



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Religious Studies B (4055)

Unit 1: Religion and Citizenship 40551

Report on the Examination

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Unit 1: Religion and Citizenship

General Comments

Once again this Unit saw an increase in the numbers of students entered for the examination and with the full ability range in evidence. The paper was accessible to most students with less able students being able to gain a reasonable number of marks.

Again the order of questions on the paper this year varied from topic to topic with questions having two, three or four marks to start. This variation does not appear to have caused difficulty to students who appear to have responded well. Whilst considering allocation of marks, it is worth reminding Schools and colleges of the paragraph included in last year's report:

'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.'

Once again the emphasis on evaluation allowed students to show that they had considered a range of religious questions and could support their views with reasoned argument. The three-mark questions on the whole were answered well; however the six-mark questions were more challenging. Many students were able to argue on two sides of a question but frequently omitted religious teachings or views in their answers, thus limiting the amount of marks available to them. Other students who were successful in including relevant religious perspectives often did not sufficiently develop their responses to gain the full six marks. The Level Descriptors for five and six marks require students to show 'informed insights'; this implies a reference to religion should be more than a general statement.

The freedom to approach topics from the perspective of one or more religions led to some students including the views of several religions in their responses. This is to be welcomed. However schools and colleges should guard against the use of too many religions being used in one topic as there was evidence of students confusing the beliefs and practices of various religions.

Of particular concern this year has been the number of students who have not been able to answer or who have made a poor attempt at answering questions requiring the work of an organisation or individual, questions 09, 14, 28 and to a lesser extent 16. Questions on such examples can be expected as they allow students to show practical responses to the theory in each topic; such knowledge may also be used to good effect in evaluation questions. Where students have been taught a relevant example, they are often able to secure maximum marks.

Again this year, a significant number of students attempted all six questions and once again reports came from examiners where entire schools and colleges had answered all six questions. This is not to be recommended as students who attempt all six questions frequently under-perform on the paper due to time constraints, meaning they are unable to deal with the questions in the appropriate depth to gain good marks.

Question 1 Religion and Relationships

This was the most popular question on the paper and elicited many good responses from students.

In 01 the most common mistake was for students to explain 'age of consent' as the time a person was allowed to do something such as drink alcohol or smoke rather than being the age when a person was able to legally give their permission to having sex.

In 02 there was evidence of good preparation by many students who were able to explain clearly religious attitudes to contraception. In some instances however, there was a huge amount of confusion and misunderstanding, particularly where the teaching that every sex act should have the potential to create life was interpreted as meaning the only occasion a couple could have sex was if they wanted a child, rather than allowing for the use of natural methods of contraception. This topic is complex and there is much variety of opinion amongst and within religions, and in such circumstances, schools and colleges should ensure that students have a sound understanding of the views of the tradition(s) they are studying.

03 drew some thoughtful responses from students, with many arguing that forgiveness was a key idea in religion and people should be allowed to learn from their mistakes. There were equally well argued views that people had broken vows to God and not just their partner by divorcing and so remarriage was not to be permitted.

04 produced some very good answers, reflecting on the importance of the family, citing the Ten Commandments, 'Honour your Father and Mother' and other teachings as well as emphasising the roles played in the family and the importance of these. It was evident in this question that some schools and colleges appeared not to have addressed the topic as a significant number of students made only very general points and consequently scored few marks.

05 produced some very thoughtful and perceptive responses from students, with many arguing that having a marriage certificate did not automatically make you a good parent, as parenting was far more complex and required time, patience and understanding. Personal experience was also called upon with some students reflecting on their situations and deciding that, married or not, their parents had done a good job raising them, even though they were not necessarily going to admit that to them.

Where students scored less well on this question, they tended to focus on the issue of marriage rather than considering the issue of parenting.

Question 2 Religion, Sport and Leisure

This question began with 06 which was worth four marks. Students had a mixed response to this question where the best responses were able to make use of relevant religious teaching and attitudes, whereas other students called upon general attitudes such as 'it keeps you fit', 'helps you make friends', answers that would better fit last year's question on the benefits of sport.

In 07 most students scored maximum marks and in some cases wrote far more than was necessary to secure the two marks.

08 prompted some very good responses on whether competitive sport should be banned on holy days with students seemingly evenly split on whether there should or should not be a ban.

09 was on the whole disappointingly done with many students making no attempt to answer or selecting organisations that were not religious but worked in sport and leisure. The specification is clear in asking for a religious organisation within leisure and mention is made of Christians in Sport and chaplains, however, there are many other suitable organisations / people that can be made use of.

10 was the evaluation questions and presented a challenge to some students who appeared to have no idea what was meant by sponsorship. However there were also some excellent answers, looking at sponsorship and its effectiveness and whether the income of top sportspeople could be defended when so many people had so little.

Question 3 Religion and Work

In 11 most students were able to briefly explain one reason why work is important.

In 12 many students were able to explain religious attitudes to business and enterprise, with the most able students making extensive use of religious teachings and applying them to the topic. Other students were able to gain good marks with explanations of attitudes, for example explaining why certain jobs would be inappropriate for some believers.

13 produced some good answers linking religious teaching into an employer's responsibilities and arguing strongly that if employers did follow religious teaching, then trade unions would not be needed. Others argued equally forcibly that trade unions would continue to be needed as employers were human and so would not necessarily always follow religious teaching or protect workers who were of a different religious background. There did appear to be a minority of students who had no idea what a trade union was, the most common misconception being that it was an organisation to promote trade between groups.

14 was disappointingly answered by many students who were frequently unable to identify a suitable religious believer. Where students did identify somebody appropriate, they were often able to secure full marks with a good outline of the work the believer had done.

15 provided some interesting and insightful responses that in many cases were linked to relevant religious teaching. Many students argued that providing a person was able-bodied enough and could get child-care if needed; there was no reason why they should not do voluntary work to help out their community in exchange for getting benefits. Others argued that if they were looking for work properly, then the unemployed would not have time to volunteer. A few students also took issue with the fact that if people had to do voluntary work, then it was no longer voluntary!

Question 4 Religion and the Multicultural Society

Part 16 elicited some good responses from students who were able to show clear practical ways in which faith communities were able to play a positive role in their local communities. Where students did less well on this question, their responses tended to be general responses lacking clear examples.

17 produced a mixed response, with many students talking about general benefits of multiculturalism, whereas the best answers which often achieved maximum marks were able to use clear religious teachings in their responses.

Many students were able to pick up full marks on part 18 with a good explanation of tolerance. Where students did not gain full marks, they often struggled to find a word to use other than tolerate or tolerating as they attempted their answer. For many the most successful method was a simple explanation with an example given to develop the point.

There were a variety of responses to question 19, with many students arguing for the need for blasphemy laws whilst others argued strongly against, making the point that religions were big enough to look after themselves and citing freedom of speech as an important consideration. Where students did less well, they often did not have a secure understanding of what was meant by blasphemy.

20 produced some very strong answers which showed a good knowledge of the debate on both sides. Many religious arguments were also incorporated. Where students did less well, they tended to focus on immigration only to the UK and as a consequence did not consider the wider global issues that may arise.

Question 5 Religion and Identity

Once again this was the least popular of the questions on the paper. However there was evidence from many schools and colleges of excellent preparation by students for this section and on a significant number of scripts, students scored their best mark on this topic.

21 produced good explanations of 'self-worth' from many students.

22 produced some excellent answers about what it means to be human, with good use being made of religious teachings.

23 elicited some very thoughtful responses from students with all views being coherently argued; the physical side of life is more important because we do not know if there is anything beyond this life; the spiritual was more important as you would be spending eternity there, so you need to make sure everything would be OK. Finally both were equally important, as what you do here and now in the physical life would determine the sort of spiritual life you would experience.

In 24 many students gave good descriptions of items a person may wear in order to show commitment to their faith.

25 drew thoughtful responses from students who built on their thinking in 23 and 24 to form strong arguments in response to whether religion was the most important part of a person's identity. Weaker responses tended not to consider other identities an individual might have, e.g. based on nationality, race, career etc. and tended to assert a view with little reason to support it.

Question 6 Religion and Human Rights

In 26 the majority of students scored two marks, many giving a simple explanation which they developed with an example.

In 27, students made some good arguments that religions could be effective pressure groups. However, there was also evidence suggesting some students did not understand what was meant by a pressure group.

In 28, students who knew a suitable organisation were often able to secure full marks with an explanation of the work done by the organisation. It was encouraging to see far less emphasis on the history of the organisation this year. Of concern, however, was the significant number of students who were unable to give an example of an organisation that could help if a person's rights were being abused.

In 29, a surprising number of students misread the question as "Explain why some religious believers might NOT support non-religious organisations in campaigning for human rights." Of those who did read the question correctly, there were a number of outstanding answers focussing on shared moral convictions, pragmatic considerations of effectiveness and the initiative of individual believers to act outside of their religious contexts to support a cause they personally believed in.

30 produced a variety of responses, with the key issues often being that the religious laws were given by God and therefore had to be given serious consideration compared to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) which is a more recent document and put together by humans. Many students argued that UNDHR was more important as it covered all humans not just those who followed a religion; in addition, it covered those whom religion may have side-lined in its teachings. Many students argued that there was no great difference between the aims of the UNDHR and the main teachings of all religions of respect for life and care for the vulnerable etc.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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