



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES
(FULL AND SHORT COURSE)
GCSE**

AUTUMN 2021

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COMPONENT 1: RELIGIOUS, PHILOSOPHICAL AND ETHICAL STUDIES IN THE MODERN WORLD

General Comments

In contrast to the normal candidature entry, this report reflects findings from a very small number of responses (fewer than 50). The religions addressed by most candidates were Christianity, Islam and Judaism with very few responses from Buddhism, Sikhism or Hinduism.

Although there were a small number of candidates, the paper responses indicated that all questions were accessible. The responses also indicated that the paper differentiated well with a wide range of outcomes. The vast majority of candidates attempted all the questions, although it was disappointing to see that in a few examples no questions were attempted across the whole paper.

This report will consider findings for each of the 'question types' before a general consideration of emerging findings.

Generally, the 'a' or key concept questions were well answered. Often, candidates expressed their understanding with a developed statement or an appropriate example. It was disappointing to see that some candidates failed to refer to 'absolute poverty' as demanded by 4a. and instead referred generally to poverty. Most candidates seemed to be aware that the 'a' question always relate to one of the key concepts in the specification. There were examples, however, of some candidates expressing no understanding about the central role of key concepts in the specification.

The generally pleasing recognition of the meaning of the key concepts in the 'a' questions was not reflected in the 'b,' 'c' and 'd' questions. Few responses **used** relevant key concepts in their explanations or descriptions even though, if they are used appropriately and accurately, they can be credited as religious and specialist terminology

Generally, the 'b' questions lacked a depth of knowledge and description. Although clearly stated in the specification content, few candidates knew relevant details about dignity in dying (2b.) or prison reformers (3b.). Although the standard of response was generally better in 4d., it was disappointing that no candidates referred to a charity that aims to prevent prejudice. Again, the specification refers to several that candidates could choose from including JCore and Christian/Muslim Forum. The majority of responses in 4b. referred to Rosa Parkes and Martin Luther King.

Generally, the 'c' questions gave some understanding of Christianity but little relevant reference to the second religious tradition. Responses indicated that many candidates had learned sources of authority which they used within their responses. It was disappointing that many candidates failed to answer the actual question asked. This was particularly apparent in 2c. and 4c.

There was no indication that candidates were unable to answer the 'd' questions due to pressures of time. There were some high-level responses which used a range of valid arguments and specialist language to justify their evaluations. Many responses, however, were very limited and gave only one or two relevant arguments and little evidence or justification. Responses often included sources of authority but, disappointingly, often failed to explain how these sources were relevant to the argument being made.

Although there were few responses in comparison to the usual Summer series certain familiar trends were evident in the candidate responses.

Particularly apparent in many responses was a faulty schema of a basic knowledge and understanding of a religious tradition. There were many examples of responses in which key elements of a religious faith were confused e.g. 'When Muslims go to church...'
'Muhammad is important in Judaism as he led the Israelites out of the wilderness...'
Many responses showed fragments of knowledge and recall but not how they form a structure of a distinct religious tradition.

The majority of responses to 2d. met the demands of referring to a non-religious tradition, usually Humanism. As previous reports have identified, some responses show little understanding of Humanism as a non-religious perspective and instead assign characteristics that are the opposite to Christianity. Again, many references are made to the faulty idea that Humanists value free will above all and embrace hedonistic practices.

Many of the responses included actual citations from sources of authority. Although actual citations are not required within the criteria they will, of course, be credited where relevant. Some responses failed to make links with the citations at all with some candidates finishing a response with a citation but making no reference to the context or appropriateness of the citation.

There was a wider range of responses which referred to practices and beliefs of different Christian denominations e.g. Seventh Day Adventist Church and Christadelphian Church. Responses often described distinctive practices, as witnessed, but failed to explain the significance of such practices and/or use specialist language in responses.

Although it was pleasing to see that the majority of questions were answered, it was disappointing that a significant minority of responses failed to actually address the question. This was particularly evident in question 2c. when many responses discussed religious funerals from two traditions but did not explain how the funerals reflected beliefs in the afterlife. Similarly, in question 4c. some responses focussed on religious beliefs about life rather than the dignity of life.

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COMPONENT 2: CHRISTIANITY

General Comments

The paper was accessible although a number of candidates did not attempt questions. Marks were frequently awarded in the lower bands with few responses achieving high band marks.

Comments on individual questions/sections

1(a) Few candidates used the complete Eduqas definition but many correctly referenced the idea of omnipotence to God.

In 2(a) a number of candidates achieved one mark, for example, but were unable to correctly give a definition of sacraments. A number of candidates did not attempt the (a) questions.

The responses to 1(b) were very weak; many candidates did not appear able to describe the Ascension of Jesus, and a significant number of candidates simply described the crucifixion of Jesus.

The responses to 2(b) were generally a generic description of charity work, and a number of candidates did not appear to understand the distinctive nature of the work of Tear Fund.

In 1(c) responses, most candidates simply wrote about Christian beliefs about the Holy Spirit and did not focus their responses on the actual question in relation to worship and so achieved low band marks. A few candidates correctly focused on the actual question and gave an explanation of Christian beliefs about the Holy Spirit within the context of worship. In the 2(c) responses, the majority of answers gave a generic explanation of the importance of pilgrimage, without any reference to Walsingham.

In the (d) response, evaluation was often limited to the lower bands; arguments need to be evaluated in order to move up the band descriptors.

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COMPONENT 3: ISLAM

General Comments

The paper was accessible although a number of candidates did not attempt questions. Marks were frequently awarded in the lower bands with few responses achieving high band marks. There appeared to be a lack of detailed knowledge of the religion of Islam across many of the responses.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Few candidates used the Eduqas 'definitions' for the 1(a) responses and a significant number of candidates did not attempt the 1(a) question. In the 2(a) responses, many candidates did not appear to recognise the term.

The (b) responses were generally in band 1 or band 2; very limited descriptions with generic responses used for 2(b) and a number of candidates confused Id-ul-Adha with Id-ul-Fitr. Some candidates offered an explanation rather than the required description for the (b) questions.

The responses to the (c) questions were limited; few candidates used the space available to offer an explanation and responses were frequently generic; candidates demonstrated low level understanding of the nature of hell. When explaining why Muslims are encouraged to do good, a number of candidates quoted from the New Testament. It is important candidates maintain the integrity of Islam as a world religion and use relevant quotations from the Qur'an.

In the extended response for the (d) questions, many candidates failed to use the space available. A number of responses were more descriptive in nature with very limited evaluation. In the (d) question on prophethood, many responses simply focused on a comparison of Adam and the Prophet Muhammad, with no further reference to any other prophets. In the (d) question on pilgrimage, candidates failed to address the actual statement provided in the question and offered a general discussion around the topic of pilgrimage.



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