their own. Some quite long answers seemed at first glance to be quite impressive but upon closer examination, they mainly consisted of unreasoned opinion with a token bit of religion thrown in. Writing a conclusion is not necessary although many of the best answers did have one. However, if this just consists of a repetition of points made without adding anything different, it doesn’t really add anything to the answer.

Other weaknesses were seen in answers which:

- were completely one sided,
- lacked any religious content,
- failed to fully address the statement provided.

Topic 1 – Religion Attitudes to Matters of Life

Most candidates were able to correctly identify the meaning of surrogacy in 01 although some answers lacked clarity in not pointing out that the surrogate mother hands the baby over at birth. There were some very good answers to 02 including relevant quotes that were well explained and references to adultery or mechanical adultery related to the 10 Commandments. Some candidates found some overlap between questions 02 and 03 and so repeated some of the ideas in 03. Where this was appropriate, they were given credit each time. 'Playing God' was widely used as was the idea that a loving God would not deny the chance for a couple to have a child, especially as he inspired scientists to develop the technology that would make this possible.

Many responses to 04 were disappointing. There was a widespread lack of understanding of the term embryology but many of those who clearly did not understand the term were able to gain some marks for general references to sanctity of life and do not kill. A common response was that embryology was wrong because it could possibly harm the embryo. The best answers had a clear understanding of the topic and were able to apply sound teachings to support the attitudes they wrote about.

Whilst most candidates had some general knowledge of cloning required for 05, it was very limited. Many arguments in favour were that you could clone pets or children who had died so they were not missed or making individual clones for use if we needed a compatible organ. Even if this were possible or desirable, there was no thought given to the practicalities of this in relation to where all our clones were going to live and that if a clone's heart was taken for transplant, another clone would be required just in case another organ is needed at a later date! Of those who restricted themselves to writing that organs should be cloned for transplant, few pointed out that even if this is possible, it is illegal and potentially harmful. There were some excellent answers however that knowledgeably compared reproductive and therapeutic cloning, with many even making reference to cloning food to solve the problem of starvation. Religious arguments were integral to these excellent answers.

Topic 2 – Religious Attitudes to the Elderly and Death

Surprisingly few candidates were able to accurately define passive euthanasia in 06, most referring to active or voluntary euthanasia or assisted suicide. Answers to 07 were generally good. Most gave good accounts of heaven and/or hell with a smaller number describing reincarnation. It was surprising how many candidates mentioned that Muslims believe in karma and reincarnation (here and in other questions where relevant). Because the question asked for an explanation of a belief rather than who believes it, many such answers were awarded the full 3 marks despite the error. There were many good responses to 08 earning the full 3 marks.

Most candidates in 09 interpreted 'the elderly' as parents or grandparents, the implication being that such people are elderly. This was acceptable and provided their answers were correct and relevant to the treatment of elderly people, parents or not, full credit was possible. The majority of answers were good and tended to be focussed on the 10 Commandments and the Islamic teachings relating to elderly parents. There was a widespread misunderstanding of life support machines in responses to 10. This did not necessarily mean that responses were poor because the misunderstanding did not necessarily affect teachings related to them. Many said they were good because they delay death long enough to allow families to say their goodbyes (having potentially travelled great distances to do so) and for the person on the machine to complete all their business before deciding to have their machine turned off or indeed turning it off themselves. There were

however some very good answers that showed understanding of whether life support machines should be used with good teaching relating to their arguments usually analysing who has the right to take life when the quality is so poor.

Topic 3 – Religious Attitudes to Drug Abuse

Almost all candidates in responses to 11 gave two correct reasons. Whilst many candidates earned the full 3 marks for 12, a significant proportion wrote about religious people disagreeing with drinking alcohol without relating it to driving. The maximum mark for such answers was 2, which many achieved. There were some good responses to 13, with a large number of candidates showing an awareness of the health risks related to smoking tobacco. Many incorrectly stated that Islam forbids smoking tobacco and some referred to Rastafarians smoking cannabis without mentioning tobacco which the question required.

Most referred, in answer to 14, to the body being a temple given by God which should not be destroyed. References to the mind were seen less frequently although those that did so usually did well and included mention of Muslims and Buddhists needing to keep their minds clear and free from intoxicants and 'Right Mindfulness' from the 8-fold path. A significant proportion interpreted the statement in 15 in relation to whether illegal drugs should be taken or not, with no reference to punishment. For higher levels, candidates did need to focus on punishment, either legal punishment, self harm through taking drugs or God's punishment on the day of judgement / bad karma. Some made reference to minority groups taking cannabis to heighten spirituality without the logical extension of considering whether it was right to punish them for following their religion. On the other hand, some focussed too greatly on punishment and used ideas and teachings more related to the crime and punishment section. Few discussed whether a person should be punished if all they are doing is harming themselves although some mentioned it without providing much development of the idea.

Topic 4 – Religious Attitudes to Crime and Punishment

Few were able to give a full answer to 16. Many referred to being sorry without mention of deciding to change which earned some credit and others said it meant repeating crimes that you have been punished for which earned no credit. 17 was generally well answered with most candidates being able to give several good reasons, some of which they developed. Answers to 18 were mixed. Some produced excellent answers related to conscience being the voice of God whilst others questioned whether conscience was reliable because of the existence of evil. Surprisingly few made the case for religious believers following the teachings of their religion as revealed in sacred texts.

Answers to 19 were often poor because candidates did not understand the term 'religious offences'. Many made reference to punishments laid down in Shariah Law without making the point that these are related to crimes which are also considered to be religious offences. Some referred to sin and related it to punishment on the day of judgement / acquisition of bad karma. Most were able to gain some credit but few were awarded the full 4 marks. Answers to 20 were generally disappointing, even though the aims of punishment should be well known. Whilst most knew the meaning of reformation, too many got sidetracked by writing about forgiveness. When doing so, forgiveness was often referred to in relation to punishment without any mention that it is neither an aim of punishment nor an alternative to punishment. Those that knew the aims of punishment and compared one or more of them to reformation tended to find the question easier than those who did not.

Topic 5 – Religious Attitudes to Rich and Poor in British Society

Most answers to 21 were correct. With a question as that in 22, there is a risk that candidates will give some unexpected or not well known organisations that help the poor. Provided they help the poor (e.g. job centres, government, charity shops etc), they were allowed. Many referred to Christian Aid who do not help the poor in Britain but as there were no marks given for naming the organisation, this did not matter. Marks were awarded for the quality of the descriptions of the work that organisations do to help the poor. Most gave lists including just the provision of food, water and shelter etc. without giving a description of the work. Only those that provided more depth and development in their answers earned the full 3 marks. These tended to be those who chose a more 'predictable' organisation such as The Salvation Army.

There were some good answers to 23 although a significant minority gave answers which were too general about greed without relating it to gambling. 24 seemed to cause few problems although some restricted themselves to how money should be used. This brought in many teachings about sharing money and also references to Zakah. The 'camel' quote from Christianity featured widely in most of the best answers as did 'the love of money is the root of all evil' usually minus 'the love of' from the beginning. Those that attributed the quotes did not always attribute them to the Bible although as it was not required, it didn't matter. There were some thoughtful answers to 25 although they were frequently lacking in development. Religious arguments were often a little vague and some got little further than 'love your neighbour'. However, many who included 'love your neighbour' were not sympathetic to those who are poor as a result of their own actions, thereby missing the point of the teaching.

Topic 6 – Religious attitudes to world poverty

Most were able, in response to 26, to easily identify two ways that the poor in developing countries should be helped. There were some good answers to 27 from candidates who were able to link unfair trade with the worsening of world poverty. Many did not establish this link successfully and some were unable to give an adequate definition of unfair trade. Some attacked the question from the perspective of fair trade without a great deal of success. There were many good answers to 28 with many pointing out that all should help the poor rather than just religious believers. Some answers lacked reasoning and many religious teachings were quite basic and superficial.

Many answers to 29 were superficial and lacking in specific beliefs and teachings related to compassion. Some gave no religious beliefs and teachings preferring to refer to such things as pictures of the starving to inspire compassion. Such answers were invalid. Although many seemed to find 30 difficult, there were some good answers. However, some turned the question into a discussion on war when all they had to do was to argue the case and then identify and include the argument for a different greatest problem for poor people. Lack of food and other resources is the obvious alternative to have included. Others tried to make the case for war not being the greatest problem because they could join the army and be fed and paid for doing so. The mark scheme acknowledged the difficulty in including religious arguments in relation to this quote and allowed 'moral answers that reflect religious teachings' instead. This concession was helpful.

Candidates in some centres answered the 5 parts of each question in reverse order i.e. they did the 6 mark AO2 question first and then worked backwards to the first part. Whilst this is a perfectly within the rules of the examination, there was no evidence that candidates who followed this pattern gained any advantage and as the separate parts of a question often build towards the final AO2 quote, they were possibly disadvantaging themselves.

A significant minority answered all the questions on the paper. They tended to be weaker candidates who would be better advised to spend longer on the four topics they are required to answer rather than trying to answer all six.

Some candidates ignored the instruction to write in black ink or black ball-point pen whilst others did not number their answers correctly and in the boxes down the left hand side of the page. Some referred to previous answers they had given hoping that the marker would look back at them. They were not disadvantaged in doing this but in future years, it may make marking their answers more difficult and is to be discouraged.

Overall most candidates seemed to take the opportunity to show what they had learnt. It was a privilege to read some of the candidates' work because they clearly enjoyed studying the course and were able to demonstrate their learning in a fluent and coherent fashion. Few candidates refused to take the paper seriously although some were reluctant to write as much as they could have. There is little evidence of a significant number of candidates who could not access the questions on the paper, apart from some of the technical terms that were used and which form part of the specification.

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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