

**Religious Studies C  
Religion and Belief in Today's World (Pilot)**

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J622**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (short course) **J122**

**OCR Report to Centres**

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**June 2012**

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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## **CONTENTS**

### **General Certificate of Secondary Education**

**Religious Studies C (Religion and Belief in Today's World (Pilot)) (J622)**

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## **OCR REPORT TO CENTRES**

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
B611 Religion and Belief in the Modern World	1
B612 Religion, Politics and Culture in Britain	3
B613 The Individual	5
B614 Community Cohesion and the Individual	7

# **B611 Religion and Belief in the Modern World**

## **General Comments**

Overall candidates performed well on this paper which allowed for differentiation at all levels of ability. The unique nature of the specification was reflected in the engagement of the candidates with the questions and the issues raised by them.

Candidates of all abilities attempted all sections and gained marks, and no section appeared significantly less popular or accessible. Key Area 3 was less popular overall than has been the case in previous years.

Many candidates demonstrated 'joined up thinking' in the way in which they utilised material drawn from one area of the paper to answer questions in another area, such as using the new religious movements from Area 3 to provide alternative viewpoints in the part c) questions. Some evidence was seen of expansion beyond the specification requirements, for example, candidates including Mormonism within the New Religious Movements section.

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### **1a**

Most candidates had clearly read that the question required reference to two countries and few candidates only offered material from one. The UK and France were the most popular choices of country and most candidates were able to identify the role of Humanist groups within those societies. Some candidates seemed confused as to how to distinguish between secularism and humanism when it came to their consideration of humanism in France.

### **1b**

Candidates found this a more challenging question than part a). Most candidates chose to answer from the UK perspective as only one country was required and, whilst they were almost all clear on what the term 'secularism' means, some candidates found it challenging to move beyond the role of religion in state and government. The best answers were able to move from the official position of religion to consider matters such as regular church attendance or affiliation to a religion on the census.

### **1c**

Students of all abilities appeared to engage with this question. Most approached it from the perspective of the role of religion as an official force within a constitution and considered the implications of maintaining an official state religion, whilst some contrasted that with the social expressions of religion around the world. Some answers were simplistic and drew solely on the candidates' own views of the importance of religion in life, but the best answers were able to develop beyond this, to consider whether religion still has a role to play beyond the opinions and experience of the individual.

### **2a**

Most candidates took a rather narrow focus to this question, looking almost exclusively at the provisions an employer would have to make for their religious employees. This approach produced creditable answers but the limited scope did make it harder to access the higher levels. Some candidates taking this approach lost the essence of the question and wrote instead about how religion might affect a person's ability to retain a job. The best answers considered

business more completely, looking at issues such as with whom one trades, the ethics of particular types of business and whether personal practice of one's religion might interfere with one's ability to trade in particular ways.

## **2b**

The vast majority of candidates, for the bulk of their response to this question, chose to focus on Islam and the specific example of religious dress. The best candidates were able to explain, in some detail, how much so-called Islamic dress is culturally derived and how forcing people to wear it restricts personal freedoms in relation to appearance. However, banning such clothing was also seen as restrictive. The weaker candidates simply stated that it was not right for women to have to cover their heads. Some candidates extended their answers beyond dress and considered women's freedom in relation to travel and work in Islamic countries.

## **2c**

This was a well answered question in general, with most candidates able to consider the different values which an individual might place on different types of rules and the effect on society if people were allowed to pick and choose which laws they would and would not follow. Specific examples of situations where religious rules and secular laws conflict with one another were sometimes lacking or overly simplistic. Candidates tended to focus on the more fundamentalist religious views with regard to religious laws and their source, but this was perhaps inevitable.

## **3a**

Most candidates who chose this question were able to answer it well, demonstrating good knowledge about the core beliefs of their chosen NRM. Interestingly, some candidates chose to answer in depth about Mormonism, which is not one of the recommended faiths but, which does fit the definition of an NRM and was credited accordingly. Some candidates spent too much time on the historical background to aspects of the NRM rather than considering how those elements might affect people today.

## **3b**

Candidates seemed to regard this as a much simpler question than part a) and gave briefer answers; Jehovah's Witnesses were the most popular choice for this question with some candidates looking at OBOD and others at Rastafari. A few candidates continued their discussion of Mormonism in this question. The general approach to the question was to look at why modern society might dislike NRMs, although the question gave scope for positive answers as well.

## **3c**

Candidates dealt well with this question overall, most explaining that all religious beliefs can seem ridiculous if you do not understand or share them. Candidates then went on to demonstrate some beliefs of NRMs which are very much in accord with the Zeitgeist such as druids' belief in the web of life.

## **B612 Religion, Politics and Culture in Britain**

### **General Comments**

A small number of candidates sat this exam so the following comments need to be read with this in mind.

A number of candidates gave general answers rather than referring specifically to the particular points being asked for in the question.

The best responses were found in the part c) questions, though the depth and analysis needed for candidates to achieve higher level responses were sometimes lacking.

There were no rubric errors and candidates seemed to use the allocated time correctly.

Question 3 proved the most popular.

### **Comments on Individual Questions**

#### **1a**

Better answers referred to a number of examples from different types of literature showing how the author had expressed various Christian beliefs and the way(s) in which it had been done.

#### **1b**

Candidates tended to give very general accounts of the events from the period of history they had studied, rather than trying to show how these events affected the lives of Christians, which is what the question had asked.

#### **1c**

Most candidates managed to access Level 2 but far too many concentrated on giving accounts of one period of history and failed to offer different and supported points of view. Better candidates attempted to show how some periods/events in British history have no bearing on Christianity and vice-versa

#### **2a**

Most answers were very general accounts of the struggle of Henry VIII with Rome and the consequent link between monarch and church, but little else.

#### **2b**

Some good responses with reference to the Lords Spiritual as well as to the ways in which church leaders use the media in its various forms.

#### **2c**

Many candidates misinterpreted the question and wrote about equal rights and human rights and not on the potential conflict between laws on equality and the beliefs held by some Christians.

**3a**

Many candidates interpreted multifaith as multicultural whilst others concentrated on why people emigrated to the UK, which is not what the question was about! Very few candidates managed to show how immigration has had an effect on the faith make up of Great Britain.

**3b**

This was well answered with many candidates explaining the importance of good relations between different sections/faiths within a community. Reference was also made to the importance of people in the workplace understanding the differences between people of different faiths.

**3c**

This question produced some very interesting and diverse responses with some candidates referring to what we would lose (multifaith/cultural society) whilst others pointed out that if the faith was Christianity, then which denomination?

A number of students managed to access the higher level of response marks.

## **B613 The Individual**

### **General Comments**

The entry for this Unit was small in number. However, candidates of all levels of ability were well prepared.

### **Comments on Individual Questions**

This was probably the least popular question. However, candidates tackled it well and there were few outright misunderstandings of the question.

#### **1a**

Most candidates who answered the question took the expected route of exemplification; some, however, described the importance of role models in more general terms.

#### **1b**

Some of the very best responses were aware of, and able to explain, the idea of myth as significant narrative.

#### **1c**

Some candidates argued that some religious beliefs might be false, but this does not undermine the validity of whole religions and belief systems. Others debated what is meant by claiming something is true or false. Some were prepared to argue that religious beliefs are false but serve some other purpose (for example, in creating unity.) Few (if any) dismissed religious belief entirely.

#### **2a**

The mark scheme suggested that candidates were likely to answer this in terms of places of pilgrimage. Most, however, interpreted it in terms of religious buildings as central to local religious communities; this was, of course, entirely valid.

#### **2b**

This was a provocative question, and candidates are to be commended for the intelligent, mature and sensitive way in which they responded to it. Many candidates wrote about Islamist terrorism, often with subtlety and perception, seeing it as arising in part in response to disquiet about late capitalist western culture and imperialist ambitions in the Middle East.

#### **2c**

Most candidates disagreed with the question and argued for more liberating and egalitarian strands within religion, whilst recognising the circumscribed roles for women in some traditions. Some were able to distinguish effectively between religion and culture.

#### **3a**

Responses were split between those which understood 'community' as the faith community, and those as the local/national/international community within which the faith is practised. Both approaches were equally creditworthy.

**3b**

There were some very subtle and interesting responses to this question; candidates at all levels showed the ability to 'look behind the question' and to recognise that few faiths unequivocally endorse the idea of the nuclear family. Many candidates recognised the extension of family relations to all members of the faith.

**3c**

Inevitably, many responses focused on sex, marriage and family as possible sources of conflict. Some focused particularly on conflicts for women/girls, others on conflicts with more traditional expectations of parents. Some suggested that faith could be formational for young people coming to maturity.

## **B614 Community Cohesion and the Individual**

### **General Comments**

Despite a low entry it was clear that some candidates had engaged in meaningful study of the issues raised in the specification and were able to use their knowledge to answer questions effectively.

It was apparent, however, that some candidates were not reading the questions carefully, which resulted in some answering what they thought was being asked, rather than what was required.

Some development is still needed to enable candidates to engage with part c) answers, rather than give a simple 2 point view with little development.

### **Comments on Individual Questions**

#### **1a**

Generally, candidates were able to use examples from at least one source of authority from their chosen religions/secular philosophies. However, most simply used information from sacred texts rather than considering sources of authority in a wider context. Weak answers tended to ignore the specific reference to the value of human rights and gave a general response about the importance of sources of authority.

#### **1b**

Several responses were from the perspective of only one religion/secular philosophy which inevitably limited marks awarded. Candidates who wrote about one faith and simply repeated the same information with reference to another were unable to access higher levels.

#### **1c**

Candidates were able to consider whether some rights are of greater importance than others and to reach a justified conclusion. Some reference was made to the UDHR or similar lists of rights. Historical references were also used effectively to consider the development of rights and their relative worth.

#### **2a**

Candidates were able to make some to reference the attitudes of the religions/secular philosophies they had studied to a variety of examples of biotechnology. Many responses were at a fairly simplistic level.

#### **2b**

Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the issues and responded with the variety of responses which were anticipated.

#### **2c**

Examples given in response to this question were mostly about abortion, euthanasia and fertility treatment. There were few candidates who were able to consider the wider implications of medical decisions. Some good responses from the perspective of specific sects were seen.

**3a**

Several misunderstandings and misreadings of this question resulted in candidates writing about 'orders' as in 'rules' – they discussed the rules and regulations of their chosen religions/secular philosophies which was not required. Some candidates responded by discussing the lack of a role in a secular philosophy which was acceptable.

**3b**

Generally a well answered question.

**3c**

It was evident that some candidates did not understand the concept of a global village in context and thus were not able to give a good response. In other cases, there were some perceptive discussions raised and considered.

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