

**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**

OCR Report to Centres

January 2012

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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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B603 Ethics (Relationships, Medical Ethics, Poverty and Wealth)

General Comments

The question paper proved accessible to most candidates. Many candidates offered clear and appropriate responses to the questions in parts a) to c) of each section where short answers are required. There was evidence of some candidates writing too much for the part c) questions, which had a negative impact on the management of their time.

The majority of candidates answered from a Christian perspective, a significant minority answered on Islam and very few candidates answered on the other religions offered on this paper.

In part d), where candidates are required to demonstrate their understanding of an issue, many candidates offered responses which demonstrated a sound grasp of the significance of the issue for the religion of their choice. Many backed up their understanding with useful reference to religious teaching and, in some cases, support from religious texts.

There were many excellent responses to the part e) questions, where candidates are responding to a stimulus. Candidates' responses often contained detailed arguments on either side of the debate and clear evidence of a personal viewpoint, either as a distinct section of the response or as comment woven into the debate. Some candidates needed to develop thoroughly explained and more detailed balanced arguments in order to achieve high marks. The tendency to see a key word and write a response which did not 'hit the mark' as regards the thrust of the stimulus was evident in some candidates' work. Many candidates, as required by the rubric, considered the issue with clear reference to the religion of their choice but others offered limited or general religious content and on some occasions, no religious content at all.

A number of candidates are continuing to ignore the rubric of the question paper by answering three questions. A minority of candidates attempted all 18 questions which was obviously detrimental to their overall performance, as to attempt all 18 questions in a one hour paper leads to low marks being achieved.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

- (a)** Candidates offered variations of how the man could be the breadwinner or the person who provided for the family.
- (b)** The majority of candidates offered examples of roles appropriate to their chosen religion such as: priest; Sunday school teacher; Imam.
- (c)** The exchange of rings, saying of vows, sometimes referred to individually, singing of hymns and the saying of prayers were commonly offered in response to this question.
- (d)** Most candidates referred to more than one attitude within the religion of their choice, backing up their observations with teachings from the faith or textual support. Many candidates explained that in some faiths, attitudes were undergoing change in response to wider cultural developments.

- (e) To achieve the higher levels, candidates needed to evaluate the attitude(s) of the religion of their choice and other views about the roles of men and women. Candidates who focused on the word 'meant' in the stimulus offered appropriate responses which evaluated the extent to which roles might be required or demanded by religion.

Section B

- (a) Most candidates focused correctly on the idea of medical intervention or artificial procedures to achieve conception, as a defining feature of fertility treatment.
- (b) Many candidates offered two distinct reasons for the support of cloning, for example that it could through the cloning of plants help to improve agricultural yields or that it opened up the possibility of better treatment of diseases. Some candidates were strongly influenced by the more speculative reports of the success of human cloning and offered responses which are currently impossible to achieve.
- (c) Most candidates explained the attitude(s) of the religion of their choice. Many referred appropriately to key ideas, such as dominion, stewardship or ahimsa.
- (d) Candidates tended to focus on the idea that suicide was contrary to the idea of sanctity of life and that it went against the command not to kill. Most candidates offered more than one view within their chosen religion, often referring to the change in attitudes towards people contemplating suicide away from condemnation to understanding. Some candidates used aspects of the euthanasia debate effectively in their explanation.
- (e) Most candidates focused on the issue in the stimulus of the mother's rights with regard to abortion and then drew on the wider debate to demonstrate how the issue might be viewed by their chosen faith. Candidates who rehearsed the abortion debate without addressing the question of the rights of the mother restricted their level of achievement accordingly.

Section C

- (a) Whilst most candidates clearly knew examples of gambling, offering responses such as betting on horses or buying a lottery ticket, some just wrote a single word such as 'poker', which is not necessarily gambling unless something is staked on the outcome of the game.
- (b) Most candidates were able to suggest two charitable activities such as giving money to the poor or giving shelter to a person who was homeless. Some candidates unfortunately misread the question and believed it to be asking for two examples of charities.
- (c) Some candidates offered precise knowledge of the teachings of their chosen religion about concern for the poor. Many offered relevant textual support. Others offered a general account of the attitudes towards this issue without a clear religious reference, which reduced the quality of their response.
- (d) Most candidates demonstrated their understanding in this question by selecting examples of occupations and then explaining why they might be considered immoral by the religion of their choice. Some candidates gave limited explanations of the reasons for the occupation being considered to be immoral. Many responses concentrated on the social evil of certain occupations, such as prostitution and did not explain why they were considered immoral from a religious point of view.

- (e)** Most candidates grasped the significance of the issue in the stimulus and there were excellent responses which discussed it in relation to moral and immoral ways of earning money. Many candidates referred to the difficulty of taking others, such as the family, into poverty in order to satisfy a moral stance for oneself. For some candidates, their personal response to this issue dominated their discussion which limited the overall quality of their response.

B604 Ethics 2 (Peace and Justice, Equality, Media)

General Comments

The questions were well answered by the majority of candidates. There was very little variety in the religions on which candidates chose to answer, with the majority of candidates answering on Christianity, and a minority answering one or both questions on Islam. Some candidates, whilst answering on Christianity, made reference to a wider range of religions in part (e) questions.

There is evidence that many candidates are coping well with the demands of the part (e) questions. Many centres are obviously encouraging candidates to offer genuine discussion and to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments being presented. Some centres do this more successfully than others. Some candidates wrote very long and involved answers for part (c) which limited the time they had available for part (e).

Many candidates have clearly been taught to include a second religion in their responses to part (e) questions. Whilst this can be advantageous, it should be used with caution. Many candidates are wasting valuable time by merely describing a religious view point, which has often already been used (for example 'Muslims would also agree with this as they believe in justice.') without using it to further the discussion. In many cases, a second religion is unnecessary for a good answer.

Where candidates failed to achieve Level 3 on part (d) questions it was generally because the answers were descriptive and failed to address the question which required candidates to 'explain' beliefs rather than simply describe them. Reasons why those beliefs were held and/or the implications of holding those beliefs were required for Level 3.

Although rubric violations were rare, there did seem to be more than in previous sessions. A significant majority of candidates attempted all three sections. Very few attempted all 18 questions. Section C is still less popular than sections A and B, although it does seem to be becoming more popular.

On the whole, this was a very encouraging session with evidence that candidates are becoming more competent in the skills required to achieve the top grades.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Peace and Justice

- (a) The question asked for a definition of ‘social injustice’ and to gain the mark candidates needed to show that they understood both elements of the term rather than referring to ‘unfairness’ in a more general way. Examples such as racism were not acceptable on their own since this can be on a purely personal level. Most candidates were able to give an answer such as ‘unfairness in society’ which was perfectly acceptable. Where candidates failed to gain the mark it was generally because they either misread the question and defined ‘social justice’ or because they failed to deal with the societal implications of the term. Some candidates misunderstood the question completely and referred to the penal system, often asserting that social injustice occurs when a crime goes unpunished.
- (b) Most candidates answered this question appropriately and gained both marks. The most common answers were the death penalty and prison. Some candidates gave two different ways of carrying out capital punishment. This was credited as it was a valid response to the question. A few candidates misunderstood the question and named two crimes for which a criminal might be punished or referred to ‘religious’ penalties such as ‘hell’.
- (c) A significant proportion of candidates gained three marks on this question. Where candidates did not gain full marks it was generally either because they had misunderstood the question and talked about the criminal justice system or, because two of their points were too close to be distinguishable from each other. Where different relevant Bible quotations were offered these were credited. Some candidates failed to achieve because they misread the question and offered ways in which Christians might work for social justice rather than reasons **why** they might do so.
- (d) There were some very good responses to this question which explained the implications of Just War Theory and the teachings in the Old Testament which support war. Some candidates, clearly struggling for Biblical justification to war, talked about ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’ to justify wars of retaliation, although most Christians would reject this. Surprisingly, few candidates talked about the ambiguity of Jesus’ teaching which seems, at different times, to both support and condemn war.

Several candidates made reference to Jesus’ overturning of the tables at the Temple, but did not go on to consider whether this was a teaching that could usefully be applied to the issue of war. Some candidates described Just War Theory but did not then go on to answer the questions fully by considering its implications. Some candidates talked about Pacifism and discussed the situations under which a Pacifist might be prepared to take a non-combative role in a war.

Candidates answering on Islam gave good descriptions of lesser Jihad and generally related it well to the requirements of the question.

- (e) Most candidates achieved reasonably well on this question with the majority at Level 3 and a significant minority at Level 4. There was evidence of a great deal of specific religious knowledge which was generally well deployed. Some candidates, however, gave a list of Biblical quotations supporting each point of view and did not move beyond this to a general discussion. Others gave a good discussion of the issues but limited themselves by not including specifically religious knowledge.

Most candidates took the view that justice leads to peace and so is more important and that peace is, in itself, an unattainable goal. Many candidates made reference to Martin Luther King, but tended to point out that he saw justice as something worth fighting for, rather than exploring the interplay between pacifism and justice in his life. A large number

of candidates took justice to be either the need for revenge or the criminal justice system rather than looking at the concept of justice itself which tended to lead them away from the interplay between social justice and pacifism. Some mentioned Liberation Theology but few could explain what it was or develop this point further. Personal responses were sometimes undeveloped.

Section B: Equality

- (a) Most candidates gained the mark for this question. Those who did not tended to repeat the question with no further explanation. ('Forgiveness is when you forgive someone.')
- (b) Most candidates gained both marks for this question. An encouraging number gave specifically religious reasons, often including relevant quotations from the Bible or Qur'an.
- (c) Most candidates performed well on this question. Many were able to give specific religious teaching with relevant quotations from the Bible and Qur'an. Where candidates failed to gain the third mark it was generally because of repetition, or because two of the points made were so close as to be indistinguishable.
- (d) Most candidates achieved Level 2 on this question but comparatively few reached Level 3. There were a few outstanding responses which used Biblical teaching to support a variety of possible attitudes. Weaker answers were very general, concerning themselves with why Christians should be nice and not discriminate rather than grappling with the question. Candidates at Level 2 often described different attitudes or interfaith activity rather than explaining them. Some candidates got 'bogged down' discussing ecumenicism which does not address the question. In general, whilst there were some outstanding answers, fewer candidates achieved the top mark on this question compared to other sections.

Candidates who attempted this question from an Islamic perspective generally fulfilled the requirement to 'explain' better than those candidates who answered from a Christian perspective. Most candidates talked confidently about the ideas of reversion and the distinction between 'Peoples of the Book' and the non-Abramic religions.

- (e) This question was generally well answered and most candidates achieved Level 3. Those who did not were generally held back by lack of specific religious knowledge. Many candidates gave good discussions on the importance of forgiveness, but struggled somewhat with the other side of the argument. Others gave personal responses suggesting that one should forgive relatively minor offences but that they could not forgive someone who had murdered a loved one. Some answers discussed whether forgiveness should be dependent on repentance or reparation.

Candidates answering from an Islamic point of view generally achieved Level 3 with a few candidates managing to attain Level 4.

Section C: Media

- (a) Almost all candidates gained the mark for this question.
- (b) Nearly all candidates attained both marks. Those who did not, had failed to understand the term 'religious figures' and gave issues (such as abortion and euthanasia) or religious buildings and their features (altar, church etc). Some candidates gave the names of celebrities, and where these people clearly and publically self-identified with a religion, the mark was awarded.

- (c) Most candidates gained full marks on this question. Those who did not had usually written very short responses briefly stating a single point.
- (d) There were some excellent answers to this question which explored the links between violence in the media (particularly films and TV) and violence in society, and particularly the potential effect on children. Some candidates gave very sociological responses which did not mention religion and so limited themselves. Some candidates incorporated views on sex and pornography which did not form a part of the remit of this question. A surprising number of candidates gave a personal response as if it were a part e) question which was not creditable but took up valuable time. Many candidates concentrated on religious objections to violence but did not address the issue of the media.
- (e) There were some good responses to this question with the majority of candidates achieving Level 3 and a significant minority achieving Level 4. There was good use of religious teaching with many taking Jesus' teaching that whoever looks with lust on a woman has committed adultery with her in his heart as being relevant to overt sexuality and pornography in the media. Surprisingly, few candidates looked at the use of sexuality in advertising and marketing as being a facet of this issue.

Many candidates distinguished between sex as entertainment and sex as education with most defending the value of the latter. Some, but only very few, discussed the possibility of the media providing positive role models in the use of sexuality. Many candidates were limited by their personal response which was not developed, often stating an opinion but not explaining it, or by the lack of specifically religious teaching incorporated in the answer.

Candidates who responded from an Islamic point of view often gave detailed descriptions of Islamic teaching on sexual conduct, but did not relate it to the media nor did they further discuss or evaluate it.

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