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# A-LEVEL

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

7062/2B: Study of religion and dialogues: Christianity  
Report on the Examination

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## General comments

This year, some scripts were outstanding and some students achieved full marks. A small number of students were unable to complete the paper in the time available, but the majority completed the paper without any evidence of rushed work on the final answer. A very few papers had significant legibility issues. Many students chose to do the questions in a different order, often starting with the Dialogues questions, and this posed no problems where each question was numbered correctly.

The most effective answers focused well on the exact content of the question, whilst mid-range answers tended towards a more general treatment of the topic, and this was especially noticeable in AO1 answers. Some students wrote responses to AO1 questions which pursued an argument rather than presenting knowledge and understanding. The most effective AO2 answers discussed different views with well-chosen evidence, good reasoning and effective critical analysis, while the less effective answers either did not address different viewpoints or missed the point of the question. Answers which summarised arguments for the view stated, followed by arguments against, without critical analysis, comment or evaluation beyond choosing to 'agree' or 'disagree' could only be awarded a maximum of Level 3.

In general, technical terms were used appropriately, but spelling was sometimes inaccurate. Scholars' names were often misspelt, and some students attributed ideas to the wrong scholars. In the Dialogues section, a number of students incorrectly treated Aristotle and Plato as Christian thinkers. There was often some vagueness about different varieties of Christianity. The terms 'Catholic', 'liberal' and 'protestant' were used imprecisely and often quite inaccurately to characterise ideas, beliefs or practices in a polarised way.

## Section A: study of Christianity

### Question 1

#### 01.1

Most students were able to present some information about falling numbers of worshippers and the challenge of militant atheism, and many outlined the views of Richard Dawkins with enthusiasm. Some excellent answers also discussed the decline of Christianity as a source of truth and moral values, the rise of materialism and the relegation of religion to the personal sphere. The most effective answers examined the nature of the challenge of each of these things with evidence and examples, while less effective answers merely stated what the challenges were. A small number of students did not know the term 'secularisation' and this led to less effective answers which proposed various challenges to Christianity, some quite unrelated to secularisation, and all of which lacked depth.

#### 01.2

A large majority of answers included different viewpoints and some evaluation. The most effective answers considered how successful a range of responses were, with good critical analysis supported by evidence and examples including the work of Alister McGrath. Mid-range answers often missed the importance of 'successful' in the quotation, and argued merely whether or not Christianity has a defence. A few answers described in some detail the work of Fresh Expressions and the House Church movement, but were rather vague on how these things were a response to the challenges of secularisation. One particular issue was that students who were unfamiliar with

the term 'secularisation' struggled to produce a response that addressed the quotation at all. A few students offered strong personal opinion unsupported by evidence or analysis.

## **Question 2**

### **02.1**

There were a number of full-mark answers to this question, but overall performances on this question were not as good as those in Question 01.1. The most effective answers considered how different aspects of mission have developed over time, with good exemplification. Mid-range answers were often limited to descriptions of different aspects of Christian mission with some examples, rather than 'developments'. A significant number of students did not appear to understand the term 'mission' in this context. Some discussed aspects of the meaning and purpose of life, and such responses were only minimally, if at all, creditable. Even answers which addressed the question showing otherwise good knowledge and understanding often included confused, misspelt or invented organisations and charities. The accuracy of knowledge and critical understanding is a key feature of the levels of response at AO1, so this limited the credit available to some students.

### **02.1**

Most students considered exclusivist and inclusivist attitudes to other faiths. The stronger answers considered how far these attitudes were positive, supported their views with reference to the Bible and scholars including Hick and Rahner, and gave practical examples. Mid-range answers often described exclusivist and inclusivist views and then ended each with 'this shows that Christianity's attitudes are positive/ negative.' The less effective answers described exclusivism and inclusivism but failed to link them at all to the quotation. A few answers misunderstood 'other faiths' as 'other Christian denominations', discussing whether or not relationships between denominations are positive or negative, and such answers gained only minimal credit.

## **Dialogues**

Almost all responses in the dialogues sections integrated AO1 and AO2 content, with few students choosing to separate out AO1 and AO2 elements. Either approach is acceptable. The best answers showed evidence of planning, and in general, written plans led to more focused and perceptive essays showing better use of evidence. Some students wrote the dialogues answers first. This is a perfectly acceptable approach and proved effective for many of those who chose it.

The weaknesses and strengths in these essays were often the same as in the section A questions. Gaps in knowledge, lack of accurate or relevant material and failure to develop or exemplify contributed to lower AO1 marks. Less effective AO2 answers showed no critical analysis and lack of focus, sometimes arguing only one viewpoint. In contrast, the most effective answers were packed with accurate, relevant, well-developed and evidenced information used to critically analyse different views focusing on a reasoned evaluation. Accurate use of technical language, the correct attribution of ideas to scholars or sources, and a sharp focus on the full meaning of the quotation were distinctive features in the most successful answers.

**Section B: the dialogue between Christianity and philosophy****03.1**

This was by some way the most popular of the optional questions. Almost all students were able to describe one or more arguments for the existence of God, and the majority offered well-learned responses to the cosmological and design arguments. The most effective answers focused on whether or not belief in God is reasonable based on such arguments, and some offered a creative range of alternative views, including sometimes insightful discussion of religious experience, miracles and science. A few argued persuasively that religious belief of any kind is not based on reason at all. The nature of the question meant that almost all students who tackled this were able to link Christianity and philosophy effectively. Less effective answers sometimes mixed up the ideas and the scholars who proposed them, and a few missed the focus entirely and argued only for the existence or otherwise of God. Those few students who focused on the ontological argument struggled to address the quotation.

**04.1**

This was the least popular question. On the whole, those who chose it were very successful. A significant number of answers received full marks and there were relatively few low-scoring answers. All students referenced both Christianity and Philosophy. Most showed good understanding of verification and falsification principles and many described with examples the concepts of eschatological verification, Bliks, language games, analogical language and symbolic use of language. Less effective answers sometimes failed to focus on statements about God, and instead discussed religious language more generally, which limited credit at AO2. In most cases, ideas were attributed to the correct scholars. Mid-range answers tended to reference appropriate AO1 content, but either the analysis was superficial or the reasoning lacked focus. The best answers analysed a range of Christian statements about God and used Biblical material, church teachings and the views of scholars to reach a wholly reasoned conclusion.

**Section C: the dialogue between ethics and Christianity****05.1**

This was by a small margin the less popular of the ethics dialogues questions. There were several excellent answers which received full marks. The most effective answers showed excellent knowledge and critical understanding of several ethical theories, referencing scholars accurately and offering good evidence for a range of views, thus scoring highly for AO1. Aquinas' Natural Moral Law and Fletcher's Situation Ethics were most frequently cited as Christian ethics. The best answers considered perceptively how far these (and sometimes Divine Command Theory) had elements of character ethics within them, and/or how far Christian teaching is about the development of character. Mid-range and less effective answers sometimes compared and contrasted these with Aristotle's Virtue Ethics. Where they linked Aquinas and Aristotle, this was sometimes successful, but more often it was problematic because Aristotle's thought is not Christian. The least effective answers struggled to offer argument or evidence to support the quotation, and a few merely enumerated the strengths and weaknesses of various ethical systems.

**06.1**

This was the more popular of the ethics dialogues questions. Several very accomplished answers received full marks. This question offered a chance for students to argue a range of views, and the most effective answers showed excellent knowledge and critical understanding of Christian

teaching and Virtue Ethics, referencing scholars accurately, and a sound understanding of genetic engineering. The most popular example among all students was 'designer babies'; many also referred to genetic engineering of non-human animals for food, and few considered plants.

The most effective answers considered, perceptively, how issues around genetic engineering raise questions for Virtue Ethics and for Christian teaching as a whole, including various ethical approaches. Some very effective answers concluded that specific procedures might be more or less acceptable in one system or the other, while generally agreeing or disagreeing with the statement as a whole. Mid-range answers often considered a limited range of genetic engineering procedures and one or two Christian ethical approaches, most often Natural Moral Law and/or Situation Ethics, with little or no critical analysis. Less effective answers often showed limited knowledge and understanding of genetic engineering, focusing only on designer babies, cloning and/or organ transplantation, and a partial or confused understanding of Christian ethics and teaching. A few students offered only a general overview of ethical systems including Bentham and Kant, with little reference genetic engineering.

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

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