
GCSE

Religious Studies A

8062/13 Christianity

Report on the Examination

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General Introduction to the November Series

This has been an unusual exam series in many ways. Entry patterns have been very different from those normally seen in the summer, and students had a very different experience in preparation for these exams. It is therefore more difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the range of student responses seen in this series and those seen in a normal summer series. The smaller entry also means that there is less evidence available for examiners to comment on.

In this report, senior examiners will summarise the performance of students in this series in a way that is as helpful as possible to teachers preparing future cohorts while taking into account the unusual circumstances and limited evidence available.

Overview of Entry

There were 419 students registered for this examination, whereas the normal summer series would be in excess of 100,000. Comparisons between the current entry and previous series are therefore difficult. There were mark entries across the complete range from 0 to 51, and across this range standards were broadly comparable with the standard seen in the 2019 entry. As with 2019, there has been no indication that 2020 students misunderstood any particular question and its requirements. The 2020 paper appears to have been as accessible as that for 2019.

Comments on Individual Questions

Questions 1.1 and 2.1 (multiple choice) were answered with around 92% accuracy for the former, and 87% for the latter. The same was true with the two-mark questions (1.2 & 2.2).

Question 1.3 ('Explain two ways in which belief in hell influences Christians today.'). This produced some thoughtful answers, including most of those given in the mark scheme, linking aspects of belief in hell with an appropriate influence. Some got so carried away with describing the possible nature of hell that they forgot to point to possible influences on Christians.

Question 1.4 ('Explain two Christian beliefs about the role of Jesus Christ in salvation.'). Most students referred (directly or indirectly) to the doctrine of the Atonement – that following the 'original sin', the suffering and death of Jesus were the means by which the right relationship between God and humanity was restored. Quite a number referred usefully (and thereby gaining the source mark) to the statement in 1 John that 'if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ. He is the atoning sacrifice for sins.' One unusual but creditworthy point developed by some, and not explicitly seen on the Mark Scheme, was the argument that Jesus' role in salvation began with the Incarnation, since Jesus had to be seen as being fully human in order to show that people can be saved.

Question 1.5 ('The resurrection of the dead is the most important Christian belief.'). 'The resurrection of the dead' can be taken to refer to the general case of humanity, or to the particular example of Jesus, or to both: a point which some developed usefully. The general consensus was the one stated forcefully by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:15-19): 'If the dead are not raised ... your faith is futile and you are still in your sins'. Students offered several other viewpoints, most commonly that Jesus' Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25) shows clearly that only those who follow God's teachings will be resurrected to God's kingdom: the rest will go to the eternal fire. To pick out

one further and popular argument, some argued that belief in resurrection of the dead is just one in a number of interlinked doctrines focused on the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, all of which are equally important. Further comments on this question appear in the concluding remarks.

Question 2.3 ('Explain two contrasting ways in which pilgrimage is experienced at Lourdes.'). Marked out of 4, the numerical 'mean' for answers was 1.85. The main issue was that many students did not know what Lourdes was/is, despite its being required for study. In so far as the word 'pilgrimage' is in the sentence, a number of students gained some marks by referring to pilgrimage practices in general, most of which were included in the Mark Scheme as being applicable to Lourdes.

Question 2.4 ('Explain two reasons why evangelism is important for the Christian Church.'). As with Question 2.3, many students did not understand the key term, 'evangelism'. Marked out of 5, the numerical mean was 2.01. Those who understood the key term produced appropriate responses for 4 or 5 marks. In particular, Jesus' parting command at the Ascension was to make disciples of all nations and to teach them his commands (Matthew 28:19-20), and this was used as a clear source mark. Many of those who did not know the meaning of 'evangelism' saw the word 'angel' within 'evangelism', and wrote (sometimes at length) about angelology. This was valiant, but in vain. This question discriminated well between lower- and higher-attaining students.

Question 2.5 ('Christmas is the most important Christian celebration.'). Students appeared to enjoy this question. Those who agreed with the statement generally said that Christmas celebrates the Incarnation, without which there would have been no Messiah and no Christian teaching. For those who disagreed, most argued in favour of Easter because of the implications of Jesus' crucifixion and atonement. Some preferred the constant celebration of the Eucharist/Holy Communion, since this is visibly ongoing. Further comment on this question is given in the 'Concluding Remarks'.

Concluding Remarks

Responses to Questions 1.5 and 2.5 provide a clear focus for concluding remarks. The AO2 questions provide up to 24 of the 51 marks available for this paper (plus 4 for SpaG), so are important in many ways. However:

- The numerical mean for 1.5 was 6.01, and for 2.5 was 5.68, which shows that around half of all responses were Levels 1 & 2 rather than Levels 3 & 4.
- This was because many responses focused on the AO1 aspects of the 12-mark questions, whereas Levels 3 & 4 require evaluation. For Question 2.5, for example, many focused on the AO1 'facts' of Christmas-presents, love of family and friends, and the commercialisation of Christmas, and largely ignored the evaluative focus of the question. Many referred to Easter, but wrote primarily about Easter eggs and celebration rather than on the question. For Question 1.5, some focused on the Christian desire for resurrection rather than permanent death, but did not go so far as to evaluate where and why any particular belief is important.
- These points do not detract from those responses that were indeed evaluative and beautifully expressed, but they do underline the importance of studying the Levels of Response through from Level 1 to Level 4, and studying in particular the criteria that allow students to access one level rather than another.

For this series, in addition to the mark scheme, a general marking guidance document was provided to examiners across GCSE Religious Studies specifications to support marking. This document is available via Secure Key Materials for teachers should they wish to use it to support their marking of mock examinations.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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