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GCSE

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES B**

Paper 2Y Perspectives on faith (Judaism)

Report on the Examination

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## General Comments

There was a wide range in the standard of performance and it was clear that many students had been well prepared for this examination. There were, however, a significant number of scripts that contained unattempted questions. It is essential that students both study and revise all of the specification content.

The questions in the new Religious Studies examination papers are very different in style from previous papers and require a different approach. Many students had been carefully prepared for this. Answers to the 2 mark questions were generally of an appropriate length, and many responses to 4 mark questions gave and developed two beliefs or ways. Some 4 and 5 mark answers, however, consisted of very long paragraphs. Often more was written than was necessary and it was not always easy to pick out the two beliefs or ways that were asked for. Another weakness in responses to 5 mark questions related to the requirement to refer to a source of authority. Although references to sources of authority do not have to consist of quotation, they do have to be recognisable and they do have to be genuine. There were several instances where students created quotations to match what had been said. Responses almost always attempted to give more than one viewpoint in answering the 12 mark questions, but they often struggled to produce logical chains of reasoning.

Three marks were available for Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG) in each of the 12 mark questions and most students reached at least intermediate performance level. Although handwriting does not feature in the criteria for assessment of SPaG, where words are ill-formed, it is very difficult to be sure about the accuracy for spelling. Handwriting was an issue in some scripts.

## Judaism: Beliefs

### Question 01.1

Most answers to this were correct, though some students opted for 'kosher' or 'trefah'.

### Question 01.2

Almost all responses gained some credit for this question. A very wide range of Jewish beliefs about life after death was in evidence.

### Question 01.3

It appeared that some students did not understand the term 'monotheism'. They therefore focused on the phrase 'religious tradition' and wrote about different Christian festivals or customs. Most, however, did understand both the term and what was required. There were some excellent responses, with just under half of them gaining full marks. Points were often developed with appropriate reference to sources of authority such as the Genesis account of creation, the Shema and the Nicene Creed.

### Question 01.4

Most students gave very confident responses to this question, showing clear understanding of a range of Jewish beliefs about the identity and role of the Messiah. Answers that explained why Jews do not recognise Jesus as the Messiah were given credit, though a number of students explained how Jesus fulfilled the role of Messiah. References to the beliefs of Messianic Judaism were not credited, since these are Christian rather than purely Jewish in nature. Some of the

strongest answers contrasted the beliefs of Orthodox Judaism with Reform Judaism. The main weakness in answers to this question lay in the absence of reference to scripture or a source of Jewish belief and teaching. Although almost half of responses gained four marks, just under a fifth were awarded full marks. There were references to ideas such as bringing peace, but often these were too vague to be worthy of credit. Stronger responses referred more clearly to the role of the Messiah as envisaged in the Jewish scriptures or the writings of Maimonides eg in putting an end to war and inaugurating global harmony, in judging between the nations or in gathering dispersed Jews.

### **Question 01.5**

There were some excellent responses to this question. The most successful answers included reference to the Exodus as the basis of the promises in the covenant, and comments on the significance of the promises made in Exodus 29:3-6 and on the Ten Commandments and the mitzvot. The alternative viewpoint mostly argued for the greater significance of the Abrahamic covenant, pointing to it as the foundation for the Mosaic one, commenting on the promises contained in that covenant and linking it to Brit Milah. Some responses considered also or instead the covenants with Adam, Noah and David. These were also credited, depending on what was written; the new covenant of Jeremiah would also have been credited, though in fact no responses referred to this. There were some very thoughtful and perceptive comments on the relative importance of the covenants. A significant number of responses, however, confused the covenants. Sometimes it was simply a confusion of the names Moses and Abraham, but often it was thought that the Sinai covenant was in fact the one made with Abraham. A few responses demonstrated knowledge that the Sinai covenant related to Moses and that it was connected with the Exodus and becoming God's chosen people, but they thought that the giving of the Ten Commandments related to a totally different covenant. Such confusion had an impact on the marks that were awarded. A small number of students did not attempt the question at all.

### **Judaism: Practices**

#### **Question 02.1**

Nearly all of students knew the correct answer to this, though a few opted for 'Brit Milah'.

#### **Question 02.2**

Those who read the question carefully appeared to find it relatively straightforward to gain both marks. Unfortunately, some responses related to the burial ceremony and others confused 'mourning' with 'morning'.

#### **Question 02.3**

Providing students remembered to explain two ways, most answered this well. Responses were able to demonstrate the impact of Shabbat on the faith of individual Jews and on family life. A few failed to read the question carefully, explaining the nature of Shabbat rather than its influence on Jewish life.

#### **Question 02.4**

This question elicited a wide range of responses. There were many very general comments about the nature of prayer but providing they answered the question, they were acceptable. The more successful responses focused more clearly on Jewish prayer. The mark for reference to a relevant

source of authority was awarded in this question more frequently than for 01.4. Many responses quoted or paraphrased the Shema.

### **Question 02.5**

There were some good responses to this question from those students who had a sound understanding of the significance of Rosh Hashanah and other Jewish festivals. The customs relating to Rosh Hashanah were not simply described; their meaning was explained and evaluated. The most successful responses pointed to the difference in the reconciliation sought in Rosh Hashanah and that sought in Yom Kippur. Many responses, however, confused elements of these two festivals, which limited the credit that could be given. Pesach was often included in answers, though some got carried away with describing the seder meal and lost the focus of the question, forgetting to evaluate its importance in comparison with that of Rosh Hashanah. Some responses made effective use of Shabbat. A major weakness in many responses was the failure to distinguish between festivals and rites of passage. There were many answers that considered Brit Milah, Bar/Bat Mitzvah and marriage. No credit could be awarded for these which affected the levels which could be awarded.

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

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