



A Level

# **Religious Studies**

7062/2B Study of Religion and Dialogues: Christianity

## Report on the examination

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## General comments

All questions were marked with direct reference to the published Level Descriptors for AO1 and AO2.

This paper was a very accessible, and almost all students were able to write some creditable material for all questions. There were some very accomplished scripts for this paper, and some outstanding individual answers. Students demonstrated AO1 knowledge and understanding of topics generally comparable to previous years. Most were able to discuss alternative views for AO2 answers, and to draw on different sections of the specification for dialogues answers.

For A Level AO1 answers, the trigger 'examine' requires students to show accurate, relevant and developed knowledge and understanding. Those who merely outlined a belief or concept were unlikely to progress beyond Level 3 at best.

For AO2 answers, the quality of critical analysis contributes to the level of response achieved. For a discussion to be 'perceptive', students needed to be able to consider the implications of, and objections to, the ideas they offered to support or reject the statement in the question.

For AO2 and dialogues answers, some students believe that critical analysis can be achieved by adding on to each paragraph "This is a weak/ strong argument...". Where this led to genuine critical analysis, it was, of course, credited. However, some students who used this formulaic approach did not understand that there needed to be some meaningful reflection on the evidence or argument presented, in the context of a dialogue between alternative viewpoints. Simply saying 'this is a weak argument because some people disagree with it' is not critical analysis.

In order to reach the higher levels for the AO1 element in dialogues essays, students needed to show accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of both philosophy or ethics and Christianity; less successful answers were sometimes lacking development in one of the two. Answers to dialogues questions were, in general, more accomplished than single assessment objective answers by the same student. Dialogues essays were, in general, more likely to show evidence of planning, and were structured more coherently.

There were many examples this year of students choosing to answer questions in a different order to the exam paper. This is wholly acceptable and allows students to navigate through the exam in a way that accommodates their own particular strengths and needs. It has no effect on the way marks are awarded.

A small number of word-processed scripts showed evidence of some artificial intelligence generated content. These were always referred to AQA's irregularities team.

### 01.1 Examine the meaning and significance of the belief that Jesus is the son of God. [10 marks]

Almost all students were able to write some creditable material. The best students described both the meaning of the belief and its significance. Many pointed to the Trinity and provided a range of biblical references including Jesus' baptism and sayings to elucidate the meaning. They discussed atonement and Jesus as role model and source of authority to highlight the significance of the belief. Less successful answers were very general and often lacked development. A surprising number of students misunderstood 'meaning and significance' and discussed instead why the belief is 'meaningful and significant', as a single idea. Many of these answers were limited to the cap at Level 2 for answers that did not address both aspects of the question.

### 01.2 'Christians can only be sure of justification by works.' Evaluate this claim. [15 marks]

The majority of students understood the topic of the question and were able to offer as alternative views one or more of justification by faith, justification by faith and works, and predestination. Fewer addressed the 'be sure of' aspect of the question, but those who did produced focused, reasoned arguments that showed perceptive discussion with reference to biblical texts, Luther, Calvin and other scholars. Less successful answers tended merely to describe two or more forms of justification, most usually works (e.g., Parable of the Sheep and the Goats) and faith (generic references to Luther) with very limited sense of argument between them.

### 02.1 Examine the influence of pluralism on Christian relations with other faiths. [10 marks]

Most students could describe pluralism and set it in the context of inclusivist and exclusivist views of other faiths. There were some excellent answers which considered how pluralism influences specific examples of relations with other faiths, for example, conflict, vandalism of religious buildings, dialogue, working together and sharing facilities. The majority of students described how exclusivism and inclusivism lead to particular views about other faiths but did not go beyond that to discuss relations with other faith communities. These answers were mostly 'generally accurate and relevant' (Level 3), but fell short of Level 4 'accurate, mostly relevant with good development'. Some students did not address the focus on influence, and merely outlined aspects of inclusivism and exclusivism, which answers were clearly, at best, limited (Level 2). A significant number of answers focused on, or referred to, relations with other churches, which was not relevant to the question and therefore not creditable.

### 02.2 'Christianity is no longer a source of truth and moral values.' Evaluate this claim. [15 marks]

The best answers considered truth and moral values as separate issues, and after discussing a range of evidence, often reached quite nuanced evaluations, for example that Christianity is

not a source of scientific truth but remains a source of existential truth for believers. These answers drew on a range of scholars, biblical material, ethical and philosophical concepts, and occasionally current affairs. The majority of answers applied 'truth and moral values' as a single idea, with some vague differentiation when referring to ethics, but where this was done with good critical analysis, students were still able to achieve the higher levels. Almost all students offered alternative views, many with reference to Dawkins and McGrath, and so were able to achieve at least Level 3.

### **03.1 'Philosophy cannot support belief in religious sources of authority.' Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Christianity and philosophy. [25 marks]**

This was the more popular of the Philosophy dialogue options, chosen by a little under two-thirds of students.

AO1 element: There were plenty of excellent answers which considered specific sources of authority, examined philosophical challenges to those sources, and evaluated Christianity's responses. Such students drew on a very wide range of scholars and material they had studied. Less successful answers were less focused on specific sources of authority, and many only considered the authority of God, focusing mainly or wholly on arguments for the existence of God. It is notable that few discussed the authority of the Church, which is prescribed for study in the specification.

AO2 element: Most answers included two different views, even those which drew on limited knowledge and understanding. The majority made an evaluation, either at the start or at the end of the essay. The best answers showed excellent critical analysis, setting beliefs about Christian sources of authority and the views of different philosophers in perceptive discussion with one another. This kind of argument usually led to a wholly appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented. A few answers offered only one view, with limited evidence or argument to support the student's opinion, and such answers were limited to level 2.

### **04.1 'Christianity should reject the truth claims of other religions.' Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Christianity and philosophy. [25 marks]**

This was the less popular of the Philosophy dialogue options, chosen by a little over one-third of students.

AO1 element: The best answers understood clearly the concept of 'truth claims' and considered specific truth claims from particular religions to illustrate the discussion. They drew on biblical material and church teachings to represent Christianity, and made links with discussions about religious language, referencing a range of philosophers and theologians. Less successful answers either focused on religious language generally, or on rejecting the beliefs of other religions generally. Some answers more or less reworked the content of their answer to 02.1, missing out any focus on truth claims, and these answers were, at best, limited (Level 2).

AO2 element: Most answers included different views, even those which drew on limited knowledge and understanding. The majority made an evaluation, either at the start or at the end of the essay. The best answers showed excellent critical analysis, setting views derived from a wide range of scholars in perceptive discussion with one another and with Christian views about other faiths', and their own, truth claims. This kind of argument usually led to an appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented. A few answers offered only one view, with limited evidence or argument to support the student's opinion, and such answers were limited to level 2. The less successful evaluations were sometimes little more than partially reasoned opinion.

### 05.1 'The conscience is the best guide for Christians to make decisions about embryo research.' Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Christianity and ethical studies. [25 marks]

This was the less popular of the Ethics dialogue options, chosen by a little over one-third of students.

AO1 element: The majority of students were able to discuss at least one understanding of conscience, and ways that Christians might make ethical decisions, often with reference to situation ethics, natural moral law or divine command theory. The best answers considered religious and non-religious understandings of conscience and the weaknesses thereof, and often referred to church teachings, specific biblical material and detailed analysis of ethical theories. They applied these to specific issues with embryo research, including the creation and destruction of life, interference with God's plan, and the possibility of harm. Less successful answers were frequently limited to a more or less generic concept of conscience and/ or a superficial use of biblical texts. It should be noted that although this is not a science subject, students were expected to know what embryo research is. Less successful answers sometimes confused embryo research with IVF, designer babies or cloning, such that their answers showed limited relevance to the question.

AO2 element: Most answers included different views, even those which drew on limited knowledge and understanding. The majority made an evaluation, either at the start or at the end of the essay. The best answers showed excellent critical analysis, setting views derived from a range of Christian approaches to moral decision making in perceptive discussion with different understandings of conscience. The strongest responses focused well on whether or not, or how far, the conscience offers clear guidance for Christians concerning embryo research. This kind of argument usually led to a wholly appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented. A few answers offered only one view, with limited evidence or argument to support the student's opinion, and such answers were limited to level 2.

## 06.1 'Neither Christianity nor ethical theories deal effectively with issues of animal life and death.' Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Christianity and ethical studies. [25 marks]

This was the more popular of the Ethics dialogue options, chosen by a little under two-thirds of students. Animal topics are always popular.

AO1 element: There was a wide range of different approaches to this question. Ethical theories referenced included natural moral law and situation ethics, both Christian, as well as virtue ethics, utilitarianism and Kant. There was sometimes a lack of clear focus on the question where the only ethical theories considered were Christian ones. Most answers also referenced the concepts of dominion and stewardship. The best answers considered one or more Christian approaches and one or more non-religious ethical theories and evaluated whether they are effective when dealing with specific issues of animal life and death, including using for food, xenotransplantation, blood sports and medical research. Less successful answers sometimes did not unpack 'issues of animal life and death' and did not address whether or not, and how far, Christianity and ethical theories were effective.

AO2 element: Most answers included two different views, even those which drew on limited knowledge and understanding. The majority made an evaluation, either at the start or at the end of the essay. The best answers showed excellent critical analysis, using a good understanding of different ethical approaches and Christian teaching critically to analyse how effectively they can be applied to specific issues concerned with animal life and death. This kind of argument usually led to a wholly appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented. A few answers offered only one view, often with limited evidence or argument to support the student's opinion, or did not offer a coherent evaluation, and such answers were limited to level 2. Less successful evaluations were sometimes little more than partially reasoned opinion.

## Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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