
GCSE Short Course

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

8061/5 Section B: Thematic Studies
Report on the Examination

8061
November 2020

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General Introduction to the November Series

This has been an unusual exam series in many ways. Entry patterns have been very different from those normally seen in the summer, and students had a very different experience in preparation for these exams. It is therefore more difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the range of student responses seen in this series and those seen in a normal summer series. The smaller entry also means that there is less evidence available for examiners to comment on.

In this report, senior examiners will summarise the performance of students in this series in a way that is as helpful as possible to teachers preparing future cohorts while taking into account the unusual circumstances and limited evidence available.

Overview of Entry

The entry for this qualification was considerably smaller than that expected had the examination taken place on the scheduled date in May 2020. Only about 1% of the original entry were entered for this later date. It is difficult to assess how the standard produced differed from what was expected, based on previous years, but on limited evidence, the standard of work seen may have been slightly higher.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 01.1 The majority of students gave the correct answer (Polygamy).
- 01.2 This question on divorce was well answered by the majority of students who gave two accurate teachings, often focused on abuse within marriage and adultery.
- 01.3 A minority of students made reference to adultery which in the context of sex before marriage was not credited. Several gave incorrect answers such as 'Orthodox Jews don't mind sex before marriage' but most students were able to identify two correct beliefs. Popular amongst them were about sex before marriage being acceptable to some Christians if it is within a loving relationship likely to become a marriage or that most religions forbid it e.g. some Roman Catholics, Muslims, Jews etc, often with reference to potential pregnancy as a further justification.
- 01.4 Too often, answers related to same sex relationships rather than same sex parents. Some credit was given to such answers but many of the best answers also included information about the bringing up of children (both positive and negative effects) and the provision of role models for children.
- 01.5 Most students correctly took this as an opportunity to give differing points of view about gender discrimination. Answers often contrasted ideas about equality with different roles often assigned to men and women and gave religious justifications to enhance their answer. Some students included discrimination against trans-gender people and this was accepted as a valid interpretation of the question. It is pleasing to report that the large majority of answers displayed sensitivity and thoughtfulness about the issue.
- 02.1 Apart from a few students who gave Forgiveness as their answer, the large majority correctly identified Justice as being the right answer.
- 02.2 A well answered question concerning reasons why most religious people oppose terrorism with most earning 2 marks.

- 02.3 Many used the Quakers as an example of people who believe in pacifism. The contrast given was often centred on fighting, usually for a good reason, but not normally presented as being a contrast to pacifism. If detailed, this was permitted for 2 marks.
- 02.4 A noticeable minority wrote more about holy war rather than just war. If they included fighting to defend their faith, this was allowed under the just cause criteria. Otherwise, surprisingly few made clear reference to the just war criteria to explain why some religious people support the theory. Many students did not provide a reference to sacred writings or another source of religious belief.
- 02.5 Many effectively contrasted the destructive effects of weapons of mass destruction with their possession as a deterrent. Some did not appear to understand what weapons of mass destruction are and wrote about weapons in general, including ones that can be carried around. Credit was given for content that can be applied to weapons of mass destruction which in some cases was slight. There were however some good thoughtful answers.

Concluding Remarks

Many students treated this paper as an opportunity to show what they had learned over the course and exhibited good knowledge and understanding throughout and thinking skills in their evaluation. Their knowledge of issues and religious teachings associated with them was evident in many answers.

For this series, in addition to the mark scheme, a general marking guidance document was provided to examiners across GCSE Religious Studies specifications to support marking. This document is available via Secure Key Materials for teachers should they wish to use it to support their marking of mock examinations.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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