



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Religious Studies B (4055)

Unit 6: Worship and Key Beliefs 40556

Report on the Examination

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Unit 6: Worship and Key Beliefs

General Comments

This was the third time of examining this unit and the number of schools and colleges and students continues to rise. It was encouraging to see the standard of responses rising too, particularly to the six mark evaluation questions. To develop an argument and make effective use of one's religious knowledge and understanding in supporting it, is more challenging than the mere recall of information or the explanation of worship and key beliefs. It was gratifying, therefore, to see schools and colleges where students have been trained well in this skill. Good training is not the same as teaching a formula, however, and the best answers, as always, showed originality and flair.

Like last year there were two parts worth six marks on each question. One tested AO1, knowledge and understanding, the other evaluation, that is AO2. The six mark items for AO1 required answers about two religions, so the mark-scheme allowed three marks for each. This pattern is not set in stone and schools and colleges are reminded that other mark allocations are possible as long as AO1 marks total nine for each question. There will always be two AO2 questions, one a 3-mark question and the other a 6-mark question.

The six mark AO1 parts were generally answered with at least some elementary knowledge and understanding (level 2 for each religion). However, some parts of the specification were better known than others. The outside of places of worship (01) received fuller answers than the composition of holy books (23), for example. Worship on special days (07), how a religion started (13), funeral ceremonies (19) and the meaning of actions at places of pilgrimage (10) all proved more challenging than the equivalent AO1 parts last year (see below).

The three mark AO1 parts received many full-mark responses, demonstrating sound knowledge and understanding. Students generally seemed to be confident writing about places of worship (03), the importance of worship (06), how pilgrimage helped religious believers (09), and the importance of religious leaders (21). On the whole, they were less confident with the basic beliefs in 15 and the difficulties of keeping food laws in 17 (see below).

The three mark AO2 parts, where only one point of view is required and two good reasons are sufficient as long as one of them is developed, were also successfully answered by most students. The only one that caused some students difficulty was 22 on the role of the community in guiding religious believers. Providing the key terms 'symbol' and 'aids to worship' were understood (see below), 02 and 05 were answered well. Schools and colleges are reminded that it is important for students to know the terminology that is specifically used in the specification.

The six mark AO2 parts were once again the items where the best students distinguished themselves. These answers require the most analytical and well-developed responses on the paper and this year they elicited some excellent writing. Convincing arguments on both sides of the debate were found for the amount of decoration inside a place of worship (04), the necessity of trained worship leaders (08), whether miracles are required at places of pilgrimage (12) and whether everyone should be allowed to join in religious festivals (20). Some students did not perform so well on 16 and 24 because they failed to read the statements with sufficient care (see below).

The most common **rubric infringement** was attempting more than four questions. When this occurred, all the questions were marked and the marks for the best four were counted. Although it is fine for students to answer whole questions in a different order from that in the paper – question 4 before question 3, for example – it is potentially confusing for the student and the marker when they answer the parts within a question in a different order, such as 04 before 03. The confusion is greatest when students do not label their answers clearly with the number of the part they are answering. There were a few students who failed to do this.

Individual Questions

The purpose in describing the kinds of answers that gained credit, and those that did not, is to amplify the mark scheme. This is a published document which gives full details how each of the parts was marked.

Places of Worship

01 Although students were a little less confident in describing the outside than the inside of places of worship (the question in 2011), this part was nevertheless answered well.

02 Students needed to show an understanding of ‘religious symbols’ in order to gain full credit.

03 Reasons **against** spending money on places of worship were not creditworthy in this instance although some students gave them.

04 Some students understood ‘decoration’ to mean the décor of the building, others the decorations that might be added for a festival. Both approaches were given credit but not at the higher levels (5 or 6). Those who wrote about stained-glass, bright colours and ornate statues (or the lack of them in some places of worship), were more likely to gain a higher level.

Worship

05 Students who did not know the purpose of ‘aids to worship’ found it difficult to argue either for or against them. Copies of the holy books were allowed as some students used them as examples of aids which were needed.

06 The reasons why religious believers worship are well understood so most students could explain the importance of worship in their lives.

07 There were a number of different approaches to this question. No credit was given for merely naming a day of the week; an explanation of why it was special or the worship that was expected of religious believers on that day was necessary. Those who wrote about worship on festival days or at rites of passage were given some credit. Markers were instructed to allow a broad interpretation to what religions ‘teach’ about such days. We recognised that tradition passed down in a religion is a form of teaching.

08 This part gave rise to a variety of responses which discriminated well between students who thought of worship only in terms of formal ritual and those who saw it as a range of activities, both at home and in a religious building. The demands on the leaders of worship are very different depending on which of these are involved.

Pilgrimage

09 Only responses that explained how pilgrimages **help** believers gained full credit. Some students merely gave reasons why people go on pilgrimage. This counted as relevant knowledge (level 1) but not much more.

10 The focus of the question was ‘the meaning of actions’ and responses which strayed away from this did not gain full credit. Merely naming a place of pilgrimage did not gain credit. Describing the actions of pilgrims alone was awarded level 1 for each religion. A good answer was one that gave at least two actions for each religion and explained the meaning of at least one of them.

11 A number of interpretations of ‘spoiled’ were seen and credited, including the physical site being destroyed, the worshipful atmosphere being interrupted and the pilgrims being exploited for commercial gain. Many students successfully argued that pilgrimage would be enhanced by lots of people going.

12 Relatively few students achieved the higher levels (5 or 6) on this question. The best answers focussed on places of pilgrimage which were associated with miracles and contrasted them with other sites which were not. Credit was awarded for the reasoning involved in arguing why either of them could be regarded as ‘special’.

Origins and Key Beliefs

13 Many students recounted the life of the founder in answering how the religion started and these answers received full credit if they showed sound knowledge and understanding. Schools and colleges are reminded that students are advised to be selective in their answers as opposed to writing ‘everything they know’. It was a pity that a number did not complete the paper because they wrote too much on the earlier questions.

14 Most students engaged well with this part.

15 ‘The basic beliefs of a religion’ was an unfamiliar phrase to some students although it is mentioned in the specification. A number of them took it to mean rules of the religion such as the Ten Commandments. However, this is not correct. Only answers which focussed on the importance of believing certain things gained full credit.

16 The comparison at the heart of this question was not understood by some students, in particular some found it difficult to work out the opposite point of view. The best answers gave reasons to agree with the statement in terms of how a believer would please God or gain good karma, and then they argued that by believing certain things, for example about the afterlife, they would be motivated to live that way.

Belonging and Practices

17 Nearly all students had a basic understanding of the challenge presented by keeping food rules. However, an explanation of a specific situation and food rule was necessary for levels 2 and 3.

18 A variety of reasons was given for keeping or not keeping the rules of a religion. Most students did well at arguing this point.

19 What happens in funeral ceremonies was not well-known in many cases. Details about burial and cremation customs were not a substitute for knowledge of the kinds of prayers, readings and other words which are said / recited at a funeral.

20 A popular approach to this question was to argue for and against the followers of one religion participating in the festivals of another. This was given full credit.

Authority

21 The role of leaders in the community was well understood and therefore most students could explain their importance to the community.

22 This aspect of the specification was unfamiliar to some students. The best answers contrasted guidance from the community with guidance from the holy book or from conscience. Those who argued that the religious leader was part of the community were given credit. However, some misread the question as about the leader being guided by the community and this was not creditworthy.

23 This proved to be another unfamiliar area. The composition of holy books mentioned in the specification covers both how they came to be written and what they contain. However, even though this was spelt out in the question, relatively few students gained full credit.

24 Some students approached this question from the angle that religious leaders have more importance today than holy books. This was creditworthy but did not enable them to reach the higher levels (5 or 6). The best answers focussed on the 'meaning' of holy books, arguing that they are essential because of what they tell believers, on the one hand, and that they are redundant because they relate to a different age or language, on the other.

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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