



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2012**

**Religious Studies B (4055)**

**Unit 5: Religious Expression in  
Society**

**40555**

***Report on the Examination***

Further copies of this Report on the Examination are available from: [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

Copyright © 2012 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

**Copyright**

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools and colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools and colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the school and college.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).  
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

## Unit 5: Religious Expression in Society

### General Comments

The entry for the paper has once more increased this year, and again it was evident that many candidates really enjoyed their studies. There continues to be an encouraging trend of centres and students selecting examples of their own, and not relying on textbooks. The diversity of religions mentioned has increased, so that a greater number of examples from religions other than Christianity are being given. The most commonly answered topic continues to be Religion and Art Religion in Contemporary Society was the least popular question, although many students attempting this question gained high marks. Overall, there were few weak areas, and certainly no weak topic. There are one or two question foci with which candidates struggled, and these are noted in the main body of this report.

On the 2011 report, a concern was expressed that key terms were a problem for candidates. This year there was little concern – for most candidates key terms, with the exception of indoctrination, were known. It was pleasing to see good use of the stimulus material in several of the questions. A number of candidates used the art stimulus to give themselves an example to write about, and the same was the case for the Media stimulus. Centres can help candidates by creating and exploring stimulus in class.

The five mark AO1 question acted as a good differentiator, and the strongest candidates could show their knowledge and understanding well. Centres might want to work on this level of skill with candidates. Five marks will always require a series of reasons / points, with explanations, and often with good examples to demonstrate points. Many candidates give explanations but these are sometimes brief, and they forget to use examples at all, or use examples without explanations (both of which limits the response to a Level 3 / 4 mark).

There was a marked improvement this year in responses for 6 mark evaluative questions. Centres have worked to prepare students well and responses achieving high marks included two different viewpoints, with several reasons voiced and good explanation of those. Candidates found the 3 mark evaluative questions quite straightforward and generally answers were good.

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 Art**

01 sought explanation of symbolism within any piece of art. Since students were given a choice from all those studied, most students could score fairly well on this topic. Most students discussed a painting, and generally one which depicted Christian ideas. Where students failed to score many marks, it was because they simply described the piece, though description often included reference to symbolic images so credit was given.

Few, if any, students failed to score a mark in defining spirituality in 02. Some gave a fuller answer than was required.

Students gave a range of reasons in their answer to 03, exploring whether sculpture was or was not the greatest display of devotion, and also whether other forms were a greater show of devotion. Many students used examples to support their ideas which strengthened their reasoning.

04 was a five mark question, which differentiated well. Students did score fairly well on the question in general, with most picking up 3-4 marks. There were many outstanding answers which easily gained full marks, and these were characterised by a good use of numerous examples as additional explanation. Students who scored least well did so because they did not go beyond listing different kinds of art, even though sometimes they gave examples – ignoring the requirement to explain the ‘use’ of these.

There were many strong answers to 05, which generally explored lines of argument of the obvious nature of images, the misuse / blasphemous use of images, graffiti as religious expression, and the importance of calligraphy in Islam. Many students used examples to illustrate each of these lines of argument. Even the weakest students were able to get some marks on this question.

### **Question 2: Religion and Architecture**

In 06, there were few students who did not get the mark which was available. Most students chose to point out a religious symbol on the building.

07 was one of the poorest answered questions on the paper. Every student could write about a religious building, usually choosing to write about a place of worship, and many of these were lengthy detailed descriptions. However, crucially, reference was not made to what was taught about God through the architecture, and this was why many students gained few, if any marks. Schools and colleges must explore this aspect for each of the examples they study (which is true across the paper on all topics).

Answers to 08 were good. Interestingly, few students mentioned the plethora of buildings which are well-designed but have had nothing to do with a religious architect. Schools and colleges might consider exploring whether architecture (and any other area from the paper) needs to have a religious mind behind its inception / build.

The best answers to 09 gave uses of architecture with explanations and actual examples of those. Where a student scored less well, it was almost exclusively because of listing types, though by stating some types, eg ‘place of worship’, a use is actually given.

Answers to 10 were good. The most common two juxtaposed arguments were from Roman Catholicism and the use of statues as intercession with Islam and statues being blasphemous. Other creditable arguments included the personal expression / preference in worship for the use of statues, but this was less common.

### **Question 3: Religion and Literature**

A definition of religious literature required in 11 was known by almost all students.

Many students found 12 to be the most difficult of the 5 mark questions. Few students gained no marks, but 2 or 3 marks were more common than 4 or 5. Many students spoke about how literature was used, rather than why, and although there is an overlap in answers, it did affect some students' marks. Many students focused their answer on using holy books, with better answers choosing to explore a range of literature and using examples of those.

Few students had any problem with 13. Many students chose to argue that writing a book that has a religious message showed inspiration or revelation rather than devotion; others chose to argue whether it did or did not show devotion, eg by using religion as a theme, or in a disrespectful way.

All students were able to give an answer in 14, most scoring 2 or 3 of the marks available. The whole range of types of literature were offered, and within those, many different examples.

The improvement schools and colleges have shown in tackling 6 mark evaluation questions was again evident in 15. Students usually answer from opposing points of view, and give reasons on either side. In this question, students tended to argue for or against the statement (i.e. religious literature can/can not be fully understood), without looking at a different way of arguing the question (e.g. is this true of one type of literature more than another?). The best students did explore the statement from several angles, but more importantly, gave several reasons on each side which they developed, often including examples.

### **Question 4: Religion and Media**

This question (16) began with the five mark part, but this had been thought to be a good introduction to the question as a whole and so it proved. Many students were able to write well about the variety of ways film can be used to teach about religion. The vast majority of students wrote about specific films to build their answers – the use of examples will usually help students to develop their answers in this Unit, and it is encouraging to see how many were used. Quite a few students wrote half or more of their answer to this question on the TV series 'Vicar of Dibley', which is clearly not a film and so was not creditworthy. Where students wrote about documentaries, credit was given due to the existence of documentary films, a number of which were named, e.g. Into Great Silence.

Most students did not know the answer to 17 – 'indoctrination' was perhaps the only key term on the paper to be a problem.

Students had few, if any, problems with 18. 3 mark evaluation questions do not on the whole appear to cause difficulties for students.

19 was also well answered by the vast majority. Some chose to give examples to support what they were saying, but many gained full marks without doing so. A small number misunderstood the question to ask why religions would use newspapers.

20 was again answered well. Many students wrote about religious programmes on the mainstream channels (BBC) and religious programming guaranteed by the license, and also about satellite channels which were specific to a religion. It was interesting to read answers which referred to a revelatory use of TV by God himself – that if God created (or inspired) everything, he must be knowable through everything – including TV. Other answers discussed the bias or corrupted interpretation of God which TV can give (tele-evangelists etc). Some students scored poorly as they wrote exclusively about how TV teaches about religion, rather than God.

#### **Question 5: Religion and Music**

21 proved to be very straightforward for most students, again showing that schools and colleges have made sure their students knew the key terms.

Students seemed to find 22 quite straightforward as well. Students who scored less well mixed types of music and moved away from the focus of mainstream. In some of these it was clear they did not know the different types.

23 again presented few problems for most students, though the vast majority gave only one point of view strongly defending the value of chanting. In evaluation questions worth 3 marks, it is not necessary to write from two points of view, though it is often a way that less able students can gain more marks.

Students usually gained at least one mark on 24, and usually by saying that one may learn the religion of the composer. For many, all their marks came from generic ideas – if the composer is religious, and what religion they follow, for example. Few students chose to discuss any specific composer and their music, beyond using the example of Eric Clapton 'Tears in heaven' to discuss the spirituality of the composer and their belief in life after death. To have built an answer around a specific composer would have improved many answers. Schools and colleges should explore this aspect for each of the examples they study (which is true across the paper on all topics, but for the artist, author etc).

There were many very good answers to 25, and, in terms of marks gained, it was perhaps the best answered of the six mark questions. Commonly, students discussed the music which might lead a person to God, as opposed to that which may not. Answers could often have been improved by the use of specific examples.

#### **Question 6: Religion in Contemporary Society**

Those students who answered this question were able to score quite highly. Even though it is the least favoured of the topics, there is no disadvantage in it; in fact the statistical evidence suggests it is actually the best answered topic on the paper.

26 was often not well understood by students, who misinterpreted faith communes as monasteries. However, they still gained marks because many of the points made were valid for both. Schools and colleges may need to make a greater study of the concept of the faith commune (with examples).

27 proved no problem for any student. Some students chose to draw the symbol rather than naming it or describing it – drawing did not penalise and gained the marks as available.

The range of ways in which religious believers can publicly show their devotion as asked in 28 was vast. Across the answers given, the range included – dress and wearing of symbols, worship, bearing witness, adherence to dietary rules and behaviour. Students gave many examples of these. Where students did not get the highest marks, it was either because they failed to develop sufficiently well the points they made, or because their answer focused on many examples of just one way (i.e. dress). Most students chose to interpret the question as being ‘in the public view’; a small number wrote about any action which was not in their own home (e.g. acts of worship in a place of worship). Both approaches were credited.

In part 30 many used the example of Islam to show how believers have a duty to worship daily, and then contrasted this with the demands of daily life affecting the chance to worship so often. The best students explored the nature of worship, and made the point that worship can be far more than prayer.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [AQA results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

UMS conversion calculator [www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion)