



GCSE

Religious Studies B

8063/2A Perspectives on faith (themes)

Report on the examination

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General comments

Overall, most students seemed to find the paper accessible, and the range of question demand and level of response were comparable to previous series. Theme A remained the most popular choice, with Theme B narrowly surpassing Theme C in popularity this time. Nevertheless, a number of students still attempted all three themes, which limited the time available for each and often led to incomplete, underdeveloped or superficial answers. Centres may wish to highlight the drawbacks of this approach, particularly its negative impact on AO2 performance. Additionally, a number of students completed the first four questions of all three themes but did not attempt any AO2 questions, indicating a lack of familiarity with the paper's rubric despite the clear instructions provided on the front page of the exam. It was however noticeable that a proportion of students were unfamiliar with various key terms which are on the specification and defined in the AQA list of subject specific key vocabulary, such as cohabitation and non-violent resistance. This caused an issue for these students who were therefore often unable to provide accurate, related answers. Centres may wish to draw attention to the key vocabulary lists for students and ensure that students are using these lists, for example in their revision.

Furthermore, we continue to see a number of students who did not name the source of quotes or teachings they use in 5-mark questions. On occasion some students placed the source as a floating statement in isolation above or below their answer, which therefore did not support or relate to the point made so could not be credited. Centres may wish to remind themselves and their students of the AQA guidance on 5-mark responses and the need for an integrated source which supports the specific point made in relation to the question. In previous years we have also seen excellent use of sources such as Youcat and Papal encyclicals, but this year we noted less variety, which may have impacted students as it was evident some struggled to identify relevant sources for the question and point made. It was also notable that there seemed to be less clear reference to religion or religious references applied to the issues in AO2 questions this year.

Question based comments

Theme A: Religion, relationships and families

1.1

Answered correctly by over 97% of students who attempted this question.

1.2

Although answered successfully by the majority, some students did not provide specific *ways* in which *gender* discrimination might take place in daily life. We occasionally saw answers referring to locations where discrimination might occur, prejudice rather than discrimination, and general reference to discrimination which could apply to other forms and was not explicitly related to gender, which therefore could not be credited. Successful answers tended to refer to things such as: sexual harassment, unequal pay between men and women for the

same role, the pink tax, women being overlooked for certain or promotion in favour of men, and less coverage on women's sports compared to men, etc.

1.3

The majority of responses successfully addressed the specific question focus, however on occasion responses addressed homosexuality more generally and did not relate their points to the context of same-sex marriage. Additionally, many portrayals of Catholic views were either inaccurate or incorrect and could not be credited. Successful responses focused on the context of marriage and were able to provide a contrasting viewpoint from a non-religious perspective or from another religious tradition.

1.4

Many students were able to identify at least one valid reason why the Catholic Church teaches that the use of artificial contraception is wrong. However, some responses referred to extra-marital sex and sex before marriage without linking to the question. Some students also mistakenly referred to IVF instead, or abortion without linking to forms of contraception that can be abortifacient, so could not be credited. On occasion responses inaccurately stated that procreation was the *only* purpose of sex. Successful responses however tended to refer to points regarding artificial contraception being a barrier to the procreative and unitive nature of sex, breaking the marriage vows, being contrary to God's plan, and natural family planning as an alternative. Many successful sources included reference to Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 2:24.

1.5

Of the AO2 questions in the paper, this question achieved the strongest responses. However, it also had the most 'not attempted' statistics across the paper, despite Theme A being the most popular theme. I suspect this was due to some students not understanding what cohabitation means. Some responses referred to student house shares or renting in a HMO (house of multiple occupancy), which couldn't be credited. On occasion, students mistook cohabitation for multiculturalism. Despite this, many responses successfully identified different Christian and non-religious viewpoints, and engaged with the question well, particularly with reference to *today* and how societal views have changed over time. Stronger responses tended to include insightful arguments such as the increase in divorce rates and the benefit of getting to know someone by living with them prior to marriage, and the comparable ease with which a relationship can be ended without the complexities of divorce. Also, the need for cohabitation for couples who for a variety of reasons including being same-sex or separated from spouses, are not able to be married, etc. Many responses were also able to refer to Christian views regarding the importance of marriage, the marriage vows, and catholic views on its sacramental nature and the stability it provides for children.

Theme B: Religion, peace and conflict

2.1

Answered correctly by over 89% of all who attempted this question.

2.2

Whilst the majority of students were successful in writing something of credit, as with 1.2, on occasion some students did not give *ways* in which Christians have been involved in non-violent resistance, instead giving examples of individuals such as Martin Luther King or Gandhi which could not be credited.

2.3

This was answered quite successfully by most students, however the question referred to the *possession* of weapons of mass destruction. Responses that referred only to their *use* and did not refer to or link points clearly to possession were not able to achieve full marks. Many however were able to identify contrasting perspectives, with successful inclusion of views relating to nuclear deterrence and the concept of mutually assured destruction.

2.4 This was the least successfully answered of the five-mark questions across the paper, although this is similar to the previous years' outcome for the same item. More successful responses addressed the focus of the precise question, on Christian beliefs about 'the importance' of justice, whereas less successful responses seemed to struggle and wrote about other topics such as forgiveness, righteous anger, charity or criminal punishment without linking to the question. Successful responses were often able to identify relevant sources to support their points such as Amos 5:24 and Mark 12:31.

2.5 Across the paper this question received the second highest number of 'not attempted' despite being the second most popular theme. However, of those that did attempt it, there were a number of successful responses achieving Level 3 and higher. Many responses were able to provide different views and to varying degrees, general evaluation of Just War Theory. More successful responses however demonstrated logical chains of reasoning leading to judgements, regarding whether specific criteria of Just War Theory criteria were still relevant or not, rather than theory as a whole. Insightful arguments such as the changing nature of war from hand-to-hand combat to nuclear weapons and the implication of these were considered, along with the increasingly multi-faith and secular perspectives, and creation of organisations such as the UN, etc.

Theme C: Religion, human rights and social justice

3.1

Answered correctly by over 83% of all who attempted this question, however this question had the highest number of incorrect answers out of all the one-mark questions, with many students incorrectly giving 'prejudice' as the answer.

3.2

This was the most successfully answered two-mark question in the paper, with many students providing relevant teachings such as God creating humans equally in his image, and love your neighbour etc. However, a number of students repeated the same sentiment so could only achieve one mark. For example, by stating love your neighbour and then love each other.

3.3

This question proved to be a good differentiator, as evident in the student responses, where many did not address the specific question, which related to views about *valuing* people based on wealth and possessions. Successful responses focused on the question and gave answers that included points such as, all are equal in the eyes of God so should not be valued based on wealth, etc, in contrast to non-religious views regarding capitalism, meritocracy, or wealth as a reflection of work ethic, etc. Less successful responses focused on the use of wealth and did not link to the specified question.

3.4

This was reasonably well answered, with a number of students achieving marks for relevant points and sources such as Mark 12:3, the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, and the Parable of the Good Samaritan. However, some responses did not address the specific focus of the question which was Christian beliefs about the *duty* to protect the rights of other people, instead describing *how* Christians can help others. Stronger responses for example, referred to beliefs about duty to protect the rights of others such as: obedience of God's laws, carrying out the teachings of Jesus, as a reflection of the Christian belief that all humans are of equal worth, made in the image of God, and should be treated with dignity, etc. In these stronger responses, examples of how Christians protected the rights of others served only as a development to support the point. On occasion some responses referred to criminal punishment and the link back to the question was not clear.

3.5

This question had more attempts from students who selected this theme than the other AO2 questions, and overall, a comparable number to 2.5 were able to achieve Level 3 and higher. Whilst less successful responses tended to just describe the work of CAFOD or Christian Aid and only generally evaluated the benefit of such organisations, stronger responses were able to consider the full dimension of the question, in terms of whether such organisations are *the best chance of ending world poverty*, or not, and why. Many of those responses who achieved Level 3 were able to demonstrate some logical chains regarding different points of view, such as the idea that poverty is too great or that organisations such as CAFOD or Christian Aid have the best resources and intentions, etc. However, those responses which achieved Level 4 were able to demonstrate well-argued logical chains, referring to insightful arguments such as whether organisations like CAFOD or Christian Aid can result in a culture of dependency, whether world poverty is inevitable due to limited resources, changing climates and growing populations, and whether governments or global secular organisations such as the UN are better placed, etc. Compared to other AO2 questions students seemed to struggle more in making clear links to religion, however the stronger responses were able to do, usually by linking teachings of Jesus such as the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats and the Beatitudes to arguments both in support and in support of other views.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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