

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

International GCSE Religious  
Studies 4RS0

Paper 01

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## **Introduction**

This specification was examined for the fourth time this year.

The examination was in 2 parts. Part 1 consisted of 4 sections and candidates were required to answer one question from each section. Part 2 consisted of 6 sections, each asking questions from the perspective of a specific religion. Candidates were asked to answer two questions from Part 2.

All questions included sub-questions that were designed to assess both AO1 and AO2.

Some candidates displayed an excellent detailed knowledge and understanding of specific religious teachings and practices and were able to look at other points of view objectively. At the same time, there were candidates who appeared to have only limited knowledge and understanding of the specification, and who sometimes wrote a great deal of general knowledge surrounding a topic, without directly addressing the specific question. Specifically in relation to (d) questions in Part 1 and (c) questions in Part 2, some candidates seemed unable to consider the topic from more than one point of view. That meant they were only able to achieve Level 3 (out of a possible 5) for these questions.

By far the vast majority of answers were from the perspective of Christianity and Islam.

## **Report on specific questions**

It is not possible to report on answers to all the questions on this year's examination because not all of them were answered, and some were answered by very few candidates, making objective comment on such questions impossible. However, this report will try to illustrate both specific and general strengths and weaknesses wherever possible.

## **PART 1: Beliefs and Values**

### **Section A: The universe, human beings and their destiny**

#### **Question 1**

This question was popular and was answered well, though there were specific examples where candidates seemed to make similar mistakes. Questions (a) and (d) provided some very good responses from candidates. There were a minority of candidates who struggled with what parts (b) and (c) were asking of them.

#### Question 1(a)

This question was answered quite well, there were various ways in which the question could be answered. This was a question where candidates either seemed to know the answer or did not; this highlights the need for careful learning of the key words.

#### Question 1(b)

Part (b) was answered well on occasion. Often however, candidates answered the question by outlining the teachings about selfishness in a particular religion rather than linking it to the cause of human suffering. Candidates need to read the question carefully and ensure that their answer is focussed on its demands.

#### Question 1(c)

This question was generally answered very well. Candidates were able to suggest many reasons why religious people believe in life after death. Candidates were free to answer from a generic religious position, or from one chosen religion. Some candidates answered using more than one religion which is perfectly acceptable in a question phrased like this one. A minority of candidates while answering the question also felt a need to describe beliefs about life after death; this was not the focus of the question and candidates need to address the question asked.

#### Question 1(d)

Answers to part (d) questions follow a format. High level answers are looking for both sides of an argument (usually two reasons on each side), a personal conclusion and reference to a named religion. In this question candidates often found it straightforward to refer to a named religion and as such accessed the full range of marks. The responses that were given to this question showed candidates understood what was being asked and came up with both simple and complex arguments.

#### Question 2(a)

The question was answered very well as candidates seemed to have a good understanding of what rebirth is.

#### Question 2(b)

A large number of candidates were able to correctly identify teachings about the relationship of humans to animals. This question produced some very good answers and showed that they understood the teachings of one religion. This is the type of question where only one religion can be credited in the response.

#### Question 2(c)

This question was attempted well by candidates of all abilities. Candidates were able to non-religious reasons well. Answers were able to be given that provided reasons accompanied by development. Care should be taken by candidates to check what the question is asking, and that reference to religious people would not be credited. Also answers that failed to recognise

reasons for and against, as required by the question, could not go beyond level 3.

#### Question 2(d)

The question needed candidates to evaluate a statement about whether immortality of the soul is the only possible explanation for life after death. Most candidates responded well, but some struggled to provide alternative reasons in the opposing view, as such they were limited to level 3. In (d) questions both sides of the argument must be given to achieve higher levels.

### **Section B: Ultimate reality and the meaning of life**

#### Question 3(a)

This question was answered well as most candidates seemed to know what abortion is. This was very straightforward for candidates.

#### Question 3(b)

Most candidates were able to outline how the appearance of design could lead to belief in God. Candidates seemed well versed in what various elements of the design argument and how they link to belief in God.

#### Question 3(c)

In exploring why religious people may have differing attitudes towards celibacy, candidates were often able to explain why one view was held, some candidates did not offer differing attitudes which must be addressed in a question that demands such. This is a further example of a question that could utilise material from more than one religion. While not required this enabled some candidates to reach the higher levels. Others were able to do this very well using just one religion.

#### Question 3(d)

This produced a number of well-balanced answers. Candidates engaged well with this question and seemed to be able to express themselves very well on both sides of the argument. Care needs to be taken when answering these questions to name a religion rather than relying on general religious arguments; failure to do so limits any response however well developed or balanced to 3 marks.

#### Question 4(a)

Generally well answered. This is a word that candidates seemed to have learned well.

#### Question 4(b)

This question asked candidates to outline the purpose of life in one religion. The scope for answers was fairly wide. Candidates linked their chosen teachings to the purpose of life well.

#### Question 4(c)

Some candidates struggled with this question. They were able to articulate what is meant by sanctity of life, but failed to make links as to why this is important for religious people. The better answers were able to draw on

material such as a basis for moral choices in areas such as euthanasia and abortion. Others linked it with other areas of specification knowledge which was perfectly acceptable.

#### Question 4(d)

This question caused few problems for candidates. Arguments for and against euthanasia seem to be developed well by candidates.

### **Section C: Relationships, families and children**

#### Question 5(a)

This question was answered well as most candidates seemed to have learned the definition, or they could utilise the knowledge developed from their studies to suggest possible definitions.

#### Question 5(b)

Most candidates were able to outline non-religious attitudes to family life. Some candidates explored the attitudes to the changing nature of family life, while elements of these answers were creditable it was much harder for candidates to evidence their learning in this approach.

#### Question 5(c)

In exploring why religious people may have differing attitudes towards celibacy, candidates were often able to explain why one view was held, some candidates did not offer differing attitudes which must be addressed in a question that demands such. This is a further example of a question that could utilise material from more than one religion. While not required this enabled some candidates to reach the higher levels. Others were able to do this very well using just one religion.

#### Question 5(d)

This produced a number of well-balanced answers. Care needs to be taken when answering these questions to name a religion rather than relying on general religious arguments; failure to do so limits any response however well developed or balanced to 3 marks.

#### Question 6(a)

Generally well answered. This is a word that candidates seemed to have learned well.

#### Question 6(b)

This question asked candidates to outline religious attitudes to remarriage. Candidates seemed to answer this question well. A small number of candidates strayed into a discussion about divorce which was not the focus of the question. Care should be taken to ensure that while taught together, these teachings can often be separated in the examination.

#### Question 6(c)

This was a well answered question overall, with many candidates able to offer a range of reasons why some religious people allow divorce. Conversely to usual candidates sometimes strayed into offering both sides of the argument, which the question did not ask for and could not be credited. A careful reading of the question would have served the candidates well.

#### Question 6(d)

This question caused few problems for candidates. Responses generally focused around the arguments for and against civil partnerships and many different reasons for the supporting views.

### **Section D: Rights, equality and responsibilities.**

#### Question 7(a)

Candidates were generally able to explain what is meant by discrimination. Some candidates limited themselves to 1 mark by providing examples rather than a definition, similarly some stopped with a definition of prejudice. Care should be taken in learning the key words.

#### Question 7(b)

This question was sometimes not answered well. Most candidates outlined what is meant by human rights rather than non-religious attitudes to human rights. Some, however, found this very straightforward and could suggest many attitudes which were developed with examples.

#### Question 7(c)

This question provided some very good answers with examples being given as to how racial harmony could be developed. This showed candidates understanding of the variety of applications of religious teachings. A significant minority focussed on teachings about racism which was not the focus of the question.

#### Question 7(d)

Some very balanced discussions. Candidates seemed to find this question straightforward. However, this was a question where candidates often forgot to name a religion and as such limited the available marks.

#### Question 8(a)

Exclusivism was generally well understood overall. As a word not in general use, the glossary definition was the answer most often seen.

#### Question 8(b)

Candidates generally answered this question well, and were able to outline one religion's attitudes to racism.

#### Question 8(c)

Candidates engaged well with this question and were able to develop the reasons they gave with specific examples. This question provided some excellent responses.

#### Question 8(d)

Candidates generally answered this question well, but a large number struggled to recognise the alternative viewpoint. It is important that candidates recognise that no matter how they feel about an issue, there is always an alternative viewpoint.

### **PART 2: The Religious Community**

Not all questions of this part of the paper were answered. Indeed, by far the vast majority of answers related either to Christianity or to Islam. It will therefore be more useful to offer some general observations on how the questions were approached, and illustrate them with reference to some specific questions.

#### **(a) Questions**

These questions asked for knowledge about certain aspects of the beliefs and practices of religious communities. With ten marks available the answers needed to be fairly detailed and comprehensive. In fact, some answers were very full and gained high marks. Some showed an excellent command of the detail of events and teachings. However some of the responses were far too short and/or general to gain more than half of the marks. There were also examples of questions not being read thoroughly or only partially understood.

#### Question 12(a)

This question asked for an outline of how the Bible is used within any one named denomination. Candidates who failed to name a denomination were unable to achieve beyond level 1. The scope for answers was large and candidates offered responses that were aspects of private or public devotion and guidance.

#### Question 19(a)

This question asked how halal could be shown in practice. Most candidates limited their answers to the killing of animals. The answers which achieved more highly referred to more than the food 'example' because the question asked for examples.

#### Question 20(a)

This question asked for an outline of how the Qur'an was revealed. There were some very detailed answers, but there were also a large number of very brief answers that only referred to the cave at Mt Hira rather than developing this.

#### Question 21(a)

This question asked candidates to outline stories from the life of Moses which showed his faith in the Almighty. Candidates were adept at linking stories with faith in the Almighty- there were many good examples of candidates meeting the demands of the question.

### **(b) Questions**

These questions asked for an explanation of specific religious teachings or activities. Again it should be noted that each question is worth ten marks, and they need to be slightly fuller than answers to (c) questions in Part 1. Many candidates displayed a good understanding of beliefs and practices, sometimes at a very sophisticated level indeed. There were, however, some recurring weaknesses that might usefully be illustrated.

#### Question 10 and 12(b)

This question referred to two specific places in Buddhism (10) and Christianity (12). While the balance of the answer does not have to be split in half, some reference to both places in questions of this type has to be made.

#### Question 13(b)

This question asked about the contribution of one Christian to the development of Christianity. Credit was given to people such as the Virgin Mary but the vast majority of answers referred to Martin Luther king, Paul or Dietrich Bonhoeffer. There were some excellent answers, but a large minority described the person's life with little or no reference to the contribution they made which was the focus of the question.

#### Question 20(b)

This question asked why Muslims might perform birth rites. Often candidates described the rites and made no link to why they might be performed. Care should be taken to read the demands of the question carefully.

### **(c) Questions**

These are very similar to (d) questions in Part 1 and in fact carry the same number of marks. They ask for a balanced answer, with reasons for two points of view and a clear indication of why the candidate favours one or the other. Many candidates could do this effectively, though quite a large number only gave reasons for one point of view. This was far more prevalent in Part 2 than in Part 1.

## HOW TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

Following on from this report, it is possible to suggest a number of simple ways in which candidates can be helped to improve their performance:

- Candidates should be encouraged to be aware that questions can be asked from a religious or a non-religious perspective, or both.
- They should look out for questions that ask about 'different' points of view or reasons. Such questions require at least two perspectives.
- Where questions ask for "why", candidates should recognise that more than description is being asked for.
- Where some questions ask for one-sided views, for example, why some Christians do not accept divorce, candidates should recognise that only one view is being asked for and being credited.
- Candidates need to read the questions carefully to avoid limiting the number of marks available to them. In this paper examples included reading religious instead of non-religious, why rather than how, and naming a Christian denomination.
- When asked to discuss an argument or proposition (in (d) questions in Part 1 and (c) questions in Part 2) they must give reasons for and against. Failing to do so means they will be marked out of 3 (rather than 5 marks). They also need to indicate which point of view they support and why. In addition, they need to indicate a named religion in part 1 or be limited to level 3.
- Candidates should allocate sufficient time for Part 2. It is worth almost 40% of the total marks. Also, both the (a) and (b) questions carry 10 marks each and should usually be answered at some length. There is no requirement to begin at question 1 and work through the paper. Some candidates very obviously began with part 2. Whatever works best for the candidate is permissible.



## **Grade Boundaries**

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<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

