

**Religious Studies A (World Religion(s))
Religious Studies B (Philosophy and Ethics)**

General Certificate of Education **J620/J621**

General Certificate of Education (Short Course) **J120/J121**

Examiner's Report

January 2011

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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General Comments

The paper provided good differentiation between the candidates and produced the full range of marks. There was some evidence of a lack of skills and maturity, at times, in parts (d) and (e) of the questions.

Time management was an issue for a significant minority of candidates. Of these candidates, many ignored the mark allocation for the parts of the questions and wrote at considerable length in their responses to parts (a), (b) and (c), which were only worth 1, 2 and 3 marks respectively. Some candidates wrote at length in their response to the (e) part of their first question and then ran out of time in the second question. Other candidates tackled the (e) part of their chosen questions first, presumably to ensure they obtained a good number of marks from the extended writing part of the paper. This worked well for some candidates but for others, time management became an issue as they spent far too long on the (e) part of their first question. Other candidates who took this approach failed to recognise the significance of the issue in the stimulus, possibly because they had not been as prepared for it, as they would have been had they worked through the parts of the question in order.

Parts (a) to (c) of the questions proved to be very accessible. Parts (d) and (e) enabled effective discrimination between the candidates. There were some excellent, informed and accurate responses to the (d) parts but there were rather more weak responses which offered only generalised comments and often inaccurate details. As has been noted in previous reports, responses to the Christianity questions often showed inaccurate caricatures of both the Roman Catholic and Anglican approach to key moral issues.

Responses cannot reach the higher levels in the (d) parts unless they offer precise and accurate information. The higher levels require responses which show candidates have gotten 'under the skin' of the faith showing that they can explain why a particular view is held. The specification makes it clear, in the prelude to each of the units, that candidates should be familiar, at an appropriate level, with the key driving forces behind the attitudes of the faith to moral issues. For the higher levels, candidates' responses are expected to go further in the explanation by qualifying their answers with reference to clearly identified teachings, sacred texts or other sources of authority for the religion. Accurate quotations are not expected or required but paraphrases or summaries do enhance responses.

Part (e) of each question tests AO2 and requires significantly more developed responses than the AO3 (c) part of the questions in the previous specification. Responses which stated information as points of view, and then stated a personal view could be awarded at most, a low Level 3 mark. For the higher marks at Level 3, or for Level 4, the response must use the information offered as evidence in the discussion of the issue in the stimulus. The highest level responses weighed up evidence and offered a personal response which was also supported with evidence and argument. Responses which followed a formula for these part (e) questions generally scored satisfactorily, but rarely achieved beyond Level 2 or low Level 3 because they did not really engage with the stimulus. There needs to be evidence of discussion or a conversation between the views expressed in the response. Reference to the religion studied was vague or absent from many papers and in others there was a failure to offer a personal response -this is a key requirement for Levels 3 and 4.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Religion and Human Relationships

- (a) State what is meant by a civil partnership. **[1]**

A significant proportion of scripts offered the correct response that a civil partnership is a legal status granted for a same sex couple, however many other scripts offered 'gay marriage' as a response. This is inaccurate and was not credited.

- (b) Give two reasons why Buddhists/Christians/Hindus/Muslims/Jews/Sikhs might decide to get married.

A significant proportion of responses offered two good points. General responses such as 'to show their love for each other' were accepted as well as religions specific responses.

- (c) Describe how a Buddhist/Christian/Hindu/Muslim Jew/Sikh might respond to a couple who want a civil partnership. **[3]**

A high proportion of responses were able to achieve two or three marks in response to this question. Some candidates focused on a practical response in that some would welcome it whilst for others, it would mean being excluded from the faith community. Other scripts referred to doctrinal responses, giving a good description of the views of the faith towards this issue. This was one of the parts where candidates tended to write at length and centres might find it helpful to check the mark scheme for these small mark questions. This question, for example, was marked in the following way: A statement 1 mark, with development 2 marks and exemplification/ amplification 3 marks.

- (d) Explain why members of the Monastic Sangha choose to be celibate. **[6]**

The candidates who chose to answer from Buddhism had little trouble in achieving Level 2 or 3 by defining celibacy and then offering a sound explanation of the rationale for celibacy in the Monastic Sangha, underpinned by reference to Buddhist teaching.

- (d) Explain how a Christian/Hindu/Muslim/Jewish/Sikh marriage ceremony might reflect Christian/Hindu/Muslim/Jewish/Sikh beliefs about marriage. **[6]**

This question was intended to test the candidates' ability to link belief and practice by explaining the source in the faith, of the marriage practices. Responses show that some found this very difficult and responded with a description of events at a marriage ceremony with no evident understanding how these related to their chosen religion. Others selected two or three aspects of the ceremony and linked them successfully to underlying religious teaching. Responses which concentrated on purely cultural practices could not achieve the higher levels.

- (e) 'A couple should be married before they have children.'

Discuss this statement. You should include different, supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Buddhism/Christianity/Hinduism/Islam/Judaism/Sikhism in your answer. **[12]**

The responses which referred to the attitude of their chosen religion, to other views and then discussed the issue expressing their own view with support achieved the higher levels, however a significant number of responses became distracted and focused only on the issue of pre-marital sex and whether the chosen religion condones or forbids it. Whilst this is part of the debate, these responses did not meet the stimulus effectively and could not be given credit at the higher levels.

Section B: Religion and Medical Ethics

- (a) State one way in which animals are used for medical research. [1]

The vast majority responded accurately to this question suggesting that animals might be used to test drugs which could be used eventually on humans. Responses referring to testing for cosmetics were not accepted as the question asked about medical research.

- (b) State two reasons why a Buddhist /Christian/Hindu/Muslim/Jew/Sikh might be against Euthanasia. [2]

This question was well answered with most responses receiving two marks for either general reasons or reasons related to the religion chosen, for example: because life is 'God given and only he can take it away' and 'taking a life is murder which is against religious principles such as the ten commandments or the first precept'.

A small number of responses gave reasons which were too similar to each other and could therefore only be awarded one mark.

- (c) Describe how a Buddhist/Christian/Hindu/Muslim/Jew/Sikh might respond to the issue of cloning. [3]

Some responses showed very little understanding of cloning or of how it might affect animals and humans. Some responses offered were actually about abortion or fertility treatment. Of those responses which were accurate many referred to the view that the creation of life in this way goes against religious understanding of God as the giver of life.

- (d) Explain why Buddhists might have different attitudes towards a woman seeking fertility treatment. [6]

A minority of responses showed a lack of understanding of the term 'fertility treatment' and instead wrote about abortion. These responses did gain some marks at the lowest level, as for some believers, the ethical issues about the disposal of embryos are much the same as those surrounding the termination of a pregnancy. Other responses offered a full account of the points for and against fertility treatment and correctly identified attitudes within the chosen religion and demonstrated a sound understanding of the teaching which underpins the attitudes.

- (e) 'We should be able to treat animals in any way we wish.'

Discuss this statement. You should include different, supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Buddhism/Christianity/Hinduism/Islam/Judaism/Sikhism in your answer. [12]

The stimulus provoked a wide range of discussions some of which reached the highest levels. A number of responses showed lengthy personal responses to the issue of animal welfare but contained little or no reference to the chosen religion. The highest level responses took a stance at the beginning and commented on other views throughout the response. These included alluding to teachings such as that about dominion in Genesis and the concept of stewardship of the environment, drawing a conclusion with a personal viewpoint evident in the response as a whole, or clearly explained with support towards the end of the discussion.

Section C: Religion, Poverty and Wealth

- (a) What does gambling mean? [1]

Responses showed that this question was accessible to candidates. However some responses took several sentences to get to the point that gambling involves risking money in order to gain more. Other responses could not be credited as they missed out the 'chance' aspect of gambling altogether, suggesting that it was just a way of getting more money.

- (b) State two occupations which a Buddhist/Christian/Hindu/Muslim/Jew/Sikh might consider to be immoral. [2]

The majority of responses selected occupations in the sex industry or those which might involve cheating or the mistreatment of people. Prostitute and a doctor performing abortions were common suggestions as was 'drug dealer'.

- (c) Describe one Buddhist/Christian/Hindu/Muslim/Jew/Sikh teaching about the proper use of money. [3]

Some responses to this question were general and were not religious specific, referring for example to the idea that religious people believe that they should use money to help people. Whilst some credit could be given to these responses, better responses referred, for example, to the life of the founder of the faith or to traditions or teachings such as the Widow's Mite or the parable of Lazarus and Dives or the practice of Zakah or tithing.

- (d) Explain why Buddhists/Christians/Hindus/Muslims/Jews/Sikhs might decide to work for a charity. [6]

There were some excellent religion specific responses which showed candidates had a good understanding of the rationale behind the attitude of the religion towards working for a charity. Responses which reached the higher levels stated the attitude of the chosen religion and supported the reasons for the attitude by reference to religion specific teachings or by alluding to sacred texts or official statements from authoritative sources. For example, reference to Right Livelihood in Buddhism, or the parable of the sheep and the goats in Christianity and vand chhahakna in Sikhism.

There was, however, a larger number of general responses which gave reasons which were not related specifically to a religion at all. These responses could only be credited at the lower levels.

(e) 'Religious people should never gamble.'

Discuss this statement. You should include different, supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Buddhism/Christianity/Hinduism/Islam/Judaism/Sikhism in your answer. **[12]**

Many responses referred to the general distaste for, or rejection of, gambling amongst followers of the major religions but also to the acceptance of gambling in moderation, for example, by the Roman Catholic Church in some parts of the world. Many candidates in their personal response suggested that not all forms of gambling should be treated in the same way. They observed that whilst many believers would be against going to a casino, but they would think nothing of buying a lottery ticket or 'having a go' on the tombola at the church fête. Similarly, many religious people might feel justified in gambling with the interest on their savings by buying Premium Bonds or by taking a gamble on the stock market.

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