



# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
(Specification B)**

**SUMMER 2009**

## **Statistical Information**

The Examiners' Report may refer in general terms to statistical outcomes. Statistical information on candidates' performances in all examination components (whether internally or externally assessed) is provided when results are issued. As well as the marks achieved by individual candidates, the following information can be obtained from these printouts:

*For each component:* the maximum mark, aggregation factor, mean mark and standard deviation of marks obtained by *all* candidates entered for the examination.

*For the subject or option:* the total entry and the lowest mark needed for the award of each grade.

## **Annual Statistical Report**

Other information on a centre basis is provided when results are issued. The annual *Statistical Report* (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

## **RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

### **General Certificate of Education**

### **Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**

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*Principal Examiner:* Mrs. Joy White, M.A., Senior Lecturer, PGCE Leader, Liverpool Hope University.

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## Option A: Papers 1 & 2: Religion and Life Issues

### General

The entry for this specification has continued to grow and as in previous years, many centres are to be commended for the very professional way in which candidates are prepared for this examination. It is clear that past mark schemes and past papers are being used by centres to prepare candidates thoroughly for the examination and the quality of responses to some of the questions show this; some are outstanding with both insight and mature comments. Both papers gave candidates the opportunity for a range of interesting, varied and challenging responses.

The papers this year provided for a range of differentiation with candidates achieving grades across the full range. Few candidates failed to attempt the majority of questions. A small number of candidates used continuation sheets to supplement their answers; centres should note that it is possible to achieve full marks in the space provided on the printed paper and there is no requirement for continuation sheets to be used. The use of bullet style or column answers for evaluation questions are always to be discouraged; these were few and far between this year.

As stated in previous years, some candidates did not demonstrate knowledge and understanding of specific religious teachings in those questions which required such knowledge. Candidates cannot achieve the higher level marks without knowledge and understanding. Often the standard of religious teaching content in answers is weak. A recurrent difficulty for some candidates is where different responses are required for explanations rather than descriptions. Candidates must answer the actual question asked on the paper and respond to the different triggers of 'how' and 'why' appropriately. This year the majority of candidates offered answers across the appropriate spectrum of religious traditions.

- Q.1
- (a) Too many candidates ignored the word 'married'; answers needed to refer to couples who were already married. Better answers referred to having children and renewing or keeping marriage vows.
  - (b) Excellent answers throughout – few candidates failed to achieve marks for this question.
  - (c) Generally good answers, mentioning the importance of vows and the effect on society of broken relationships caused by adultery.
  - (d) Although there were some good responses about remarriage, there were too many candidates who wrote simply about divorce and issues associated with it. The more able candidates made reference to the different perspectives within the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions.
  - (e) Often there was very weak knowledge about religious teachings – other than that sex should take place within marriage and general comments about adultery. Many made no reference to teachings about contraception. Many candidates did not use key terms in their answers.
  - (f) Some excellent answers. Candidates produced sound and well organised responses. The question was very accessible.

- Q.2
- (a) Many candidates achieved full marks, frequently giving appropriate examples in their answers.
  - (b) Excellent answers were the norm for this question. Some candidates gave very vague answers or repeated the term 'responsibility' without explaining it.
  - (c) Lots of candidates wrote freely and accurately about the work of different religious people such as Martin Luther King and as a result were able to score maximum marks. Some answers were simply generic and focused on equal rights rather than what religious believers have actually done.
  - (d) A lot of responses failed to answer the question 'why' and wrote about 'how' believers show concern for those in need.
  - (e) The majority of answers were based on the idea of God creating everyone – so that we are all equal. The best answers had a clear reference to equality between men and women as required in the question; some candidates ignored this and referred to equality in a general way.
  - (f) Some excellent responses – this type of question opened up an interesting debate about the important things in life. Many candidates included specific religious teaching relating to wealth. Higher level candidates used impressive articulation to reference gambling as a means to wealth.
- Q.3
- (a) Many relevant answers often reflecting a thoughtful and personal response to this question.
  - (b) Most candidates attempted this question; some used faith as another word for religion and gave good explanations.
  - (c) Some good answers where candidates had obviously been well taught – references to the Trinity, unseen power, no physical form, etc. Higher level candidates used lots of key terms in their answers. Generally a large number of candidates struggled with this question.
  - (d) Too many answers were descriptions of funeral rites rather than why religious believers have them – lots of information about the after life but on occasion little evidence of accurate religious teaching. A surprisingly large number of candidates confused 'rites' with 'rights' and gave answer based on 'human rights'.
  - (e) Many good answers reflecting the variety of ways that people respond to God through acts of benevolence and more religion orientated avenues. A number of candidates repeated answers and disadvantaged themselves in terms of possible marks. A large number of answers did not contain religious terms.
  - (f) Responses to this question were mixed. Many responses were too concerned with what happens after death rather than whether or not humans should believe in life after death. Very few answers argued that belief in life after death is central to all religious believers and as a result governs how they live this life. Lots of answers lacked depth. This was one of the most difficult questions for candidates.

- Q.4 (a) Many excellent answers.
- (b) A huge range of different responses from candidates. Some candidates gave a weak definition. Others simply repeated their first point.
- (c) Very little explanations of reasons – mostly limited accounts of what happened on Good Friday and secular ideas about eggs, hot cross buns and the like. It is surprising at this level that some candidates wrote about Easter as being a celebration of Jesus' birthday. Far too many candidates used the term 'reincarnated' in reference to this question.
- (d) Many candidates showed good knowledge of religious symbols and were able to demonstrate why symbols are important to religious believers.
- (e) A mixed response depending on the centre marking. Some candidates gave outstanding and detailed descriptions, which was the requirement of the question. Some candidates appeared to have a very weak understanding and knowledge of Christianity. There were some very confused answers about baptism and confirmation. Some candidates struggled to write about a ceremony from a different religious tradition.
- (f) Many good answers showing sensible debate about choices in life. The majority argued that there was choice in many areas of life with reference to predestination, duty, free will and laws.
- Q.5 (a) Good answers reflecting the need for conservation, to recycle and reduce global warming. Again it is important to note that repetitive answers will not achieve full marks; there should be two different answers.
- (b) Excellent answers – most candidates recognised the term 'humanity' as the whole of the human race.
- (c) Excellent answers demonstrating understanding of the ideas of stewardship and the procreation of humanity. There was evidence of some good use of religious text in answers.
- (d) Many good answers. The vocational role usually had a focus on the medical profession and the priesthood. In the best answers there was a link between specific talents and a way of using them for God. There were other answers that referred to the basic idea of helping others through the use of different skills.
- (e) Very little evidence of 'teachings'. Most answers were to do with people looking after the environment, caring for animals (not using them for food or experiments) and generally conserving. It is disappointing that many candidates made little reference to a religious teaching.
- (f) Answers were generally focussed on the idea of God creating all living things – because man has a greater intelligence, he should take care of animals – this often led to a discussion about animal rights. Some candidates used the 'religion versus science' debate. The higher level answers included comments on concepts such as morality, religious practices and the soul.

## **Option B: Religion and Human Experience**

There was an increased entry again this year with a greater number of centres entering whole cohorts.

It was particularly pleasing to see the impact of the INSET's that had taken place during the year with candidates making greater use of the visual stimuli and fewer gaps in the exam paper. It was disappointing to note that some whole centres were unable to attempt answers on key specification content-notably the story of Job and Oscar Romero.

Candidates showed an increasing understanding of key concepts and beliefs but were often unable to apply those to a wide range of questions. At times the understanding and use of specialist terms were compartmentalised into set units rather than being transferred throughout the paper.

### **Unit One**

There were many examples that candidates had engaged with this unit and were able to produce some high level understanding and reasoning.

- (a) Well answered. Candidates were able to refer to a range of factors such as negotiation and different peace groups. Some candidates made reference to the role that inter-faith dialogue could play.
- (b) This was very well answered. Candidates were able to often give a relevant example or explain reconciliation in practice.
- (c) Most candidates were able to give two different reasons and too explain the rationale behind them.
- (d) Most candidates understood what was meant to by a Just War and were able to explain two different conditions.
- (e) Most candidates selected Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks or Ghandi. Some candidates described the work of the person or gave a brief bibliography rather than describing the use of non-violence in their actions.
- (f) There were some very pleasing answers in which candidates incorporated moral reasoning and relevant reference to sacred texts. Some particularly high level answers were able to relate and apply key concepts or teaching from other units, e.g. suffering, the role of conscience and the authority of sacred texts.

### **Unit Two**

- (a) Usually well answered with a variety of body parts mentioned! It did become apparent that some candidates did not have a full understanding of what was meant by transplant.
- (b) Sanctity of Life is a key concept that is central not only to the unit but the whole paper. It was disappointing how many candidates were unable to give a clear definition and often confused the term with quality of life.
- (c) Usually well answered with references to moral and religious reasoning.

(d) Many candidates were aware of religious teachings about the use of IVF and explained how those specific teachings would help someone make a decision.

(e) Many candidates were able to explain that often it would depend upon individual belief and the role of interpretation of scriptures/religious teachings and conscience.

Some candidates considered that the two religious traditions had to have contrasting views rather than explaining similarities.

(f) There were some excellent answers in which candidates applied a range of religious teachings and key terms from across the paper such as quality of life, sanctity of life, conscience, suffering etc. This question allowed candidates to utilise their understanding of a range of different elements of the unit such as medical ethics and life and death decisions.

### **Unit Three**

(a) Candidates referred to a range of different rules.

(b) Most candidates were able to give a definition with an appropriate example.

(c) There were many good answers to this question with candidates able to show an understanding and relate to a relevant example from one of the religious traditions studied.

(d) Although some candidates were able to give good examples it was apparent that many candidates had not encountered this area of the specification.

(e) Usually well answered with candidates generally being able to illustrate how the places of worship help religious believers rather than just describing the place.

(f) There were some excellent answers here where candidates applied learning from this unit and other units into their answers. Some candidates made particular reference to the work of Corrymeela and Neve Shalom.

### **Unit Four**

(a) There were some disappointing responses where candidates repeated the same answer-normally connected with fear of punishment. Some candidates referred to religious law which showed a high level of understanding.

(b) Most candidates had an awareness of what was meant by 'human rights' but often found it difficult to explain the term. Candidate's answers were supported with the use of a relevant example.

(c) Usually candidates were able to give two different reasons. A few candidates misread the question and gave a description of two religious teachings or books.

- (d) There was a huge disparity in the quality of answers to this question. Some candidates incorporated the bus boycott or Salt March into their answers and showed little awareness at all of Oscar Romero. Some candidates gave a brief biography but did not indicate how Romero stood up for human rights.
- (e) There were some very good answers where candidates had engaged with contemporary issues and other issues encountered in the specification. Many references were made to the wearing of hijab, conscientious objectors, capital punishment, euthanasia and abortion.
- (f) This question produced some excellent answers where candidates showed an understanding of the issue and were able to incorporate religious and moral reasoning. For some candidates although they had plenty to say it was apparent that further marks would have been awarded with a better structure and greater use of key language.

### **Unit Five**

There were some disappointing answers in this unit. Candidates often gave superficial answers which failed to reflect an understanding of the key concepts or Issues.

- (a) Usually well answered with candidates often giving relevant answers.
- (b) Candidates often referred to having choice with little further description or illustration.
- (c) There were some excellent answers which reflected a through understanding of key religious teachings. Some candidates however were unable to use any religious terms in their answers.
- (d) Answers either showed candidates were aware of the teachings of Job or had not explored the story at all. For those who had explored the story they were often able to utilise their understanding to other answers to this unit.
- (e) Candidates were usually able to refer to two different ways that religion can help someone suffering although there was often a lack of specialist language used.
- (f) There were some excellent answers in which candidates were able to apply their understanding of many of the issues within the specification including just war, medical ethics, quality of life, the role of conscience, sacred teachings, authority, human rights, the role of the devil and different types of suffering.

## Option B: Coursework

With this being the penultimate year for the submission of coursework, it came as no surprise that the number of entries for this option was considerably down on previous years. Even some centres that have been die-hard stalwarts of coursework were noticeably missing, and with some centres having already given us notification that from now on they will be going down the non-coursework route, we can only be left to speculate on the numbers for the next – and final – opportunity to take advantage of this beneficial method of assessment. We shall see. I continue to believe that the skills used in producing the various elements of the coursework such as description, exemplification, analysis and evaluation, assist those pupils in answering the units on the examination papers, as well as providing some sort of safety net for those pupils who do not perform well under examination conditions or who are C/D borderline. The benefits of this option are not simply limited to ensuring that there is less revision to do come exam time!

As in previous years, the purpose of this report is essentially to highlight areas where there may be some weaknesses so that any teachers who recognise them will take the comments on board and rectify whatever errors may have occurred. However, with every submission of coursework, it's evident to the team of moderators that some centres clearly don't read or pay scant attention to the report (in some instances we've even questioned whether the comments on the individual school reports have been acted upon!) as we find the same mistakes occurring which were drawn attention to in the previous year's report, and sometimes in reports prior to that also. This is extremely frustrating for us all as I don't write this report in isolation - I receive comments and observations from all the moderators on the schools they've dealt with – with the express purpose of helping all students concerned to achieve the highest marks possible. I am fully aware that the centres these comments are aimed at are probably not reading this report now, but I live in hope. This year has actually been quite strange in that areas of weakness that, by and large, seemed to have disappeared in the last few years e.g. including Christian Aid and CAFOD in the "Our World" AO2 question without any reference to their environmental policies, have crept back in this year's samples. I don't really know why this should have happened, but hopefully we won't see evidence of this next year.

The vast majority of the centres undertaking this option, as has always been the case, use the exemplar material provided by the examination board and consequently use the corresponding mark scheme. What we have noticed this year, however, which goes against the trend of recent years, is that more centres failed to include this mark scheme with their administration. Please remember that you cannot assume the moderator knows that if you are using the exemplar questions that you are using the exemplar mark scheme also. In all probability you are, which we can see from the annotation provided, but as the annotation from some centres continue to leave a lot to be desired, then a mark scheme is essential. I apologise to those centres which never fail to submit all the correct administrative documents, but it has to be said for those which don't.

Before I move on to look at each individual assessment objective I feel I should comment in general terms on the work submitted this year. All of us have noticed that there is a further increase in the lack of individuality in students' work as I have mentioned in several previous reports. I appreciate that resources are limited and budgets tight, but there is no reason why all pupils from the same school should have essentially the same information in the opening paragraph, the same exemplification in the next paragraph and the next and the next. There are such things as libraries and the internet and even if they are all using the same information, it doesn't mean that the format of their work has to be identical. Having said that, we have once again received some outstanding work which would put some A level students to shame. (It could even be said that perhaps some teachers are actually expecting **too** much from their students in order to achieve the higher levels!)

Their dedication to producing work of the highest standard has to be congratulated as does the work of all the students of all abilities. They have clearly engaged with the topics and have, to a great extent, produced responses which demonstrate that they are developing individuals with strong opinions. The obvious guidance and effort given by teachers should also be highlighted as they have ensured that their students go into the examinations knowing that they already have achieved the best marks they could for two of the units.

## AO1

The main focus of the Christian aspect for the “Our World” question is the Genesis chapter 1 account and yet some centres still continue to include, in some detail, chapter 2 as well. There is also no need to describe the creation story in full and both of these points can result in students going over the word limit. Although they do not get penalised for this and the word limit is only given as a guide to how much should be included, the limit is still given for a reason. We have had some ridiculously long answers this year e.g. where AO1 (i) (from the perspective of two religions) has actually exceeded the total word count for the entire coursework because numerous responses to the understanding of Genesis chapter 1 have been included when the question only asks for one. In such cases teachers must give advice to the students. It is a skill to be cultivated to be able to respond succinctly and concisely and students need to understand this. It is perfectly possible to gain full marks by keeping more or less to the word limit. (Remember that quotations are not included in the word count).

Two other points that should be drawn attention to is that both literalists and non-literalists are Christians – they all believe that God is the creator - and that the question does not have a focus of science versus religion or whether God actually exists. With regard to “Suffering and Evil”, a number of pupils don’t seem to make the connection between freewill and original sin and a number of pupils gave great detail of the different types of suffering rather than reasons for it (something we thought had generally disappeared). There is nothing wrong in **briefly** referring to different types possibly as an introduction, but that’s as far as it should go. Also, if the perspective of two religions is asked for then please ensure that if only one is given, the mark should reflect that. We had one instance where full marks were given for half a piece of work and even the cross moderation agreed with that!

## AO2

The understanding of stewardship and the response of religious believers to this was generally very good. However, as I have already mentioned, organisations have to be referred to because of their environmental policies which have a direct link to their religious beliefs. If secular organisations are mentioned that should be noted, but perhaps their similarities to the aims of religious groups could be drawn out. Chico Mendez made his regular appearance, but some students failed to show that his environmental commitment stemmed from his religious beliefs. On a final note, Thanksgiving Day in the USA made its inaugural appearance in this section and the fact that it has nothing to do with the environment wasn’t even corrected! The answers to the “Evil and Suffering” AO2 question continue to be the ones where students are either given incorrect guidance or fail to understand the focus of the question. The question does not ask for responses to suffering, but how religious teachings help those who are suffering. In order to get the higher levels students should refer to specific teachings and show their understanding of how these teachings help sufferers. Some centres gave great detail about e.g. the work of the Salvation Army but didn’t explain at all why its members are committed to the care of others. Which religious teachings have inspired them to do this work? Other centres gave entire biographies of religious personalities! There is nothing wrong with referring to prayer in this question but only if the students give the relevant religious teachings related to prayer and then show an understanding of how that helps people who are suffering. Also some candidates refer to Biblical texts eg Hebrews 12:6 without actually quoting the particular reference which is obviously necessary in order to establish the point being made.

## AO3

We had some very interesting answers to the question of heaven and suffering and it's clear that the majority of students find this a topic on which they have a range of opinions and which they can really "get their teeth into". The one issue that we all referred to, however, as being a weakness in this section, was that a number of students wrote plenty about whether heaven existed or not, but failed to address the second part of the question about whether suffering stopped. Please ensure that your students include a discussion on whether there is suffering after death and don't just explain religious beliefs and teachings about life after death. This question also shouldn't end up as a detailed account of paranormal activities! Students also had strong opinions about the issues raised in the "Our World" question. Possibly more reference to religious beliefs would have enhanced some answers, as would a wider variety of examples of exploitation and reasons why animals are killed. A number of answers debated the vegetarian issue and nothing else.

### General points

- Most centres annotate their work well – some superbly - but there continue to be examples of a virtual lack of annotation (which should be included throughout the work and not just at the end of each section). There have been instances this year where entire pieces of work have not even been given a tick let alone anything else, where spellings of subject specific words in particular are left uncorrected and incorrect religious facts are not referred to, e.g. "Islam is against eating meat".
- QWC marks are generally accurate although we have had instances of full marks being given when candidates can barely string a sentence together. On this point also, an increasing number of students are using text messaging language which, of course, is not acceptable. On the other hand, I had very few examples of "ok" being used. As this is a particular issue of mine, I am very grateful for all attempts to stamp this out.
- It is important that the work submitted is authenticated by both the student and the teacher. There have been several instances this year of one or other signature missing and until they are produced the student cannot be awarded a grade. I have mentioned in a previous report that some students were clearly going in for a career in medicine as their signatures were almost illegible. Some students in this year's cohort obviously want to be known as "the student formerly known as ....." as their signatures were no more than a few dots and a dash!
- Please check that the correct marks are recorded on the appropriate forms and that they correspond not only on the actual work and the RS2 form, but also on the RS2 and the RS1.2 form (and that they are added correctly). Having said this, the standard of administration was generally very good this year, for which all the moderators are grateful.

With the demise of the coursework option fast approaching, it is still encouraging to see that some centres continue to view this as a process with definite benefits. Moderating the good practice that is evident in the work of the vast majority of the students has once again been a worthwhile experience for all the moderators and they would like to extend their thanks to centres for making it, as I have said before, "a relatively pain-free and ultimately rewarding one."



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