



GCSE

# Religious Studies A

8062/16 Paper 1 Judaism

Report on the Examination

8062  
June 2024

Version: 1.0

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## General Comments

Centres are to be congratulated for the preparation of their students this year. In the main, all students made a good attempt at the paper, and the vast majority answered all of the questions. It was evident that they had been well taught, and had made sure that they gave sufficient time to questions 1.5 and 2.5. They took the paper seriously, and it was evident that teachers had trained their students in using relevant sources of authority to support their answers. The examining team felt the demands of this year's paper were comparable to previous series, with students able to achieve marks across the paper. The questions were accessible and straight-forward and students had no problem dealing with them. Marks were awarded across the ability spectrum.

### 1.1

Question 1.1 asked students to identify one idea that was not a moral principal in Judaism. The vast majority answered correctly with 'Waiting for the Messiah' thus getting them off to a confident start. Over 85% of students answered this correctly.

### 1.2

Question 1.2 asked students to explain two Jewish beliefs about the Shekinah. This appeared to have been a well-taught area of the specification. Many referred to the story of Moses and the journey to the Promised Land, and the majority were able to define the Shekinah as God's divine presence on earth. References were also made to the Feminine presence of God, and Shekinah being present in the minyan and during study. It was a well answered question with over 88% gaining full marks, and around 95% gaining 1 mark or more.

### 1.3

Question 1.3 asked students to explain two ways in which belief in God as Creator influences Jews today. Where the student had read 'Creator', they did well. They were able to apply the concepts to treatment of the world, stewardship and the responsibilities of dominionship. They often then applied the idea to the sanctity of human life, and the responsibility to respect human life. Over two fifths of students gained the full 4 marks where this approach had been taken. Weaker answers responded to the trigger word 'God' and went off topic discussing God as a judge and law giver, so losing valuable marks for weaker examination technique. However, almost 90% managed to secure 2 marks or more, applying some relevant subject knowledge to their answer.

### 1.4

Question 1.4 asked students to explain two Jewish beliefs about the role of Moses. It was evident that many students had studied Moses in detail and were able to discuss the Ten Commandments, the journey to the Promised Land for example. This was one of the most accessible questions on the paper, although the examining team were surprised that more students didn't pick up the mark for the sacred writing or another source of Jewish belief. This capped many students marks at 4, with just under 20% of students gaining full marks.

## 1.5

Question 1.5 asked students to evaluate whether the sanctity of human life was the most important teaching. The question was accessible provided students were able to construct an argument. It did differentiate by outcome. A number of students tried to use the principle of Pikuach Nefesh against the statement, which was unexpected. Just over 20% gained a level 4 or more. Some students used writing frames that sometime stifled their performance or led them into confusion. So students would write ‘this is a weak argument because’ or ‘this is a strong argument because’, and they would end up confusing their trains of thought, particularly those in the middle ability spectrum. More able students thrived with this technique, however. Almost two thirds gained a level 3 or above, and just under 90% a level 2 or above, so students gave a respectable performance on this question.

## Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

SPaG marks were good; centres are making more use of word processing for students who need it. Around two thirds of students gained the full 3 marks for SPaG, just over 20% gained 2 marks and only 5% 1 mark.

## 2.1

Question 2.1 asked students to recognise a brief definition of the Amidah. Over 69% of students were able to pick the correct definition, however, centres are reminded that students will benefit from learning specific key terms.

## 2.2

Question 2.2 asked students to explain two things that happened during a Bar Mitzvah ceremony. The mark scheme included specifically things that happened during the ceremony, and did not credit things done in preparation, for instance study. Just under 80% gained the full 2 marks, with around 90% gaining mark or more.

## 2.3

Question 2.3 asked students to explain two contrasting features between Orthodox and Reform synagogues. Nearly 5%, did not attempt the question. Most students mentioned the separation of men and women in the Orthodox denomination, and mixed seating in Reform synagogues. This was often explained with lack of distraction, and reference to equality, respectively. Another popular approach was to mention the way in which the Rabbi was facing during worship, and students were then able to elaborate on this. Some students laboured under the impression that Orthodox synagogues were ‘fancy’ and Reform were ‘plain’, or diverged by discussing the gender of rabbis, which was not a design feature. Some students just listed furniture items in the synagogue, without trying to differentiate between Orthodox and Reform denominations. However, a third of students gained full marks and nearly 50% gained 3 marks or more.

## **2.4**

Question 2.4 asked for two reasons why Jews worship on Shabbat. Again, a number of students were put off by this question, and nearly 7% did not attempt it. Of those that did attempt it, just below 50% gained 2 marks or more, with around 10% gaining 5 marks for the reference to the source of authority. Many answers made reference to Shabbat's relation to the creation story, and the observance of Shabbat in the family home.

## **2.5**

Question 2.5 asked for evaluation on the statement : 'Dietary laws are important for all Jews'. Weaker responses tended to become descriptive rather than evaluative, so there were many AO1 descriptions about what the dietary laws were, rather than whether they were important. Of those who did manage to answer the question, about 20% gained a level 4. Almost 60% gained a level 3 or above, with just under 90% achieving a level 2 or above.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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