

**Religious Studies C  
Religion and Belief in Today's World (Pilot)**

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J622**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (short course) **J122**

**Examiners' Reports**

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**June 2011**

**J622/R/11**

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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 Religion and Belief in the Modern World

### General Comments

Overall the candidates performed well, demonstrating differentiation at all levels of ability. The new and unique nature of the specification was reflected in the engagement of the candidates with the paper and many candidates right across the ability range showed evidence of having been carefully and thoroughly prepared. Many candidates demonstrated real creativity and insight in the ways in which they responded to questions.

The c) sections of the questions have produced the expected differentiation. Candidates of all abilities attempted all sections and gained marks. Differentiation is achieved at the highest levels through skills. Although range and breadth of knowledge is helpful, it is the ability to shape that knowledge to the issues raised which distinguishes the most able candidates. The assessment objectives require the ability to explain and analyse with knowledge and understanding and therefore, the candidates who were able to apply their knowledge to the specific question asked, and analyse this knowledge, did best. The best candidates were able to develop beyond knowledge and understanding, by offering personal insights or criticisms of viewpoints, highlighting inconsistencies in thinking or demonstrating differences within a specific viewpoint. The willingness of candidates to engage in a discursive fashion with these questions demonstrates the contemporary and relevant nature of the issues reflected in this specification, and fewer candidates resorted to simple description of views on either side of the question as a result. Almost all candidates gained some of the available marks in these sections. Level four part c) answers contained an impressive breadth of knowledge and/or a sophistication of analysis which requires practice and experience as well as detailed knowledge of the specification content.

Many candidates also demonstrated 'joined up thinking' in the way in which they utilised material drawn from one section of the paper to answer a different question, such as using the new religious movements from Key Area 3 to provide alternative viewpoints in the part c) questions. Some candidates even drew on content from other papers in the specification to good effect, demonstrating high level thinking skills.

### Question 1

- a) Most candidates engaged well with this question. Despite the instructions stating that two countries were required, a few candidates only offered material from one. Most candidates had selected the United Kingdom as one of their countries and showed a good range of knowledge about the connections between religion and the state. Some candidates presented, by comparison, a simplistic view of state secularisation in France or the USA. However, the highest level responses described how religion is at work 'behind the scenes' or how aggressive secularisation can affect religious voters, providing a creative and insightful second point of view.
- b) Candidates found this a more challenging question than part a) but the majority were able to explain the status of Religious Education as an academic subject in their country of choice, and some talked about the role and status of faith schools. A minority of students focused on how having a personal faith might impact on the education of a child in a secular school system, an answer which was unusual and creative, but creditable within the scope of the question.
- c) Students of all abilities engaged well and enthusiastically with this question. There was a variety of approaches taken, all of which demonstrated engagement and knowledge – a large number of candidates drew on their personal experiences with the requirements of

the specification to demonstrate the importance of religious education in developing awareness of the world around us, and the current issues within it. Others argued convincingly that it was interesting as an option but should not be compulsory. The highest level responses focused on the distinction between Religious Instruction in a specific faith and the academic study of religion, or talked about the need to understand the dominant religious tradition of a country as a means of understanding its culture.

## **Question 2**

- a) A small number of candidates were confused by the reference to travellers in this question, some thinking it referred to travellers within the UK and the prejudices that may be held against them. Other responses considered religious laws as a factor in deciding to emigrate. The most popular countries chosen to exemplify laws relating to religion were Saudi Arabia, because of its laws relating to women, and France because of its laws on the wearing of religious dress. Most candidates were able to show how these laws could impact on a traveller. Fewer candidates referred to religious practices although some good responses talked in general terms about giving offence through ignorance and the potential consequences this might have. Almost all candidates focused on the potential negatives of religion in relation to travel, in the form of restrictions or obligations imposed by a religious view which is not yours.
- b) Candidates achieved well with this question, almost all were aware of the difference between forced and arranged marriage, and some responses focused almost entirely on this. This was creditable, although some candidates lost sight of the original question. One original response considered that it was better to engage in an arranged marriage, where your choices were considered, than ignore tradition altogether and risk being forced in the end. Some responses drew on cultural traditions and practical matters like time and opportunities for meeting people and linked this in with religious beliefs about marriage.
- c) Some candidates focused on belonging to a religion, rather than engaging in religious practices which restricted the scope of their discussion somewhat. However, many candidates drew on wider examples such as the right to celebrate religious festivals, meet dietary requirements or they drew on material from Key Area 1 about wearing religious symbols. Some good responses talked about the right of a non-believer to participate in a religious ceremony for the experience versus the right of the religious congregation to set its own rules. Reference to specific human rights provision was limited in general but it was not required by the question; candidates tended to incorporate an implicit definition of human rights as basic freedoms into their discussion and this was successful.

## **Question 3**

- a) Most candidates approached this question by identifying a teaching and then considering how it might affect interactions between believers and non-believers. Jehovah's Witnesses and Rastafari were popular choices for this question and resulted in good responses.
- b) Some candidates had difficulty with this question, and instead of describing the history of the movement tried to examine how believers relate to the modern world. Better responses either gave succinct accounts of the establishment of the movement and the methods of proselytisation employed by its founder and subsequent followers, or they focused on an element of belief or practice which had particular appeal and considered why this might be so.
- c) Candidates dealt very well with this question, with most exploring in some depth the elements which they deemed necessary to a religion and then examining whether exemplar New Religious Movements fitted that mould. Some high level responses considered who has the right to decide whether or not something is a religion.

## B612 Religion, Politics and Culture in Britain

### General Comments

A number of responses were too general and did not refer specifically to the particular points being asked or in the question.

The highest level responses were found in the c) part of the questions, though the depth and analysis needed for candidates to achieve the highest level were sometimes lacking.

There were few rubric errors and candidates seemed to use the allocated time appropriately.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### Question 1

- a) Very general responses were seen which would have benefited from some more specific examples and greater clarity in the examples chosen.
- b) Many responses were superficial, lacking in detail, whilst some candidate responses concentrated more on Europe than on Britain.
- c) The most common reference was to Stonehenge, with many candidates not moving beyond this example. Higher level responses tended to engage with the question by referring to more than one example and how these sites might still affect the lives of people living today.

#### Question 2

- a) Most responses were general, mentioning the link between the Monarch's role as Head of State and of the Church of England, whilst also mentioning that some Bishops sat in the House of Lords, but not going beyond this.
- b) Some candidates looked at how Christians might support democracy rather than how its beliefs (eg in equality and the importance of each individual) can support democracy.
- c) Lower level responses tended to discuss the issue from the angle that if you do not want to be offended, then do not watch the film/play. Higher level responses tended to look at the complications which might arise in a multi-faith society, whilst others raised the point that something which offends one believer, might not offend another. Some candidates also referred to the relevance of the issue in a "secular" society.

#### Question 3

- a) Many candidates concentrated upon the effect on the variety of food and music and little else, while higher level responses also tended to refer to the transformation of Britain into a multi-faith/cultural society.
- b) Some responses seemed to confuse a religious organisation with a charity, with a number of candidates referring to Amnesty International, Oxfam or other charitable organisations.
- c) This question produced some very interesting and diverse responses with many candidates suggesting that faith schools failed to consider other faiths. Other responses argued that faith schools offered a safe haven for pupils who might possibly be bullied for their faith, whilst others discussed the possible problems of faith schools within a multi-faith society. Some candidates also referred to the problems between faith and secular views.

# B613 Religion and Belief in Today's World: The Individual

## General Comments

Centres are to be commended for the imaginative, creative and thoughtful way they have prepared their candidates. Many candidates right across the ability range showed evidence of having been carefully and thoroughly prepared for the paper, and there was a real willingness on the part of candidates to engage with some difficult and pressing contemporary issues.

There were some excellent responses in the part c) questions, often showing real engagement with the issues. Some very well informed and prepared candidates, however, were less able to shape the material to address the issues raised in the part c questions. In the very best responses, the clear evidence of personal engagement was to be found in a real willingness to get 'under the skin' of the issue raised in the question.

## Question 1

- a) Most candidates had knowledge and understanding of what religious symbols are; however, even the best informed candidates tended to focus to some extent on how symbols are used rather than why. Many, although not all, responses were on Christianity.
- b) Some candidates seemed to not know what 'revealed truth' means. Many responses focused on the idea of revelation through sacred texts, and this is a legitimate interpretation; however, revelation is much broader than this. The majority of responses were on Christianity and Islam.
- c) Some candidates did not seem to be aware of the meaning of 'ethical issues,' and instead wrote generally about the relevance of religious ideas in the modern world. These were creditworthy to the extent that they addressed the ethical issues. Amongst those who did directly address the ethical issues, some focused on particular issues, often those raised by technological developments (IVF, euthanasia and the like), whilst some wrote more generally.

## Question 2

- a) Many candidates at all levels produced well-informed answers to this question. The majority of responses were on Christianity. Significant numbers of candidates either thought that reincarnation is a Christian belief or confused reincarnation with resurrection. Amongst the few responses on Buddhism, there was little awareness of the idea of anatta and so the core belief is rebirth not reincarnation.
- b) Some responses focused on inter-faith communication as a tool for proselytizing, and some identified evangelism in Christianity with proselytizing. Some candidates recognised the significance of dialogue with one another in a number of faiths, however, many responses were somewhat general and focused on the issue of mutual understanding, but without much engagement with the tensions inherent in the process of arriving at such understanding.
- c) This was well-answered by all. It was impressive to see many candidates distinguishing between different types of fundamentalism, for example, between a literalist view of scripture, a view of truth as possessed all at once, and degrees of conservatism with respect to religious practice. Some made the point that the identification of fundamentalism and violent extremism which is almost ubiquitous in the media is a very

limited view, citing the idea that it is possible to regard the Amish as fundamentalists. Some were even aware of the origin of the term 'fundamentalism' in early the 20<sup>th</sup> century Protestant movement to return to the 'fundamentals' of faith and scripture, not necessarily in a literalist fashion.

**Question 3**

- a) Many responses were fairly general, and many focused on religious practices (arranged marriage, festivals etc) rather than beliefs; this was acceptable, however, insofar as these practices arise from beliefs. The general answers focused on possible bullying in school.
- b) Some responses focused on support and the community gathering round. Most candidates assumed that faith is a matter of personal choice, very much a view of post-Enlightenment thought, rather than of belonging to a community of belief. Some focused on communities which shun or expel those who lose their faith.
- c) Many candidates disagreed with the quotation, arguing that people often turn to religious beliefs or to institutional religion in a crisis. Here, there was some awareness of religion having a representative role in a crisis for a community or society. Some distinguished between practical help and moral or spiritual support. Some candidates suggested that religious belief can itself be the source of conflict or crisis.



## B614 Community Cohesion and the Individual

### General Comments

There was some good subject specific knowledge demonstrated in the responses. Some responses were limited in their choice of religions/secular philosophies, and this was reflected in the use of some less appropriate examples in responses.

The majority of responses were answered from the perspective of a variety of Christian denominations, although there was evidence of confusion between these different denominations and, of not being able to distinguish the different groups accurately. Some responses were from different Muslim divisions, although there was some confusion between religious and cultural behaviours. A number of general 'humanist' responses were also evident; in most cases these were not specific to any particular group.

### Question 1

- a) General answers on the sanctity of life were most common, with some development.
- b) Responses demonstrated some understanding of a variety of attitudes in the perspective chosen, although some candidates failed to distinguish between religious and cultural attitudes.
- c) Good evaluation was evident in a number of responses which addressed the issue of life being a gift to be valued. Those responses which considered only a part of the quotation gained fewer marks. Some excellent attempts to consider the nature of the 'gift', and to relate this to the way in which it should be valued, were seen.

### Question 2

- a) Generally all responses related this to the concept of stewardship from the perspective they chose.
- b) There was a variety of responses to this question with some candidates considering human cloning, and others looking at the issue of cloning animals. Most candidates were able to answer well from one perspective, but some struggled with a second..
- c) As in question 1c) some responses engaged with the full quotation whilst others considered only a part of it. Many candidates considered a Humanist response to the issues here, and were able to use some relevant information. Others used a Christian response.

### Question 3

Fewer candidates attempted this question.

- a) Many responded with a consideration of actions in this life which would affect reward in the next. Some Christian responses related relevant parables such as Matthew 25.
- b) Candidates struggled to answer this question in any depth, with little understanding of the nature of 'duty' in the perspectives they chose.
- c) Many responses argued from the point of view that believers were no different from non-believers and that everyone has a responsibility for what happens in the world.

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