
GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES (SHORT COURSE)

Section 5: Themes
Report on the Examination

8061
June 2018

Version: 1.0

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General comments

This was the first award for the Short Course and students generally performed quite well on this section. However, some students did not attempt the second question on this paper. This might have been because they ran out of time as it was the third paper to be completed or because they did not realise that they were required to answer two questions for the Themes. Only one question needed to be answered for each of the two religions papers but for the Themes there were two compulsory questions.

Some of the students appeared to lack the understanding of how to approach answering the questions. For example they wrote far too much for the two mark questions or explained similar beliefs instead of contrasting beliefs for the four mark questions. Others did not refer to sacred writings or another source of religious belief and teaching which is required for the extra mark in the five mark question. A minority explained atheist or humanist beliefs for the four or five mark questions. These beliefs do not qualify as religious beliefs for these questions and consequently could not be credited. Non-religious arguments though were valid for the twelve mark AO2 themes questions.

In the 12 mark AO2 questions, many responses used religious teachings in a descriptive AO1 type way rather than using them to support reasons and judgements and so could not reach the top marks. The bullet points included in the question are there to assist the students with their response and the emphasis is on giving and referring to arguments. It is the reasoning which is vitally important and this is stressed by the need for a justified conclusion. Some answers also failed to focus fully on the AO2 statement which impacted on the mark which could be awarded.

Theme A: Relationships and Families

Question 01.1

Most made an excellent start to this section as the first question was well answered which the vast majority obtaining the mark. A few did confuse conception with contraception.

Question 01.2

Three quarters scored the maximum two marks for this question about same-sex marriage. Less than five percent who attempted the question did not score a mark. Many referred to two Christian attitudes to same-sex marriage whereas others used one Christian belief and a second one from either Buddhism, Islam or Judaism. Some spent too long validating the religion's view point, writing much more than the two marks merited.

Question 01.3

Most responses outlined the traditional role of men and women in their religion and contrasted it with more modern interpretations. Some referred to St. Paul's teaching concerning women being silent in church and only men having the main leadership roles in the Roman Catholic Church. A number of responses wrote solely about equality rather than roles, which affected the mark which could be awarded – it was credited, but at a lower level, as it was only rarely linked to roles.

Question 01.4

There were some excellent answers including quotes from sacred writings and sources of authority. Many wrote about the Roman Catholic response to divorce and contrasted it with either another Christian denomination or a different religion eg Islam. A number of responses focussed on the process of divorce in Islam or Judaism although the question was about attitudes to divorce itself. More than half of responses achieved four or five marks for this question.

Question 01.5

Several students got carried away discussing adultery, contraception, church views of cohabitation and there was the issue of what sex outside of marriage is called. Where responses focused on the statement the answers were generally good. This question brought a wide range of marks for the responses with over half receiving six or more marks.

Theme B: Religion, peace and conflict**Question 02.1**

It was surprising that some students did not attempt this multiple choice question. Of those who attempted it there was some confusion with 'to reform', with only two thirds getting this correct.

Question 02.2

There was a wide variety of correct answers with nearly three quarters of responses receiving full marks. Often students explained their two reasons although this wasn't necessary for a 'Give' type question.

Question 02.3

Students appeared to find the fact that this was a contrast question challenging. Some appeared to believe that some religions are happy to use nuclear weapons to totally wipe out the enemy - men, women and children. Responses which received the maximum four marks referred to the use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent and contrasted that with beliefs concerning a Just War or the idea that they should be banned because of the terrible destruction they would cause if they were ever used. Most responses achieved three or four marks.

Question 02.4

This was generally a well answered question, with just under a third receiving the maximum five marks. Many responses included Christian or Muslim teaching with quotes from the Bible or the Qur'an.

Question 02.5

Although there were some good answers many wrote a response essentially debating whether war is right or wrong rather than answering the statement. Whilst this gained credit, it was limited. A majority of responses argued whether war did or did not solve problems, with a lesser number arguing that war solved problems versus other options. Many did not include a reference to solving

problems between countries. This proved to be a question which invited a wide variety of responses, with over half receiving six marks or more.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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