

# **Religious Studies C**

General Certificate of Secondary Education **GCSE J622**

Religion and Belief in Today's World (Pilot)

## **Reports on the Components**

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**June 2010**

**J622/R/10**

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

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# B611

## General Comments

Overall the candidates performed satisfactorily on this question paper. No particular question or section of a question appears to have been avoided by candidates.

The (a) and (b) parts of the question paper were accessible with the majority of candidates distinguishing appropriately between 'describe' and 'explain' focused questions; less able candidates tended to produce descriptive answers regardless of the command word used.

The (c) part of the questions produced the expected differentiation between candidates, allowing candidates of all abilities to attempt this part of the question and thereby gaining some marks. The absence of the requirement to refer to a specified religion (due to the structure of the specification) proved advantageous to less able candidates, since any appropriately applied religious/philosophical view was credited. More able candidates benefitted from the breadth of material available across the specification and were able to apply this material across the questions (for example, New Religious Movements (NRMs) information was applied by many candidates in all parts, not just part (c)).

In spite of the small entry size the full range of ability was seen.

## Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Many candidates focused on education for this question, which was creditable, although some less able candidates failed to make any clear links between education and the law which limited the marks available. The best answers discussed the structure of the constitution (Britain, and the USA were the popular choices of country) and then exemplified the links between this and religion. A negative take on the question ('religious belief is not an influence on the law because...') was not seen as often as expected but was present; in general candidates taking this approach lacked detail and depth in their answers. Very few candidates misread the question and gave information on both countries studied.
- 1 (b) This was generally a poorly answered question - candidates were possibly confused about what they were being asked for. Answers tended to be very general responses about human rights and the freedom to choose religious belief, with some candidates continuing the education theme from part (a) and citing the freedom to study or not study religion at school.
- 1 (c) The majority of candidates strongly disagreed with the statement and argued their point of view well. Fewer candidates were able to offer an alternative viewpoint, or to fully justify a religious attitude to the issue – the question differentiated well.
- 2 Probably the least popular question on the paper, although candidates who opted for it generally performed well.
- 2 (a) The majority of responses tended to focus on religious dress and the wearing of religious symbols - probably because this has been topical in the news recently. Public prayer was also a common example. Candidates tended to focus on the UK for their examples although this was not required.

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- 2 (b) The weakest section in general - answers tended to be descriptive, along the lines of which jobs religious people might choose to avoid but lacking the reasons why they would do so. Answers tended to be very general without religious specific examples.
- 2 (c) This was generally very well answered. Candidates tended to have strong views as to what is important in a marriage and were able to empathise well with how religious believers may feel on the issue. The very best responses seen used two or more different religious views to highlight the differing priorities in relation to marriage, but candidates were able to achieve well, with fewer religious viewpoints, by demonstrating insight into differing secular views.
- 3 The most popular question - every candidate seemed to have chosen this topic and to have engaged well with the material.
- 3 (a) Generally very well done; a majority of candidates had studied Rastafari and one other NRM and were able to demonstrate not only knowledge but insight into the growing appeal of Rastafari in the modern world. Not all answers were evenly balanced between two NRMs, but this was not required for the higher levels, provided two were dealt with. Lower ability candidates showed a tendency to conflate the two NRMs they had studied, but did include accurate information which was creditable.
- 3 (b) Many candidates misread the question and answered about both NRMs (possibly because part (a) asked for both?). This, unfortunately, limited the depth of responses. The best responses showed knowledge of key beliefs and insight (sometimes very creative!) into how such a belief might affect an individual. Interesting responses included discussion on Rastafari Dreads and the effects of peer pressure in regard to fashion, and the difficulties of a narcotic sacrament in a secular society which criminalises such substances.
- 3 (c) Again generally strong answers. Almost all candidates discussed Rastafari's origins as a reaction to slavery and racism, and related this well to the question. Some very able candidates discussed the meaning of 'society' in this context. Most candidates engaged well with the issue and justified their arguments well. A surprising number of candidates referred to how interesting they had found the study of NRMs, and linked this back to the statement by suggesting that interest in diversity is a feature of our society and consequently being different is no longer a form of rejection.

## B613

### General Comments

It was most encouraging to see candidates of all abilities engaging with the material and accessing the questions, at a level commensurate with their ability. Candidates and teachers alike seem to have relished the breadth of the specification, and centres are to be commended for the way they have prepared their candidates.

It was encouraging to see centres addressing the material through the different faiths in the component, but also to see candidates sometimes using a wider range of faiths and belief systems which they had clearly been taught elsewhere in the specification.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) This question could be understood either in a 'technical' sense as referring to monastic practices or more generally. The vast majority of candidates understood it in the latter sense. Some focused on interpretations of faith/scripture - for example, liberal/conservative/literalist approaches to the bible. Such approaches were creditworthy.
- 1 (b) Some candidates clearly did not know what asceticism was, although it is in the specification.
- 1 (c) Most candidates disagreed with the quotation, and were able to produce decent arguments against it. Some very able candidates recognised that faith does not deal in certainties and that there is, inevitably and properly, an agnostic element to religious belief.
- 2 (a) Some candidates understood this in terms of medical research into, for example, the use of stem cells and this was creditworthy. Where the question was interpreted as concerned with cosmology and the origins of life, despite the steer of 'different' beliefs, this was one question where it was evident that most candidates seem to think that literalism with regard to scripture is the default religious position and that religion and science are implacably opposed. Few, if any, recognised that the common idea of a universe, that is rational and not random, has a long history and that religion historically motivated scientific research.
- 2 (b) Some focused on 'why' as meaning 'what is it that constitutes being a fundamentalist?' rather than on motivation. This was a legitimate interpretation and creditworthy according to the level at which it was done. Candidates who did focus on motivation rightly identified a response to and rejection of modernity in science and ethics as a key motivation for fundamentalism in its various forms.
- 2 (c) Again, the view that 'religion thinks that science is wrong' appeared to dominate. Few candidates identified common ground.
- 3 (a) There was some tendency to conflate arranged and forced marriage, although the distinction between them is in the specification.

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- 3 (b)** Most candidates suggested having a secure background and having sources of moral authority as means of support. A few suggested that religious beliefs might exacerbate the problems young people might face.
- 3 (c)** It was encouraging to see a number of candidates of all abilities suggesting that it is never as simple as choosing a religion, but a matter of negotiating one's upbringing with one's own convictions. Even those of limited ability seemed to be able to engage with this issue at a more than simplistic level.

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