



A-level **Religious Studies**

7062/2B Study of religion and dialogues: Christianity

Report on the Examination

7062
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General Comments

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

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 with the exception of 2.1, where many failed to demonstrate any knowledge and understanding. Most were able to discuss alternative views for AO2 answers. A few students seem to have struggled this year with the subject content or focus of some questions, or to understand specification language.

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.

Some students have clearly been taught that critical analysis could be achieved by adding on to each paragraph “This is a weak/ strong argument....” Where this led to genuine critical analysis, this was, of course, credited. However, some students who used this formulaic approach did not understand that there needs 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.

1.1 Examine Christian understandings of judgement.

[10 marks]

Most students were able to address different understandings of judgement. The most accomplished considered a range of differences including sequence of events, spiritual and physical resurrection and judgement and the implications of theological determinism, all with reference to appropriate Biblical evidence, and sometimes mentioning other scholars. A few students completely misunderstood the thrust of the question and focused on whether or not humans should judge others; this is not a topic prescribed for study, and so was not creditable.

For A Level AO1 answers, the trigger ‘examine’ requires students to show accurate, relevant and developed knowledge and understanding. Those who merely outlined two or three understandings were unable to progress beyond Level 3 at best.

1.2 ‘The concept of God in process theology is not really God.’

Evaluate this claim.

[15 marks]

Most students were able to describe some of the characteristics of the God of process theology, and to compare those with the characteristics of the God of classical theism, leading to a concluding evaluation agreeing or disagreeing with the statement. Some students took a view, supported it well with evidence and examples, but then failed to offer an alternative view, which limited their mark to Level 2. The very best answers considered in addition the implications of process theology for the doctrine of Trinity, the authority of Jesus and/or beliefs about judgement to produce a sophisticated and nuanced conclusion.

There were some excellent responses which achieved full marks, but there were a few who seemed unclear about process thought.

As with all AO2 answers, the quality of critical analysis contributes to the level of response achieved. For a discussion to be ‘perceptive,’ students need to be able to consider the implications of, and objections to, the ideas they offer to support or reject the statement in the question.

2.1 Examine how Christian liberationist approaches influence society today. **[10 marks]**

On the whole, this question was not done well. Many students appeared to know little or nothing about liberationist approaches. Others appear to have mis-read or misunderstood the question. Many wrote instead about libertarianism or liberal biblical criticism/ theology, with the result that there was nothing to credit. This specification includes ‘Emphasis on the social relevance of Christianity including liberationist approaches as supporting the poor and defending the oppressed,’ so it is hard to account for a widespread lack of knowledge and understanding of this topic.

Some students were able at least to describe ways that the churches or individual Christians support the poor, and this was credited. Students who were able to describe in general terms some aspects of liberationism and consider their influence on society were able to access up to Level 4. Even students with incomplete knowledge and understanding were able to access Level 5 if they showed clearly how Christians support the poor and challenge oppression in society today. By contrast, some students displayed an impressive knowledge and understanding of liberation theology in different forms well beyond the basic requirements of the specification and reached the maximum marks with ease.

‘There is little agreement among Christians about the ordination of women.’ **Evaluate this claim.** **[15 marks]**

Many students struggled to address the focus of the question, for a variety of reasons. Some did not appear to understand what ordination means, or how it is understood in different denominations. These students mostly focused instead on the status of women in Christianity generally, often largely in a historical context. Others had some knowledge and understanding about ordination, but evidence and examples were applied with a good deal of inaccuracy.

However, the most common cause of problems for students lay in the fact that many considered the contrasting views *Christians think women should be ordained vs Christians think women should not be ordained* or even just *women should be ordained vs women should not be ordained*. This was not the thrust of the question. The best answers correctly considered contrasting views *there is little agreement about ordination vs there is much agreement about ordination*. Examiners were directed to be lenient if students argued for and against the ordination of women, and such answers were capped at Level 3 ‘a general response’, rather than the technically correct Level 2 ‘a point of view relevant to the issue’.

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3.1 ‘Religious sources of authority do not require miracles.’**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 dialogues answers by some way.

AO1 element: Of those students who did choose this question, some drew very effectively on their knowledge and understanding of the sources of authority outlined in the specification, and on the work, they had done on miracles. As a result there were some excellent responses that included a full range of evidence and examples with accurate reference to scholars. Many students were clearly quite comfortable with the content on miracles but struggled to apply this to religious sources of authority. The majority of students referenced both philosophy and Christianity.

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 realist and anti-realist understandings of miracles, and the views of different philosophers, in perceptive discussion with one another and with Christian beliefs about the authority of the Bible, the Church and Jesus. 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. Weaker answers sometimes attempted to insert a formulaic attempt at critical analysis by adding on to each paragraph “This is a weak/ strong argument” with little or no supporting content.

4.1 ‘Science shows that it is not reasonable to believe in God.’**Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Christianity and philosophy.****[25 marks]**

This was by far the more popular of the two Philosophy dialogues questions, chosen by the majority of students. It appears to have been very accessible, and most weaker students were able to include creditable knowledge and understanding, and to offer different views.

AO1 element: There were many excellent responses to this question. The best ones mainly reflected on the role of reason in arguments for the existence of God, and considered a number of challenges from science, with good evidence and examples drawn from a range of scientific disciplines including biology, physics, geology, psychology, and/ or neuroscience. There were some excellent analyses of Polkinhorne’s thought. Weaker answers tended to focus on more or less limited understandings of the Big Bang theory and the theory of Evolution, and how far these show that God does not exist. Such an approach is at best only generally relevant, and therefore most likely to achieve no higher than AO1 Level 3.

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 scientific disciplines in perceptive discussion with one another and with Christian beliefs about God. 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. Weaker answers sometimes attempted to insert a formulaic

attempt at critical analysis by adding on to each paragraph “This is a weak/ strong argument” with little or no supporting content. Weaker evaluations were sometimes little more than partially reasoned opinion, and there were a few instances of lightly informed, anti-religion polemic which offered little credit-worthy content.

5.1 ‘Christian ethics do not deal effectively with issues concerning marriage.’

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Christianity and ethical studies.

[25 marks]

This was marginally the more popular of the two Ethics dialogues questions.

AO1 element: The best answers identified a number of issues concerning marriage, including divorce and remarriage, same-sex marriages and whether celibacy is an acceptable rejection of marriage. Some very strong answers also considered issues of domestic violence. Natural Moral Law and Situation Ethics were most frequently applied to these issues, but some answers also considered the teachings of Jesus, other Biblical material and the teachings of the churches, most notably Roman Catholic teachings. Those answers which did not address specific issues concerning marriage were more limited and often failed to progress beyond Level 3 ‘generally accurate and relevant’. Some students devoted considerable effort to applying Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, but this was not creditable as ‘Christian Ethics.’

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 ethical approaches in perceptive discussion with one another and with evolving social views on marriage, divorce and family life. The strongest responses focused well on how far ethical theories *deal* effectively with the issues. 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. Weaker answers sometimes attempted to insert a formulaic attempt at critical analysis by adding on to each paragraph “This is a weak/ strong argument” with little or no supporting content.

6.1 ‘Kant’s ethics are compatible with Christian ethical teaching.’

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Christianity and ethical studies.

[25 marks]

This was a little less popular as a choice than 5.1, perhaps because the focus on Kant’s ethics appeared more challenging. In general, students responded well to this question.

AO1 element: The best answers showed a clear understanding of Kant’s approach to ethics and were able to clearly explain the implications of the categorical imperative. They then drew on Christian ethical approaches, usually Natural Moral Law and Situation Ethics, to consider compatibility. Some references to Divine Command Theory treated it as a normative ethical theory rather than a meta-ethical approach. A few, mostly very strong responses also examined how far the teachings of Jesus, the Ten Commandments and/ or Church teachings relate to Kant’s ethics. Some students referred to only one Christian ethical theory, most often Natural Moral Law, and thus were less able to reach the higher levels for AO1. Where students had more limited understanding of Kant’s ethics, responses were

correspondingly less accomplished. A few responses discussed how far Kant's ethics are compatible with Aristotelian Virtue ethics or with Utilitarianism; these were not creditable.

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 Christian ethical approaches and the categorical imperative to analyse critically how far Christian teaching is compatible with Kant's ethics. This kind of argument usually led to a wholly appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented. A few answers offered only one view, either wholly in support of the statement, or wholly in disagreement, often with limited evidence or argument to support the student's opinion, and such answers were limited to level 2. Weaker answers sometimes attempted to insert a formulaic attempt at critical analysis by adding on to each paragraph "This is a weak/ strong argument" with little or no supporting content. Weaker 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.