



Religious Studies (Short Course)

8061/5 Paper 5 Thematic Studies

Report on the Examination

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General

Generally, the examination was well received by the large majority of students with some outstanding work at the top end of the mark range.

The slight changes to the format of the question paper (questions 1.3, 1.4, 2.3 and 2.4 being on separate pages) seemed to help students to organise their work more efficiently although for various reasons, some still needed to use the extra space at the end of the booklet to finish their answers. This revised layout to the paper saw a welcome fall in the number of students failing to answer question 2.

Some students still use atheism or humanism in the AO1 questions. Where a question refers to religious beliefs, the only ones acceptable and given credit are Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism and the various different denominations or groups within these six religions. The 12-mark AO2 questions allow for non-religious arguments alongside religious ones but AO1 questions do not.

In a minority of cases, some students were permitted to word process their answers. In these cases, centres must ensure that the three units in this specification ie. two faiths papers and this themes paper are printed on separate sheets of paper for each unit with the unit number and title clearly visible and each submitted with the relevant answer booklet. This makes the scanning of each unit and the online marking process much more efficient and straightforward.

1.1

This question was well answered with more than 90% getting it correct. Clearly the term ‘extended family’ is in common usage in lessons which is pleasing.

1.2

Many students found this question challenging and the proportion gaining the full two marks was less than expected. The term ‘sexuality’ is in the specification, but a large number of students appeared not to be familiar with it. Those that were familiar with the term tended to refer to same gender relationships although a significant number referred to ‘being with’ or ‘spending time with’ members of the same gender and ignoring the sexual element completely. Those less familiar with the term focused more on terms such as adultery, procreation and sex before marriage, none of which were credited.

1.3

A lot of students did not know the meaning of the specification term ‘polygamy’ and therefore failed to gain many marks on this question. Those that knew the term detailed their answer, indicating that one religious view was that it was adulterous, often quoting the Ten Commandments. This was accepted and given credit. However, the contrasting belief required in the question proved more difficult for some. Answers mentioning that polygamy is acceptable in Islam were credited with the ‘detail mark’ being given, for example, for a man treating his up to 4 wives equally and well, by making reference to Muhammad having more than one wife, or the historical situation some war widows found themselves in. It should be remembered that in the context of the question, ‘contrasting’ can be interpreted as ‘different’ and not just ‘opposite’.

1.4

The majority of students had some awareness of the meaning of gender discrimination and were able to pick up marks on this question. A pleasing number were awarded the full five marks, often referring to the quote from the Bible ‘love your neighbour’ for the source mark (mark given for the source and not just the quote). Traditional views of the roles of men and women being seen as discriminatory predominated. There were also good references to the creation story with Eve being made out of the rib of Adam and her being punished for taking the forbidden fruit being a cause of gender discrimination. Different denominations of the Christian Church or Islam having an all-male priesthood was also used.

1.5

Most students had a good attempt at evaluating this statement. Arguments in support included the idea that marriage is too expensive, that marriage is out of date, that fewer people are religious today so have less encouragement to marry and that a piece of paper should not be needed to show a loving relationship with a partner. Avoiding the pain of divorce was also given as an argument in support. Some made reference to same sex marriage not being allowed in some religions and denominations which lessens the importance of marriage. All of these were considered credit worthy.

The different point of view focused mainly on the blessing of God on a marriage in front of others, marriage being the only valid place for a sexual relationship and also the chance to procreate in a relationship with the stability to support children within a family.

Lower-level answers were often quite superficial and/or did not use information and arguments in a reasoned and logical way. As such, they appeared to be fulfilling requirements for AO1 more than AO2. It is important that students are aware of the level descriptors examiners use when marking these answers in order to improve their level.

2.1

The majority of students answered this question correctly.

2.2

This question required students to provide two ways religious believers might act as peacemakers. Many students provided answers focused on beliefs as to why they might act in this way. Answers that did not refer to what people do were not credited.

2.3

The interpretation of ‘nuclear deterrent’ in the mark scheme was quite broad because it covered possession of weapons of mass destruction and also the potential to use them. If countries do not possess them with the opportunity to use them, they have no deterrent value. Some students answered with reference to other lesser weapons and where the beliefs they used also apply to nuclear weapons, this was considered to be correct.

Answers in opposition to nuclear weapons were more easily given than those in favour and again, many believed they had to provide beliefs for and against rather than simply different.

There were references made to these weapons only being allowed in a just war. As they do not protect civilians and are likely not to be proportional, no credit was given. Answers related to issues of use in self-defence were acceptable in the context of the question. There were many references to the nuclear deterrent preventing attacks for fear of mass destruction, possibly mutual mass destruction, which some developed in a critical way, pointing out that using fear and threats is not a good way to conduct international relations.

2.4

In contrast to 2.2, this question asked for beliefs that encourage people to help, not ways of helping. However, if ways of helping were given as development of a belief, this was allowed. There were plenty of very good answers earning the full five marks. Once again, the Bible teaching of 'love your neighbour', often given in the context of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, was the most popular reference to sacred writings along with the Golden Rule and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats. However, a noticeable minority did not attempt an answer. Possibly this is due to issues of timing.

2.5

In answers to this evaluative question the lower-level answers were often quite superficial and/or did not use information and arguments in a reasoned and logical way. As such, they appeared to be fulfilling requirements for AO1 more than AO2. However, there were some excellent well-argued answers that contained logical detailed reasoning with application of references to religion.

The just war was often given as a good reason for going to war. Linking this to self-defence as a just cause was successful in many cases. There were many references to self-defence extending to defending a faith, especially from an Islamic position. This was accepted. Old Testament teaching of 'an eye for an eye' was generally given in justification. Some used this teaching in relation to revenge as a cause of war without considering a link between revenge and self-defence.

The alternative position was often given as there is no good reason for going to war. This pacifist view was often detailed by Jesus' teaching to 'turn the other cheek'. Fighting in defence of another country was also given as a good reason for going to war with some citing the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine as an example. Once again, the just war was used to support an alternative position by considering some other criteria alongside self-defence.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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