

GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Insight report:

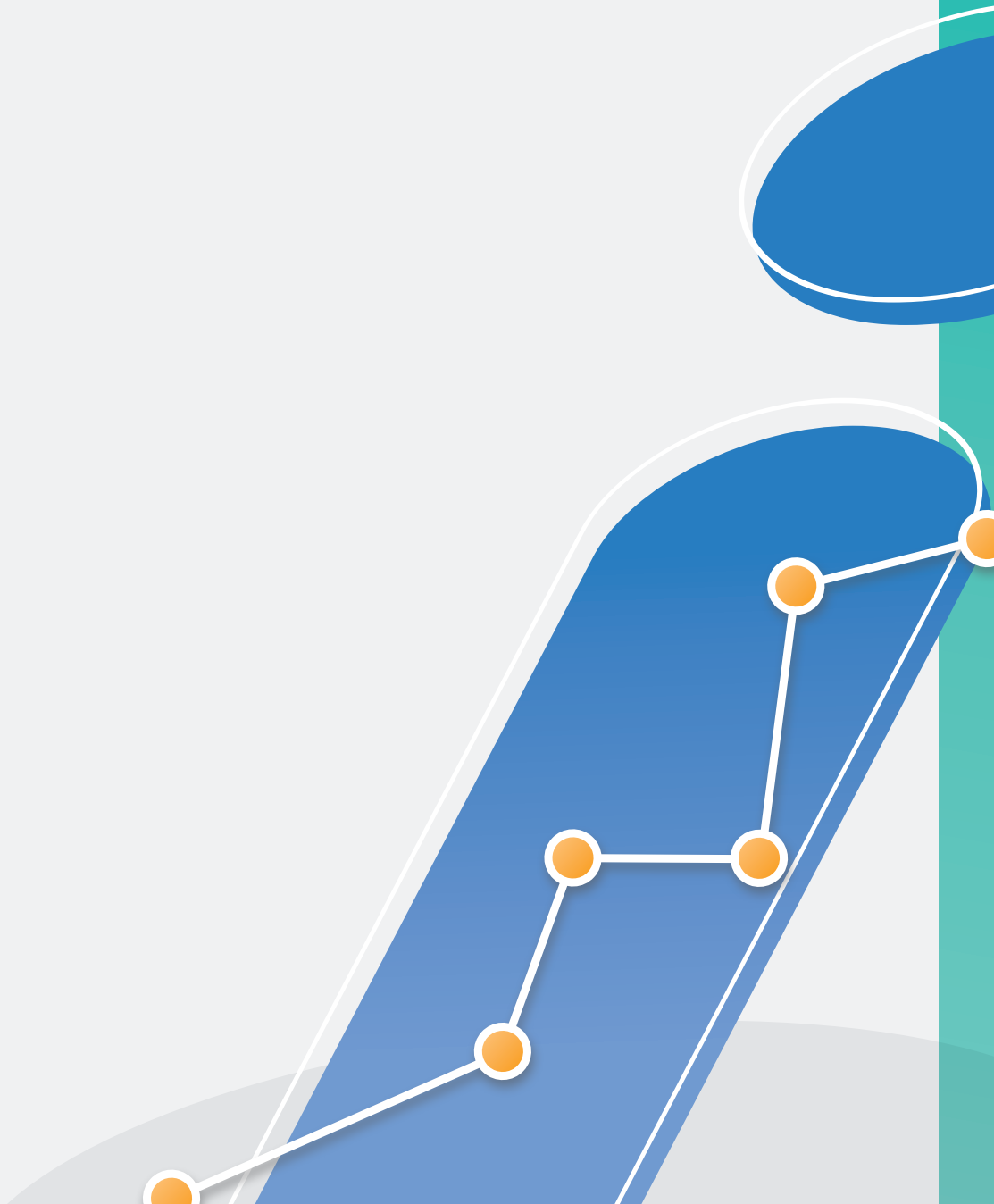
2019 results at a glance

September 2019

2019

aqa.org.uk

insights



How to use this report

This report provides a snapshot of this summer's results. It contains information on grade boundaries and performance by paper. This report is part of our full results insight series. For extra information on results:

- Access our free Enhanced Results Analysis tool. We've created [two-minute tutorials](#) to show you how.
- Navigate to [e-AQA](#) to download the full report on the exam for a detailed breakdown.
- [Book on](#) to one of our Live lessons webinars. The Head of Curriculum for your subject will take you through this year's results and answer your questions.
- [Book on](#) to a Feedback event. See examples from real scripts from the summer to highlight common areas where students did well and where there's room for improvement.

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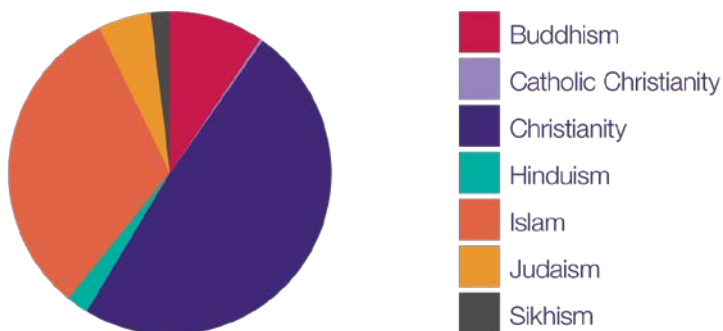
Qualification summary

Religious Studies A

As this is the second exam year for the reform specification, it must be noted that the quality of many answers demonstrated that teachers had effectively prepared students for the requirements of the exams, and have taken the feedback from 2018 on board; credit must be given to centres for this. The most popular route through the specification remains option MA (Christianity, Islam and Themes) by a significant margin. However, there were notable increases in entries for some of the smaller routes such as FA (Buddhism, Sikhism and Themes) and JA (Catholic Christianity, Judaism and Themes), which is also encouraging.

Papers 1 and 2 appeared to be appropriate for the ability range of students and, across components, suitable differentiation was achieved. Where some marks were not gained, it was often as a result of not fully addressing the focus of the question in line with the assessment objective; for example, AO1.2 'influences' in Paper 1 01.3 questions. Timing did not appear to be a significant issue, with the majority of students completing the required questions in the given time. However, there was a minority who attempted all six Themes questions on Paper 2A which is not only a rubric infringement, but of course impacted their ability to write in enough detail in the time given.

Religions studied on Religious Studies A



Religions picked for study on this specification

Remember, all students take two of these options.

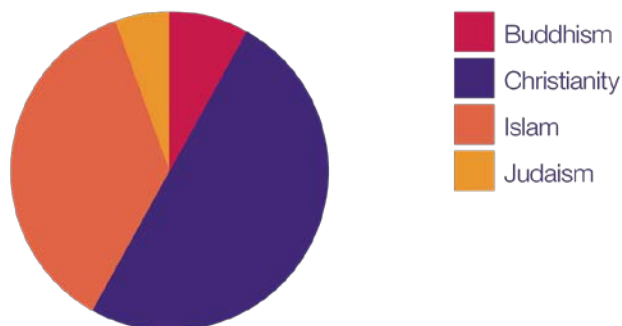
AQA GCSE Religious Studies A

Religious Studies Short Course

As this is the second exam year for the reform specification, it must be noted that the quality of many answers demonstrated that teachers had effectively prepared students for the requirements of the exam, and have taken the feedback from 2018 on board, so credit must be given to them for this. The most popular route through the specification remains option D (Christianity and Islam) by a significant margin; entries for the other routes have also remained fairly static this year.

Across the religions and themes, questions appeared to be appropriate for the ability range of students and achieved suitable differentiation. Where some marks were not gained it was often as a result of basic skills requirements, such as not addressing the focus of AO1.2 'influences' in religions 01.3 questions. Timing did not appear to be a significant issue, with the majority of students completing the required questions in the given time, however there were some who did not complete the second section of the Themes paper.

Religions studied on Religious Studies Short course



Religions picked for study on this specification

Remember, all students take two of these options.

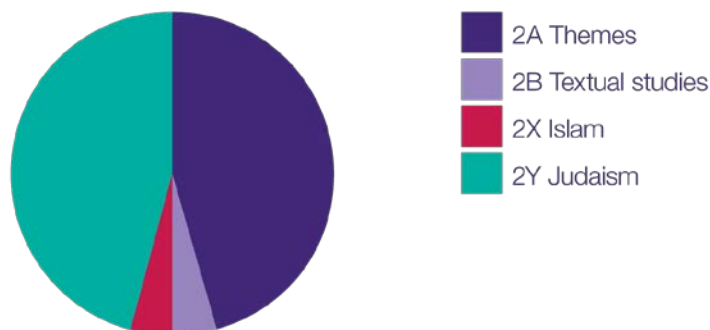
AQA GCSE Religious Studies Short course

Religious Studies B

As this is the second exam year for the reform specification, it must be noted that the quality of many answers demonstrated that teachers had effectively prepared students for the requirements of the exams, and have taken the feedback from 2018 on board; credit must be given to centres for this. The most popular route through the specification remains YA (Judaism and Themes) by a significant margin; entries for the other routes have also remained fairly static.

Across Catholic Christianity, and the religions and themes options, questions appeared to be appropriate for the ability range of students and achieved suitable differentiation. Where some marks were not gained, it was often as a result of missing key exam technique in following question instructions; for example, not including the reference to sources of authority in the 5-mark 0.4 questions. Timing did not appear to be a significant issue, with the majority of students completing the required questions in the given time.

Religious Studies B options popularity



Options picked for study on this specification

AQA GCSE Religious Studies B

Conduct your own analysis using data relevant to you [Watch tutorials on using ERA for results analysis](#), or log straight in via [e-AQA](#)

Grade boundaries

How to interpret grade boundaries

GCSE Religious Studies is a linear qualification; the final grade is based on marks from all papers. You will be able to navigate to the grade boundaries per component from our [summer support pages](#). There is no need to convert this mark to the uniform mark scale (UMS).

Grade boundaries are set using a mix of statistics and expert judgement

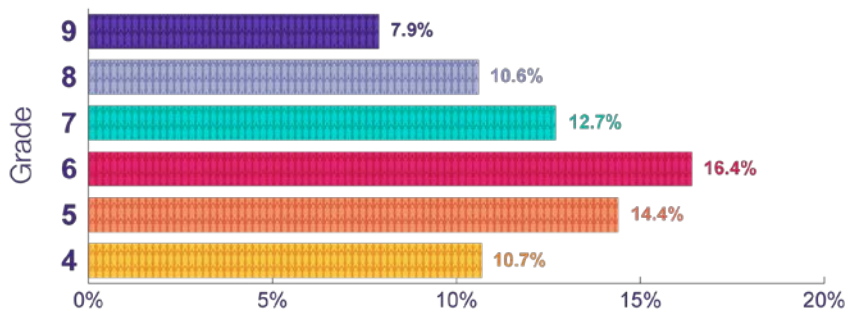
Our research team uses a range of statistics to make predictions that suggest the most appropriate grade boundaries. The statistical evidence considers the prior attainment of the given cohort as well as the distribution of marks. Senior examiners then review a script sample to confirm the statistically recommended marks are sensible for the grade.

Boundary setting is overseen by Ofqual.

Religious Studies A

Grade summary

This shows the percentage of students achieving each grade.



Total achieving (3-U = 27.3%).

AQA GCSE Religious Studies A

Grade summary

98.7% achieved a grade.

72.7% achieved at least Grade 4.

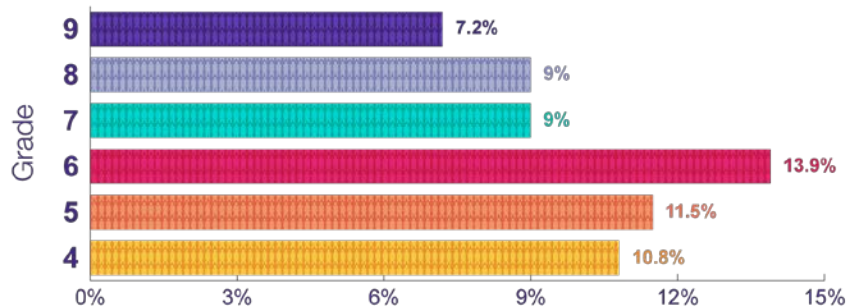
31.2% achieved at least Grade 7.

7.9% achieved Grade 9.

Religious Studies Short Course

Grade summary

This shows the percentage of students achieving each grade.



Total achieving (3-U = 38.6%).

AQA GCSE Religious Studies: Short course

Grade summary

96.2% achieved a grade.

61% achieved at least Grade 4.

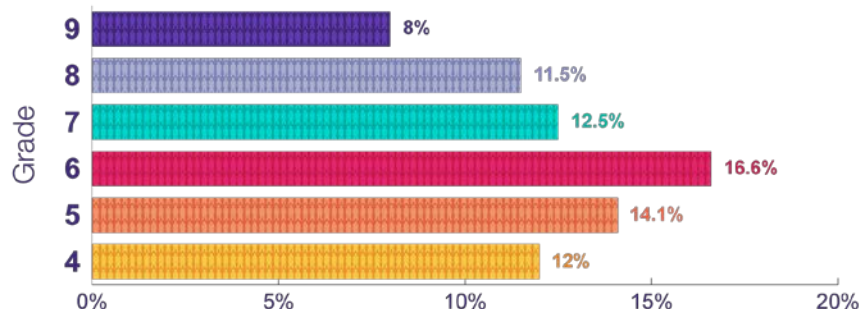
25.2% achieved at least Grade 7.

7.2% achieved Grade 9.

Religious Studies B

Grade summary

This shows the percentage of students achieving each grade.



Total achieving (3-U = 25.3%).

AQA GCSE Religious Studies B

Grade summary

99.1% achieved a grade.

74.7% achieved at least Grade 4.

32% achieved at least Grade 7.

8% achieved Grade 9.

Watch our two-minute team stories to find out more about how we set grade boundaries and ensure fairness. Visit aqa.org.uk/team-stories

Religious Studies A

Paper 1

This is a snapshot. Learn more about every question from the Summer 2019 series in our reports on the exam. Visit aqa.org.uk/log-in and follow:

e-AQA > Secure Key Materials > GCSE > Religious Studies/Leisure & Tourism > Religious Studies (new specification) > Reports on the exam.

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was less distinction in achievement between the Beliefs and Practices sections this year compared to 2018. In some cases, such as 8062/13 Christianity, Practices AO1 questions were generally done better than Beliefs. • Students seem to have been well-prepared in terms of timing. Improvement was seen especially in 8062/15 Islam on 02.5 which is the Practices 12-mark question. This showed that students were spreading their time out more efficiently across the two sections. • A good knowledge of technical terms was demonstrated in various areas, for example in 8062/11, Buddhism questions 01.1 and 02.1 were both answered correctly by over 89% of students. However, improvement could be made in some areas of subject vocabulary. For example, in 8062/14 Hinduism question 01.2 'features of the divine' and 8062/17 Sikhism questions 01.3 'stages of liberation' and 01.4 'sangat' caused some problems for students. • Good evaluative techniques were seen across lots of 12-mark answers, including some students who wrote a judgement at the start of the answer and then proceeded to justify it, and others whose reasoning led to a conclusion. For example, in 8062/13 Christianity question 01.5, over 70% of students achieved Levels 3 and 4. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to ensure full specification coverage, for example, in learning beliefs and practices of particular denominations and schools (where required by the specification content). In 8062/15 Islam, there were some weaknesses in student responses to questions 01.1 and 01.4 which focused on Shi'a Islam. Also, in 8062/11, Buddhism question 01.4 on Pure Land proved challenging. • Improvements could be made on the 4-mark 'influences' questions (AO1.2) by students ensuring that their answers clearly showed how the particular beliefs could influence the believer, such as by having an effect on their actions, thoughts, or emotions. For example, in Buddhism, Christianity, Catholic Christianity and Islam, answers to question 01.3 could all have been more focused on how Bodhisattvas, trinity, sacraments and Adalat, respectively, influence people rather than just describing the beliefs themselves (which limits the answers to 2 marks). • Make sure the question is read carefully. For example, in Christianity question 01.4 the focus was on 'causes' of sin, so a description of the nature of sin or general beliefs about sin could not receive maximum marks. Further, question 02.4 required explanation of why the Eucharist is important, not a description of its celebration. In 8062/16 Judaism, question

	<p>02.4 required answers to show how an understanding of marriage was gained from the ceremony, rather than a description only, which proved to be a challenge for many students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is no need to write an introduction for 12-mark answers, as doing so could waste valuable time. Furthermore, 12-mark answers must contain AO2 evaluation and should not simply be descriptions of the belief or practice in question. For example, some answers to Sikhism 01.5 described the Mool Mantra, rather than evaluating its usefulness in understanding the nature of God.
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Reports on the exam are written by senior examiners who see more responses than anyone else. Access full reports via aqa.org.uk/log-in

Paper 2

This is a snapshot. Learn more about every question from the Summer 2019 series in our reports on the exam. Visit aqa.org.uk/log-in and follow:

e-AQA > Secure Key Materials > GCSE > Religious Studies/Leisure & Tourism > Religious Studies (new specification) > Reports on the exam.

Highlights from Summer 2019

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The option choices remained in a similar pattern of popularity from 2018, with Themes B, E, D and A being the four largest entries and F and C significantly smaller. However, despite Theme C remaining the least popular choice, student performance has improved on this Theme. On Paper 2B the two most popular optional Themes were also B and E. Some good knowledge of key terms was shown, such as 02.1 'stewardship' and 06.4 'people-trafficking' which were well answered. However, in some cases misunderstandings of key terms became problematic, for example in 01.1 'nuclear family' and 04.3 'reconciliation' which hindered achievement on these questions. There were some very strong answers to 12-mark AO2 questions across the Themes. In particular on question 04.5, almost 20% achieved marks in the Level 4 band. On Paper 2B some students demonstrated a very sound knowledge of St Mark's Gospel, this resulted in the ability to answer the questions very successfully. Where students were less familiar with the text, they were hindered in accessing higher marks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 5-mark questions on each section require a reference to a source of belief and teaching. It is important that students clearly identify the source; and this improvement in exam technique could help many students secure the fifth mark. For example, in questions 01.4 and 03.4, some students found it difficult to link to a source of authority in support of their answer. The 4- and 5-mark questions on each Theme asked for religious perspectives, so it is important that students don't miss out on credible material by including points relating to atheist, humanist or other secular worldviews. In 12-mark questions, the highest marks can only be reached by answers that clearly address the focus of the statement. For example, in question 01.5 some wrote general responses on views about same-sex relationships, rather than evaluating people's disapproval of the relationships. Careful reading of the questions is necessary. For example, on Themes G and H there were some students who attempted to make every question a 'contrast' which was not required. Also, on 02.2 and 04.2 the question asked for 'ways', which should have elicited reference to practical responses. On question 05.4 the key word was 'against' and for 02.4, focus should have been 'human life'. Theme H on Paper 2B was generally completed less successfully than Theme G.

Theme H requires both a careful revision of the text of St Mark's Gospel and the meanings behind it. For example, question 08.2 was one of the most challenging for students as this required knowledge of teachings that come from the 'Parable of the growing seed'.

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Short course

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some good knowledge of key terms was shown across units, and especially successfully on 8061/1 Buddhism question 01.1 and 8061/5 Themes question 02.1. However, in some cases misunderstandings of key terms became problematic, for example in Themes questions 01.1 'nuclear family' and 02.3 'reconciliation.' A lack of understanding of subject vocabulary hindered achievement on these questions. There were some very strong answers to 12-mark AO2 questions across all the sections; these demonstrated clear evaluation and addressed the statements fully. It is recommended that students use the bullet points which appear with the questions to help inform the contents of their answers, whilst also ensuring that they stay tightly focused on the statement itself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to ensure full specification coverage. For example, in learning beliefs and practices of particular denominations and schools (where required by the specification content). In 8061/3 Islam, there were some weaknesses in student responses to question 01.3 which focused on Shi'a Islam. Improvements could be made on the 4-mark 'influences' questions (AO1.2) by students ensuring that their answers clearly show how the particular beliefs could influence the believer, such as by having an effect on their actions, thoughts or emotions. For example, in Buddhism and Judaism, answers to questions 01.3 could have been more focused on how beliefs about anicca and the Messiah influence people, rather than just describing the beliefs themselves. The 5-mark questions on each section require a reference to a source of belief and teaching. It is important that students clearly identify the source; this improvement in exam technique could help many students secure the fifth mark. For example, for 8061/2 Christianity question 01.4, some students found it difficult to link to an accurate source of authority in support of their answer.

Religious Studies B

Paper 1

This is a snapshot. Learn more about every question from the Summer 2019 series in our reports on the exam. Visit aqa.org.uk/log-in and follow:

e-AQA > Secure Key Materials > GCSE > Religious Studies/Leisure & Tourism > Religious Studies (new specification) > Reports on the exam.

Highlights from Summer 2019

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All questions were well attempted by the vast majority of students, with comparable achievement across all four topic areas. It is important that schools continue to encourage students to at least attempt every question that is set. There were some very strong answers to 12-mark AO2 questions across the four questions. In particular on question 01.5 almost 35% achieved marks in the Level 4 band. The highest marks were achieved when answers included clear evaluation and were tightly focused on the statement in question. Students did well on the 1-mark questions, especially on questions 1–3, which suggested a good knowledge of subject vocabulary. Effective use of key terminology was also made within responses to the AO2 essay questions by many students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to emphasise full specification coverage, including the key terms. Some were hindered by a lack of understanding of subject terminology such as such as ‘natural law’, ‘Eucharistic adoration’, ‘marks of the Church’ or ‘dramatised prayer’. There were some gaps in knowledge with the least well-known topics being natural law (01.4); the application of belief in the Trinity to the interpretation of Genesis 1:1-3 (02.3); Irenaeus and Anselm’s descriptions of salvation (03.3); evaluation of the Eucharistic adoration and Mass (03.5); and justice as a Kingdom sign (04.4). Students must be sure to follow the instruction to include a reference to scripture or other source of authority in the 5 mark questions. For example, in question 03.4 some missed out on the fifth mark by not including a reference. However, in other questions, the references were impressive, such as those using the Catechism in question 04.4.

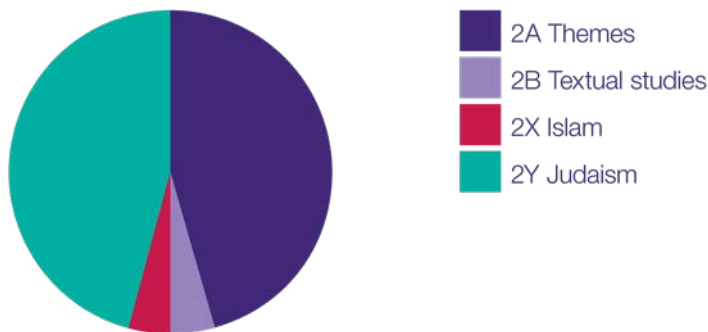
Paper 2

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e-AQA > Secure Key Materials > GCSE > Religious Studies/Leisure & Tourism > Religious Studies (new specification) > Reports on the exam.

Religious Studies B options popularity

Paper 2 choices



AQA GCSE Religious Studies B

Papers 2A and 2B Highlights from Summer 2019

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were some excellent answers to all questions. Particularly pleasing was the appropriate use made of material studied for Paper 1. For example, some students referred to Theology of the Body in question 03.4. Theme A was the most popular option and Theme C the least popular on Paper 2A. Some students answered all three questions which, aside from being a rubric infringement, often resulted in responses being very brief due to time restrictions. Most students made a real attempt to argue from more than one point of view in the 12-mark questions and to include Christian content. The strongest answers on Paper 2A came from Theme C which included a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topics that provided the greatest challenge to students on Paper 2A were 'Holy War' (02.3) and 'human dignity' (03.4), and on 2B question 02.4 on 'the cost of discipleship.' Some students could not achieve full marks in the 4-mark questions as they did not refer to Christian belief, and in the 5-mark questions they did not include a reference to scripture or source of authority, as instructed by the questions themselves. It is important that students follow the instructions for each question carefully. In 12-mark questions, the highest marks can only be reached by answers that clearly address the focus of the statement. For example, in question 01.5 some wrote

range of arguments, as well as making good use of church and scriptural teaching. On Paper 2B answers to Q2.5 were very strong, with over 48% of students achieving Level 4.

- On Paper 2B many students demonstrated a very sound knowledge of St Mark's Gospel, this resulted in the ability to answer the questions very successfully. Where students were less familiar with the text they were hindered in accessing higher marks.

general responses on divorce rather than the issue of remarriage.

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Papers 2X and 2Y

Highlights from Summer 2019

Areas where students did best	Areas where students could improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the entry for 2X Islam was far smaller than that for 2Y Judaism, across both papers the full range of marks was achieved. Examiners saw some impressive responses to all questions, many of which displayed high levels of understanding and evaluative skill. • On 2X, questions 01.2 and 02.3 were particularly well answered. Over half the students gained full marks for 02.3 which shows that they are tackling the 'influences' (AO1.2) element of this question effectively. • On 2Y question 01.3, over half got full marks and were able to explain beliefs about life after death clearly. 49% achieved full marks for question 02.3, which shows that they are tackling the 'influences' (AO1.2) element of this question effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Paper 2Y, the question that proved the most challenging was 01.4, on the Shekhinah; on 2X question 02.2 on the Ten Obligatory Acts was a challenge, with many only gaining one mark. Also, question 02.1 was not answered as successfully as 01.1, with many students opting incorrectly for wudu or jihad. These questions all highlight the need for the sound learning of subject vocabulary. • On Paper 2X, many students were unable to achieve the full 5 marks for the 01.4 and 02.4 questions as they did not include a reference to a source of authority. • On both 2X and 2Y, an issue was the frequency of Christian content in students' answers to a wide range of questions. Furthermore, many included non-religious views in their AO2 answers, which are not usually appropriate in the religions papers. Students should restrict their answers to views from within the religion of study in this section.

Next steps

Access our full suite of insight resources:

- [Results insight video series](#)
- [Enhanced Results Analysis](#)
- [Reports on the exam](#)
- [Feedback events](#)
- [Live lessons webinars](#)

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