



GCSE

Religious Studies (Short course)

8061/4 Paper 4: Judaism

Report on the examination

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General comments

It was evident that many students were well-prepared for this short course examination with the best demonstrating a coherent and wide-ranging knowledge of Judaism. They were able to use specialist terminology to good effect, and some students were able to support question 01.4 with quotations and appropriate sources of authority to enable the fifth mark to be attained. However, there were still several examples where there was no reference to a source of authority, or where students simply gave a quotation without the source.

The paper tested specific knowledge of concepts, using specialist terminology used in the specification and requiring answers focused on these concepts. Some students did this well, but some did not understand the concept and therefore either did not attempt an answer, or wrote a confused or entirely incorrect answer. Centres are advised to encourage students to unpack questions carefully in order to sharply focus on what the question is asking. All aspects of the specification should be taught to a consistent high level with the intention that students understand all terminology and concepts covered in a question.

Some of the evaluative responses in question 01.5 were well articulated and even answers attaining lower marks demonstrated some knowledge and understanding of the Jewish religion in their responses even if these were not overly detailed or in depth.

Question 01.1

A vast majority of students achieved the mark for this question.

Question 01.2

This question asked for Jewish beliefs on life after death. It was answered successfully with many students achieving at least one mark and a large proportion, the full two marks. Some students listed more than two beliefs and centres are reminded that only the first two are accepted.

Question 01.3

This was answered reasonably well with over half of the students achieving full marks. The question was asking for two ways in which belief in the key moral principle of healing the world influences Jews today. Several students were able to explain that healing the world is a human duty showing respect to God's creation and explaining how this influences Jews to look after the environment and show stewardship. Many of the answers reflected how healing the world brings people closer to God and that this is achieved by their right thoughts and actions. Some of the better responses were able to link this with today's climate crisis and some also drew on the belief that by healing the world it can bring the Messianic Age closer. Some of the of students only achieved 2 marks, which was largely due to repetition of the original point or a lack of detail to explain the two different points that had been made.

Question 01.4

Students found this question more challenging with lower numbers of students achieving full marks. The better responses were able to demonstrate how the belief that life created by God is holy and is therefore precious and should be respected, not abused. Many of the references were made to the creation stories in Genesis 1 or 2. There were several responses that drew on the belief of Pikuach Nefesh and the obligation to save a life even if this breaks Jewish Law, Some of the less successful responses were able to state that life is sacred or God given, but not give detail to the point being made. Around 14% of students were not able to attempt the question and 9% seemingly misunderstood the question that was being asked.

Question 01.5

Many struggled with this question and 14% of students did not even attempt it. 17% of the students were only able to achieve a Level 1 as they had only made a simple point with a reason, or they had misunderstood the question.

However, 28% of the responses achieved Level 3 with marks ranging from 7-9. These answers were able to explain how the Shekhinah refers to the divine presence of God on Earth and how this was demonstrated in manifestations. There were successful examples given of the presence of God in Solomon's Temple which replaced the tabernacle, also through prayer and drawing on the Talmud where it states that when 10 or more adult men are together, God is present (minyan). There were several responses that also used examples from the account of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden or the pillar of fire or cloud during the Exodus.

Only 4% of students were able to demonstrate a Level 4. They provided a well-argued and reasoned response of different points of view with a sound judgement on the significance of the Shekhinah in describing God, demonstrating views such as the unity of God. This was not done successfully by many, as they found supporting other views quite challenging.

SPAG

It should be noted that in addition to spelling and grammar, this takes into account correct use of specialist terms. This limited the mark of many of the students because they struggled with the meanings of these terms. There were however many examples of students displaying excellent accuracy and fluency in their writing along with good knowledge of the specialist terms that they used.

Anecdotally, there were not quite as many scripts as last year where the quality of handwriting was poor. This is an improvement and a step in the right direction. While every attempt is made to decipher what is written, centres are encouraged to continue the support and further practice in creating improvement in this area.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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