

Religious Studies A and B: Unit B603

General Certificate of Education **GCSE J620/J621**

General Certificate of Education (Short Course) **GCSE J120/J121**

Reports on the Unit

January 2010

J620/J621/J120/J121MS/R/10J

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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B603 Ethics (Relationships, Medical Ethics, Poverty and Wealth)

General Comments

The paper achieved good differentiation between the candidates and produced a full range of marks. Whilst a number of candidates did achieve full marks there were few outstanding papers which might reflect the age profile of the cohort. Centres need to be aware, however, that examiners can not speculate about the age or preparedness of candidates and this unit was marked at GCSE standard.

The vast majority of candidates responded to questions from the Christian religion, questions 2, 8 and 14. Responses involving faiths other than Christianity were rare.

Time management was an issue for a significant minority of candidates. Of these candidates, many did not acknowledge the mark allocation for the parts of the questions and wrote at length in their responses to parts b) and c) which were only worth 2 and 3 marks respectively. Some candidates wrote at length in their response to the e) part of their first question and then ran out of time in the second question. Other candidates and on occasions whole centres, tackled the e) part of their chosen questions first, presumably to ensure they obtained a good number of marks from the extended writing part of the paper. For some candidates this worked well but for others, time management became an issue as they spent far too long on the e) part of their first question. Other candidates failed to recognise the significance of the issue in the stimulus probably because they were not as well prepared for it as they would have been had they worked through the parts of the question in order.

Candidates seemed to find parts a), b) and c) of the questions very accessible. Parts d) and e) enabled effective differentiation between the candidates to occur. There were excellent informed and accurate responses to the d) parts but there were rather more weak responses which offered only generalised comments and often inaccurate details. In the Christianity responses, negative and often inaccurate conclusions were often drawn of the Roman Catholic approach to key moral issues. Similarly, an assumption was often made that the Church of England was quite relaxed about any moral issues and that Protestants would let anything go as long as it was a loving thing to do. Candidates will not reach the higher levels unless they offer precise information

Part e) of each question tests AO2 and requires more developed responses than the part c) questions of the previous specification which tested AO3. Candidates who stated information as points of view and then put their own point of view could be awarded, at most, a low Level 3. For the higher marks at Level 3, or Level 4, candidates are expected to use the information they offer as evidence in their discussion of the issue in the stimulus. The higher level responses weighed up evidence and offered a personal response which was also supported with evidence and argument. Candidates who followed a 'formula' for these responses generally scored satisfactorily but rarely achieved the highest marks because the response did not really engage with the stimulus. Reference to the religion studied was vague or absent from the work of some candidates and others failed to offer a personal response which is a key requirement for higher levels.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Religion and Human Relationships

- (a) **What is meant by divorce?** [1]

Candidates often missed the point and gave responses which were not precise and which could be interpreted as legal separation rather the dissolution of the marriage.

- (b) **State two reasons which a Buddhist / Christian / Hindu / Muslim / Jew / Sikh might give for seeking a divorce.** [2]

Often the reasons given were too similar to each other or not reasons for seeking a divorce at all. Falling out of love or having arguments which were often suggested might lead to irretrievable breakdown but are not reasons for divorce in themselves.

- (c) **Describe the roles of men and women in a Buddhist / Christian / Hindu / Muslim / Jew / Sikh family.** [3]

Traditional roles were offered by most candidates with some archaic stereotypes of family life. Many candidates commented that these traditional roles were being modified in many families with men and women sharing many of the traditionally separated tasks.

- (d) **Explain Buddhist / Christian / Hindu / Muslim / Jew / Sikh attitudes towards divorce and remarriage.** [6]

Many candidates responded well to this part of the question, however, there was a tendency to concentrate on divorce rather than on divorce **and** remarriage. Reference to both was required for then highest level of response.

- (e) **'Married couples should never divorce.'**

Discuss this statement. You should include different, supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Buddhism / Christianity / Hinduism / Islam / Judaism / Sikhism in your answer. [12]

Some candidates repeated the material they had offered in d) without making it relevant to the issue in the stimulus and without attempting to discuss it. Other candidates offered little evidence or information and spent the time expressing their own point of view which limited their achievement. Good responses offered a range of views and support, often in the form of a textual reference or a reference to accurate teaching from the religion as well as a well supported personal point of view.

Section B: Religion and Medical Ethics

- (a) What is meant by cloning? [1]**

The vast majority of candidates responded accurately to this question. Examiners were looking for response which referred to the identical nature of a clone.

- (b) State two reasons why some Buddhist / Christians / Hindus / Muslims / Jews / Sikhs might oppose human cloning. [2]**

Many candidates found difficulty in giving two reasons – sometimes one reason was stated twice or only one reason was given which was explained at length.

- (c) Describe the attitudes of some Buddhists / Christians / Hindus / Muslims / Jews / Sikhs towards a childless couple seeking fertility treatment? [3]**

The majority of candidates could access this question and in some cases wrote at considerable length, often well in excess of the amount required for 3 marks. Many candidates gave a well informed response which referred to the issues associated with AIH and AID. A significant number of candidates responding to the Christianity question were able to identify attitudes with denominational groups and explained the underlying reasons for the denomination taking that view.

- (d) Explain some Buddhist / Christian / Hindu / Muslim / Jew / Sikh attitudes towards abortion. [6]**

This question proved very accessible but many candidates failed to plan their response well enough and did not go into sufficient depth in their explanations, Candidates are not expected to be able to quote from the scriptures of the religions to which they have chosen to respond but candidates who are able to make reference to material in the sacred writings or to specific teaching, as the reasons behind the attitude are judged at a higher level.

- (e) ‘Children are a gift, not a right.’ Discuss this statement. You should include different, supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Buddhism/ Christianity / Hinduism / Islam / Judaism / Sikhism in your answer. [12]**

This proved a problem for some candidates who were still thinking about the topic of abortion. Similarly some thought the question was just about fertility treatment. As a result some responses hardly addressed the issue in the stimulus at all whilst others focused on the idea of a gift without any reference to children as a right. The concept of rights seemed to be foreign to many candidates.

Section C: Religion, Poverty and Wealth

- (a) **What is meant by poverty?** [1]

A surprising number of candidates struggled to offer a recognisable definition.

- (b) **State two Buddhist / Christian / Hindu / Muslim / Jew / Sikh attitudes to the use of money.** [2]

Rather than giving attitudes, some candidates offered examples of what religious people might do to relieve poverty, which was the response required from c).

- (c) **How might a Buddhist / Christian / Hindu / Muslim / Jew / Sikh respond to the needs of poor people?** [3]

A surprising number of candidates could not offer much detail – some were vague just saying they would help without any examples of specific details of what religious people might do in response to the needs of the poor. The highest responses gave an example which they then expanded with detail. For example the work of Christian Aid.

- (d) **Explain what Buddhism/ Christianity / Hinduism / Islam / Judaism / Sikhism teaches about the causes of poverty?** [6]

Clearly this question came as a surprise for many candidates as they seemed to assume that following on from c) d) would ask them to explain the attitude of the religion to helping the poor. As a result some responses which would have been very good received no marks at all as they were irrelevant to the question. Some candidates offered pure geography responses about, for example, LEDCs and natural disasters or famines. A good proportion of candidates did manage to offer something religion specific but this was often not well explained. A few developed good responses concerning the attitude of the religions they had chosen toward human greed and the suffering caused by economic selfishness and inequality

- (e) **‘Giving money to a charity is the most important thing a religious person can do.’**

Discuss this statement. You should include different, supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Buddhism/ Christianity / Hinduism / Islam / Judaism / Sikhism in your answer. [12]

The stimulus was taken in one of two ways and both could be credited – Giving to charity as the most important thing or giving **money** to charity the most important thing. The comments above made about how the e) parts were tackled are relevant to response to this part e) stimulus as well. A good proportion of the candidates did focus on other potential religions activities which could be as important or even more so such as prayer or pilgrimage or spreading the Gospel.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education
GCSE Religious Studies A (World Religions) (J620 J120)
GCSE religious Studies B (Philosophy and/or Applied Ethics) (J621 J121)
January 2010 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a*	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	u
B603	Raw	48	42	37	32	27	22	17	13	9	0
	UMS	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	0

Specification Aggregation Results

No aggregation was available this January.

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade for this unit was as follows:

	a*	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	u	Total No. of Cands
B603	5.7	16.0	31.7	50.0	67.1	80.6	89.0	94.7	100	11476

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
<http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums/index.html>

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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