



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Religious Studies B (4055)

Unit 2: Religion and Life Issues

40552

Report on the Examination

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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

The entry for this unit has continued to increase year on year. Most students found this year's paper very accessible with few unanswered questions and specific religious teachings were found in many of the answers. This is important as it helps towards obtaining the higher levels in the 3, 4 or 6 mark questions. Some of the answers this year were outstanding and showed that the students had been very well prepared. Some made good use of the diversity of opinion within the Christian tradition whilst others made excellent use of teachings and beliefs from two or more religions.

There were few rubric infringements but some students answered all six questions. In these cases most of the answers lacked depth as it is time consuming trying to answer every question. Many would probably have scored higher marks if they had concentrated on four questions as required by the examination. Some students attempted the parts of the questions out of order. Although this is allowed it is probably not a good idea to do all the six mark A02 questions first. This often resulted in a failure to complete the exam because so much time had been taken up writing longer answers than those required for these questions. In addition the parts are normally designed to lead logically from one part to another in a way which should be helpful to those taking the exam. Furthermore, several who did not follow the numbering as printed on the exam paper ended up missing one or two questions. This may have been because they hadn't realised that they had not answered all the question parts.

There were fewer students this year saying that Christians believe ... and Catholics believe something else as if Roman Catholics belong to a different religion. Unfortunately the problem of mixing up Islamic and Hindu teaching remains. Muslims do not believe that the cow is sacred or believe in reincarnation. Hindus do not worship Allah. Several also expressed the view that Buddhists do things because of god. However, where students could correctly identify or contrast beliefs or teachings from different religions, it generally helped them score high marks.

Some students have not mastered the skill of using the beliefs and teachings of the different religions in the A02 answers in an evaluative way. The beliefs and / or teachings are listed as supporting or opposing a viewpoint but no real reasoning is given and no informed insight is shown.

Schools and colleges 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 students. It enables technical terms, or more challenging parts of the specification to be examined appropriately and provides students with opportunities to write at greater length on issues where there is a greater body of knowledge or explanation available.

Question 1: Religion and Animal Rights

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

01 This question was very well answered although a minority of students only gave one reason and explained it in detail. This was not what the question required and in such instances only one mark could be obtained.

02 There were some excellent answers to this question with many students contrasting religious attitudes towards experiments for cosmetic purposes with those designed to aid the discovery of cures for major diseases both for animals and humans. Many who referred to Buddhism and Hinduism made reference to the principle of ahimsa. However, (again this year) many incorrectly attributed biblical teachings about loving our neighbour, people all being created in the image of God, the sanctity of life ideas and do not kill as beliefs which all Christians apply to animals.

03 Superficial answers commented that killing animals for fur was not nice or stated that it was up to the individual. Some appeared confused about the ivory trade or believed that it wasn't necessary for the animal to be killed in order to use the fur. Many mentioned the idea that breeding animals for fur isn't really much different than keeping animals for their meat. Also if the animal is killed for meat why not use its fur. Reference was made to stewardship and dominion in many of the better answers.

04 A minority of answers did not identify that the question was about actions and wrote about why believers protect animals. Some suggestions were highly questionable in terms of what a religious believer might actually do or be in a position to do and some listed ideas with no development. A sizable number did, however, score a maximum mark in this question.

05 Few students elaborated about caring for people (love your neighbour etc.). Most people focused on whether or not we should care for animals as our equals and used dominion v stewardship arguments. Many of the best answers referred to the view that human beings were made in the image of God and thus are of greater value and require more caring. Some missed the need to include religious views or included them only superficially however, the question proved accessible to all abilities.

Question 2: Religion and Planet Earth

This was another popular section and many answers were of a high standard.

06 This question was well answered with most students obtaining the maximum mark.

07 The best answers made good reference to the creation stories and explained about the complexity of nature and the awe and wonder which it inspires. Unfortunately the majority of students ignored the 'nature and wonder' of the planet and based their answers totally on stewardship and the need to care for our environment. This meant that they were not able to obtain level four.

08 Although there was a complete range of answers many were very generalised and did not explain the dangers associated with climate change in expressing an opinion. Answers mostly focused on stewardship.

09 This was a well answered question with almost half the students gaining the maximum three marks. It was recognised as an 'action' question although some just listed what religious people could do without showing any development.

10 Many struggled to find an alternative view to the idea that we have created problems so we should look after the world. Many presented atheism and religious belief as contrasting ideas but did not provide an alternative argument since in both cases they were arguing that people should look after the world. The arguments most used to support the statement focused on the ideas that God created the world and so should look after it and that God would make a much better job of it as we are only tenants with selfish and greedy motives.

Question 3: Religion and Prejudice

This was another popular section and the answers were generally an improvement on last year.

11 This question was generally well answered with many different and creditable reasons given.

12 A full range of answers was seen with the best answers making sound use of teachings including the golden rules, every person has a special value to God or is created in the image of God, everyone has the potential to reach enlightenment etc. Some wrote about religion being sexist and the weakest did not include teachings and focused on simply the need to treat everyone the same or equally, missing the question focus on prejudice.

13 Many students that attempted this question misunderstood the concept of treating people the same. Answers mainly repeated material used in answering question 12 although some students developed ideas concerning the treatment of those who are problems in society and the roles of men and women.

14 Where students were aware of legislation, they gave informed and sensible responses. Weaker answers were unsure of what 'law' meant and whilst the mark scheme made allowance for the full breadth of interpretation, the answers, when interpreting law as e.g. the police, were never as good.

15 This evaluation question brought a complete range of responses. Many showed good knowledge of the struggle of Martin Luther King and Gandhi, and linked this to the idea of what life would be like if there was no law against discrimination. There was a lot of repetition of what had been said previously on equality, love thy neighbour and treat everyone the same. Many students found it difficult to give arguments to support the statement although some referred to positive discrimination being a good thing for individuals that have disabilities etc. and argued that it should not be stopped.

Question 4: Religion and Early Life

As usual this was a popular topic with many students scoring good marks.

16 There were some very good answers to this question with students arguing that children are just a natural result of sexual activity or that they are a gift, miracle and blessing from God.

17 The term quality of life was mostly known, the sanctity of life less so. Some students were confused in that they stated that the sanctity of life is the religious version of quality of life. Several answers were extremely concise with insufficient development to obtain the four marks which were available.

18 Most scored the maximum two marks for this question.

19 This proved to be a challenging question and several students gave the same information they had used in 18 without addressing it to the issues of rights. Those that did read the question correctly usually compared the rights of the unborn child with that of the mother.

20 A full range of answers were seen for this six mark A02 question and it didn't present too many problems for the well prepared student. Many wrote entirely on the arguments for and against abortion but there were some excellent evaluations that did focus on the actual issue of 'any time' from the statement.

Question 5: Religion, War and Peace

21 This was the best answered question on the paper as nearly everyone obtained the maximum mark.

22 A few students did not understand the term 'pacifist' but there were some excellent answers backed up with good references from sacred writings.

23 There were some very well argued responses with most using examples from the modern era with explanations about there being no justification for killing innocent civilians. A minority developed the idea that terrorists may be regarded by some as freedom fighters if they are attempting to overthrow an evil regime.

24 This proved to be the most difficult question on the paper. Many students wrote about the work of aid agencies rather than one peacekeeping force. The majority of those that mentioned the United Nations and NATO (the two peacekeeping forces mentioned in the specification) wrote about their history rather than what they actually do.

25 Where students picked up and commented on 'Just War', they wrote some excellent responses which included details of the Just War conditions. Weaker answers tended to simply focus on the arguments for and against war.

Question 6: Religion and Young People

This was the least popular question and of those who answered it many had attempted all six questions.

26 This was generally well answered with many making use of the stimulus. A few answered why faith groups have activities instead of giving two examples of actual activities.

27 – Where a positive approach was adopted, many gave detailed responses to this question referring to moral codes, endeavouring to do right rather than wrong etc. Answers which focussed on young people being forced to follow a religion and being denied a life of their own invariably did not score well.

28 Where the term 'coming of age ceremony' was understood properly the best answers were given – some simply interpreted this as a birth ceremony and argued for or against children having religion dictated to them. Others gave very superficial answers about making your own mind up or it is not appropriate if they are not religious, which, while not inaccurate, wasn't really at the heart of what the question was asking them to consider.

29 Most students gave reasonably sound answers to this question recognising peer or family pressure, modern lifestyles and the dominance of secular views as contributing to difficulties for those with faith.

30 Those students answering this question gave many of positive reasoning for teaching religion in schools including to avoid bias, learn about different faiths and develop social harmony and understanding. This was contrasted in the main with learning about religion in the home or place of worship.

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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