



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

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 overall standards achieved in this examination exceeded the impressive standards demonstrated in 2011. Most students had been well prepared, especially in AO1, with many displaying a wide knowledge and understanding of the specification content.

Assessment Objective 1

Many students displayed good knowledge and understanding. However there was a noticeable weakness in many students' knowledge of technical terms such as stewardship, retribution, deterrence and saviour siblings. It is important that they know these terms, along with all other technical terms in the specification.

It is pleasing to report that many students 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. The 4 mark AO1 questions require some development for four marks and some students struggled to provide development amongst the various quotes and teachings they listed. Many students were over-reliant on just a few quotations such as 'love your neighbour', 'treat others as you would like to be treated' and 'an eye for an eye.' These were often taken out of context and not properly applied to the topic students were writing about. On many occasions, quotations and teachings were twisted to fit the particular belief or attitude with varying degrees of success. This was especially the case with 'an eye for an eye' and the incorrectly quoted 'money is the root of all evil.' Some students attributed quotations to the wrong religion, especially referring to Hindus trying to please Allah and in some cases they appeared to invent their own quotations.

In the AO1 questions, asking why religious believers may agree or disagree with a certain moral issue, it is important that answers are focussed on what is asked rather than providing an alternative view as well. No credit is given for content explaining why religious believers agree with an issue if the question asks why they disagree and vice versa. However it is pleasing to note that many 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, and should be encouraged throughout.

Question 17 was often not well answered because many did not understand the meaning of retribution. As an alternative, students stated that many religions believe that reformation or deterrence were better alternatives. In such cases, marks were awarded but to achieve the higher levels, there had to be some consideration of retribution. This 'evading the question' was also evident to a lesser degree in questions 2 and 7, as technical terms used in the question were not known.

The style of AO1 questions varied through the paper; three mark questions asked for the difference between two technical terms were generally well answered. It was possible to gain marks if only one definition was given but providing two correct simple definitions which did not provide detail or development earned level 2 rather than level 3.

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.

Assessment Objective 2

The assessment criteria for AO2 require the use of 'evidence and reasoned argument to express and evaluate personal responses, informed insights and differing viewpoints'. Students are expected to show AO1 knowledge and understanding to 'support their responses to the issues for evaluation' (GCSE Religious Studies Spec B page 24). It was very evident in many responses to the 6 mark AO2 questions that students were prioritising knowledge and understanding over evaluation. Starting a 6 mark answer with 'Christians think...' with an alternative paragraph starting 'Muslims think...' before a brief concluding paragraph starting 'I think...' which repeats points made earlier, is unlikely to properly fulfil the AO2 criteria. In a similar vein, starting a paragraph with 'I think Hindus would agree...' followed by a second paragraph starting 'I think Hindus would disagree...' are likely to produce more knowledge and learnt understanding than evaluation and reasoned argument. Answers of these types rarely progressed beyond level 4 due to the dearth of true AO2 content. Some more able students would have been able to achieve levels 5 or 6 had they approached the tasks in an evaluative way. The grade descriptions for grades 'A', 'C' and 'F' on page 30 of the specification highlight clearly what the expectations are for students achieving particular grades.

As last year, some students offered answers which consisted mainly of extended opinion unsupported by reason or evidence. For higher levels, students need to do more than this. 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, it is best if this adds something new to the answer rather than just repeating points made previously.

However, despite these flaws in technique that were evident in many answers, the responses of many students to this type of question were better than last year with more students reaching levels 5 and 6. At the higher level, it was pleasing to see so many well written and coherent answers containing the required 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, often in level 6 answers being evaluated rather than just being used to support an opinion. It is important that students use religious beliefs and teachings in this way, rather than just adding them on at the end in order to meet the requirement for religious arguments. This way, the requirement for a personal response is more easily met.

As in AO1, some quotations and teachings were overused, often twisted to fit a point of view when there are plenty better and more relevant quotations available, being repeatedly told that religious believers should help the poor because religion tells us we are all equal seemed a little contradictory when the existence of rich and poor people is clear evidence that although maybe we should all be equal, we are obviously not all equal! Some went further and supported the idea that we are all equal with 'an eye for an eye' without justifying how this teaching is relevant to equality. Providing a valid justification would have been more likely to meet AO2 criteria rather than just being limited to AO1. The use of 'Brahman created everything' and 'atman is in everything' were also overused, often without any real valid justification to make them relevant to the discussion.

Some students strayed from the quotation producing answers that were unfocused or irrelevant. This was especially evident in question 20 where many students focussed on punishment and forgiveness rather than on not breaking the law and in question 15 where some preferred to state or discuss why people take drugs and whether they should do so, rather than on whether they should be helped. In addition, some students used quotes out of context to support an argument that the religion they were taken from does not hold.

The 3 mark evaluation questions were generally well answered and without too much difficulty although some seemed unsure about what was expected of them. It would be helpful when preparing students for such questions if teachers could make them aware of the level descriptors for marking them i.e. for Level 3, all that is required is several simple reasons (3+) or a well developed reason (or a combination of both). Unlike the 6 mark AO2 questions, no alternative response is required to balance it although an alternative on some occasions did help some students to achieve level 3 because it helped provide more reasoning in their answers.

Few answers lacked religious content (6 marks questions) or evidence of at least thinking about a religious concept or topic in order to provide a response (3 mark questions).

A few general points

- A large number of students referred to 'love you neighbour' as being one of the 10 commandments. Several other commandments were also 'invented' such as 'thou shalt not drink alcohol'.
- Although there was no question on the paper that referred directly to cannabis, a significant number of students made reference to it and showed great misunderstanding in doing so. In question 14, there were many references to cannabis being a medically prescribed drug. Although an oral spray called Sativex which is derived from cannabis (which does not produce a 'high') is available by prescription to a small number of multiple sclerosis sufferers in UK, it is unlikely that this was in the mind of many students who referred to cannabis. They appear to believe that cannabis (often referred to as weed) is available on prescription to relieve pain in cancer sufferers and for those suffering from depression. This is not true.
- Although Rastafarians allow the use of cannabis for religious purposes, they do not allow the use of other illegal drugs. Many references to Rastafarians implied that they are completely pro drug.
- Forgiveness is not a legal alternative to or replacement for punishment. In addition, reformation is usually achieved through and during punishment, as a product and aim of punishment, not a replacement. These are common errors but are still being made

- Some students mixed up the religions they used. As an answer to question 12, one student wrote: 'During the festival of Purim, Hindus are not allowed to smoke, drink, have sex and eat from sun up until sun down. This is to show respect to Allah'. Whilst it is perfectly in order to study several religions in this course, studying just one or two is less likely to lead to such confusion.
- It should be made clear to students that the only style of question that requires an alternative opinion is the 6 mark AO2 question. If in AO1, they are asked for religious beliefs and teachings either for or against something, they get no credit for the alternative.
- If different religions share similar teachings as in questions 2, 7 and, 13 marks are awarded once for the idea or teaching with no extra credit given for stressing that believers in another faith think the same.

Topic 1 – Religion Attitudes to Matters of Life

- 01 Most students were able to give a brief explanation of why religious believers agree with blood transfusion although some answers were vague, had mistaken transfusion for transplant or explained why Jehovah's Witnesses do **not** agree with it.
- 02 There were some very good answers to this question including relevant quotations relating to adultery, masturbation and only God providing life, that were well explained. Several students also referred to the effect on the child as it grew up, often, from students who focussed on Hinduism linked to not having knowledge of what caste they were in.
- 03 Some students found some overlap between questions 2 and 3 and so repeated some of the ideas. Where this was appropriate, they were given credit each time. Ideas about only God being able to provide life and choose who should have children were 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 for couples unable to conceive naturally.
- 04 Many responses to this question were disappointing. Whilst most students were able to give at least a basic definition of designer babies, there was a widespread lack of knowledge about saviour siblings. Most incorrectly referred to saviour siblings being used to provide body parts and organs i.e. to be conceived and born in order to sacrifice their own lives for their siblings in order to serve their sole purpose. Surprisingly few made correct reference to the 'donation' of stem cells and the fact that the saviour sibling is unharmed by this process and will continue to live a full life afterwards.
- 05 Whilst most students had some general knowledge of medical research, in some cases it was limited. Many students strayed into the area of treatment rather than research or focussed almost entirely on a particular area of research such as embryology or cloning. Surprisingly few made reference to animal testing or testing on humans however, preferring to restrict themselves to the medical benefits contrasted with playing God.

Topic 2 – Religious Attitudes to the Elderly and Death

- 06 Most students earned the full 3 marks for this question. A few made reference to hospices being for the elderly but most identified them as being used by the terminally ill.
- 07 Answers were generally good. Most focussed on the family being an alternative to care homes, using good religious teachings, especially from Hinduism and Islam. Such an approach was valid. Even though the question asked why religious believers do not agree with using care homes, students used the reasoning that they don't use them because their faith requires them to look after the elderly themselves. Reference was made to the impersonal nature of some care homes and the lack of freedom they allow, and a few argued that the elderly should be supported in their own homes to allow them independence as the most loving thing to do.
- 08 There were many good responses to this quotation earning the full 3 marks. However, most were more content with writing about life after death rather than how it gives great comfort to the elderly.
- 09 This question was not well answered. Whilst most earned at least 1 mark, only half earned the full 2 marks. Students need to understand what 'quality of life' means.
- 10 This was the best answered of the 6 mark AO2 questions. A wide range of beliefs and teaching were evident with some drawing the distinction between 'do not kill' and 'do not murder'.

Topic 3 – Religious Attitudes to Drug Abuse

- 11 Almost all students gave two correct reasons.
- 12 Many students earned the full 3 marks. Many gave an alternative point of view which, although not required, helped students to develop their answer. Much reference was made to Jesus turning water into wine and the use of alcohol in Holy Communion but some answers were quite general, for example, suggesting drinking alcohol should be allowed in moderation without giving any real reason as to why this should be so.
- 13 Many students answered this question well. They made good reference to illegality and the harmful effects of drugs, backing this up with relevant beliefs and teachings. A significant minority tried to provide a counter argument by making reference to cannabis being allowed for religious purposes by Rastafarians, some Hindu Sadhus and the Ethiopian Coptic Church. No credit was given for this because it was not relevant to the question.
- 14 Apart from those who misread 'legal' for 'illegal', most students were able to gain 2 marks. However, many did not provide accurate or relevant development to earn the third mark available. References to cannabis were largely incorrect and not relevant. Many restricted their answer about legal drugs to social drugs such as tobacco and alcohol, some highlighting the age restriction on their purchase.
- 15 Many responses neglected to provide sufficient focus on whether people who take illegal drugs should be helped, preferring to turn the question into either whether people should take illegal drugs or why they choose to take them. Whilst some of what was written in these instances was creditworthy, the lack of focus on the quotation prevented students from achieving the higher levels. Those who did focus on the quotation usually answered the question successfully.

Topic 4 – Religious Attitudes to Crime and Punishment

- 16 There were many students who earned all three marks for this question. A common error was to neglect to include any reference to the fact that these are both punishments and do not apply to those who have not committed an offence. A common way of starting an answer was 'Prison is where you...' without any reference to an offender.
- 17 A large number of students did not know the meaning of retribution. Some therefore did not attempt an answer. Others confused it with reformation, writing that religious attitudes were in favour of retribution because it was helpful to offenders. Many started their answer by saying that religious believers do not approve of retribution before providing the alternatives of reformation, protection or deterrence. If their answer was framed in this context as an alternative, marks were awarded although, for the full 4 marks, greater reference to retribution was necessary. The most common quotation to support retribution was 'an eye for an eye', attributed variously to Judaism, Christianity and Islam although many made reference to amputating hands under Shariah Law, not always connecting this thought to retribution.
- 18 This was not well answered, mainly because many did not refer specifically to religious offences, as required in the question, preferring to consider offences in general. There was much misunderstanding evident about forgiveness, referring to it as an alternative to and replacement for punishment. This is a common error that students need to address. They also need to see reformation as an aim of punishment, not a replacement for punishment.
- 19 Those who understood deterrence were able to answer this question successfully, especially where they gave an example, usually the death penalty. Others were less sure about deterrence and either did not attempt an answer or were incorrect or very vague.
- 20 This question was not well answered. Most students who recognised the quotation as being about religious beliefs encouraging believers to obey the law were successful in their answers. However, too many strayed into areas of punishment and forgiveness which took them away from the quotation.

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

- 21 Most reasons given for taking part in lotteries were correct.
- 22 This question was not well answered. Students should have been able to offer a well developed argument based on 'love your neighbour', at least, but some did not appear to be able to.
- 23 There were some good answers to this question. Those that referred to using God-given talents to earn an honest living, some of which was shared with the poor by tithing or paying zakah, generally had sufficient ideas to develop for Level 4. Some gave an irrelevant alternative view, usually based on 'money is the root of all evil'. Others used the correct quotation in making the point that, provided the rich do not 'love their money' by being greedy and selfish, their riches are acceptable.

- 24 This question seemed to cause few problems although some students failed to gain marks by not mentioning that inheritance is usually governed by a will and paid after a person's death. If paid whilst alive, it is a gift and not an inheritance. Nearly 6 out of 10 students earned the full 3 marks, often using the fact that earnings are worked for whilst inheritance is not as their development.
- 25 The fact that most students did not seem to be clear about what for them constitutes responsible and wasteful uses of money meant that many struggled to reach Level 4. Those that gave the definitions generally scored well. Many wrote about giving to charity without making any reference to whether this was responsible or wasted although in most cases, it was inferred that it was responsible and credited. This was another opportunity for students to write about tithing and Zakah but again, this was not always made relevant to the quotation. As most religions have similar ideas about responsible use of money, quotations and teachings were quite plentiful. However, two religions sharing the same idea does not qualify for double marks, even if identified separately, since it is the idea or teaching that is being applied and evaluated, not the identity of who believes it for which credit is given.

Topic 6 – Religious attitudes to world poverty

- 26 There were some good answers to this question but some were vague or clearly the product of guesswork. However around half of all answers reached Level 3.
- 27 This was poorly answered. Many read 'global interdependence' as 'global independence', thereby being completely incorrect. There were some very good answers to this question. However, some students read 'global interdependence' as 'global independence' and therefore answers could not be credited. 'Global interdependence is a technical term which students need to know. The term is included in the specification and students may expect that any term used in the specification may be used in an examination.
- 28 Some interpreted this as a 'fairtrade' question and as it is AO2, gave an alternative opinion that using fairtrade products can be seen as opposing unfair trade. Although such answers received some credit, they did not fully explore the quotation which asked whether religious believers should do more to oppose unfair trade. Those who addressed the quotation as it was written and who knew about unfair trade were able to score highly.
- 29 Surprisingly few students identified the religious organisation, the work of which they described. As they were not asked to identify one, no marks were given for doing so, and no marks were lost for failing to do so correctly. The marks were awarded for an explanation of the work a religious organisation does to help the poor in developing countries. Some mentioned specific projects whilst others gave more generic answers which were credited if they are things that a typical religious organisation does. Most such answers were simple lists of what is provided and so were capped at Level 2.
- 30 This was another question where less able students struggled through not knowing the meaning of stewardship. Some students gave an alternative reason such as justice or compassion and argued that this was more important than stewardship. In such cases, where this was well done, they earned Level 4, the maximum for a one sided argument.

As was the case last year, some examiners reported that students in some schools and colleges 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 again no evidence that students 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 minority of students ran out of time often through writing too much with plenty of repetition. Some of these answered their final 6 mark evaluation first presumably because there are more marks available for that question than the others. However, had they answered the shorter questions in what time they had left, they may well have been more successful and given themselves the opportunity to earn more than the maximum 6 marks they restricted themselves to.

There was some evidence of students answering questions in seemingly random order e.g. 5, 11, 2, 21, 9, 23 etc. Almost invariably, they were not successful and several missed out questions, possibly because they confused themselves about what they had done and what they still needed to do. Such an approach should be discouraged.

A significant minority answered either a fifth question or all the questions on the paper, possibly because they had time remaining. Students should be advised that it would be better to spend longer on the 4 questions they are required to answer rather than trying to answer extra questions. The timing allows students to provide sufficiently developed answers to earn high marks on the four questions they choose to answer. If they have time left over, it is likely that they have provided insufficient development and answering another question is unlikely to solve this. Indeed the extra question(s) are often the most poorly answered.

A few 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. In addition, some handwriting was very difficult to read and seriously hindered understanding of what the student was trying to write.

Overall most students seemed to take the opportunity to show what they had learnt. It was a privilege to read some of the students' work because they clearly enjoyed studying the course and were able to demonstrate their learning in a fluent and coherent fashion.

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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