



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In Religious Studies (4RS1)

Paper 01: Beliefs and Values

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Introduction

4RS1 is a linear qualification with both Paper 1 and paper 2 examined at the end of a course of study.

Paper 1 aims to test knowledge, understanding and analytical and evaluative skills concerned with Beliefs and Values, whilst Paper 2 focusses on the Religious Community.

On Paper 1, candidates can base responses on one or more of the six major world religions covered in the mark scheme. They may also be asked to consider the beliefs and opinions of non-religious people, as required by the Specification.

Paper 1 is marked out of 100 marks comprising one full question, parts a to d inclusive, with a choice of two from each of the four sections. It provides 60% of the weighting for the examination.

Paper 1, Beliefs and Values, is divided into four sections:

1. The Universe, Creation and the Place of Human Beings
2. Life and Death
3. Peace and Conflict
4. Rights, Equality and Social Justice.

In each section, candidates are required to choose one of two questions. Each question has the same structure though the content varies:

An (a) question worth 3 marks

A (b) question worth 4 marks.

A (c) question worth 6 marks.

A (d) question worth 12 marks.

This year the total number of candidates entering the examination increased. Most candidates answered from the perspective of Christianity, Judaism or Islam.

Section 1: Beliefs and Values

(a) Identify three views about immortality

Most candidates were able to access three views on immortality. They identified the Hindu concept of the state of constant state rebirth unless moksha is achieved and the soul released to join Brahma. The Christian understanding of immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body also made regular appearances. The atheist belief that there is no immortality made a regular appearance.

(b) Choose one religion. Outline two beliefs about the ultimate reality

Many candidates answered this well when they focused on belief in God as the ultimate reality and then described attributes of points to show development. For example, identifying God as the ultimate reality and creator, developed by, who created the universe and all that is in it. Similar development was shown as God as omnipotent or omnibenevolent. Candidates dropped marks by explaining the ultimate reality was a place in the afterlife like heaven or by not developing points

(c) Explain why some people believe they should care for the planet.

This question showed good understanding from candidates answering it from the perspective of stewardship and how that would work practically in the daily lives of religious believers. Another popular approach was non-religious with an emphasis on looking after the planet as it is all we have and so we must care for it, then identifying practically how this would occur such as recycling more etc. Many candidates were able to access Level 2 but many candidates were unable to gain high marks in this level due to lack of development.

(d) "Suffering is part of the test of life.

Many candidates who answered this and attained higher levels did so with a focus on the Christian understanding of why suffering exists and then used examples of the lives and teachings of saints to back up their point. In addition, they used the problem of evil and suffering and presented this through logical chains of reasoning. Further development was based around the teachings of Irenaeus and Augustine. A popular alternative point of view was a non-religious understanding as candidates argued there was no purpose to suffering and so no test from it and so it was up to us to avoid it or find methods of doing so effectively. Higher candidates gave a developed conclusion were able to push marks to high Level 3 and above. Candidates who did not fully develop points or did not show logical chains of reasoning moved between Level 1 and Level 2 marks.

Question 2

(a) Identify three ways human beings can control their environment.

This was a question that was well answered and credited many responses from candidates with most gaining the full three marks. There was a variety of answers such as recycling, living in ways that can protect the environment, moving to a new area, deciding which groups of people to associate with and a number of other responses. The main reason for not achieving three marks was candidates not providing three reasons.

(b) Choose one religion. Outline two beliefs about sin.

This question saw good marks attained by candidates who correctly identified a belief about sin and so were then able to develop points to gain full marks. For example, identifying mortal and venial sins, with examples, were seen in a number of responses that gained full marks.

Identifying forgiveness as something that was encouraged and commitment not to sin again once

forgiven, were also seen regularly. Candidates who only gave simple points of information were then limited in marks due to lack of development.

(c) Explain why many religious people believe humans are responsible for their own actions.

This question saw mostly answers from the Christian tradition, but also a number from the Jewish and Islamic traditions, that highlighted the understanding that the concept of 'free will' was central to why religious people believe humans have responsibility for their actions. Good development was shown through the example of Adam and Eve being free to act against the will of God in Eden. This led to many candidates being able to access Level 2 marks and the higher end of Level 2 marks depending how they developed their answer. Occasionally candidates brought in a non-religious view into their answer and so dropped marks.

(d) "The world would be a better place without humans."

Candidates approached this question from the argument that the world would be a better place without humans as it is humans that are the problem in the world. They identified how humans, since the industrial revolution, have over time destroyed the natural world and continue to do so. This was usually addressed as a non-religious point. This then was countered with the idea that humans are the pinnacle of God's creation and so are an essential part of his world so are a necessary part of the world. Candidates gaining Level 3 and 4 marks developed points further by explaining how humans have acted for the benefit of the planet and continue to do so in a number of initiatives, highlighting the role as stewards for future generations before reaching a justified conclusion.

Section 2: Life and death

(a) Identify three ways religious people can support families

Candidates were mostly able to come up with three correct responses to this question. They often answered by referring to giving financial support, by providing childcare, by offering parish support and through prayer. The question could be answered directly from a religious perspective but also from not specifically religious support, such as providing childcare, an example that many candidates stated in getting full marks.

(b) Outline two non-religious attitudes to adoption

This question was answered well by candidates who identified that adoption was a good thing as it enabled childless couples to be able to have a family and provide a home for a child. Many also identified that adoption was not a good thing as although a family was created it was not biological and this caused attachment issues. Some candidates answered from a religious point of view and so dropped marks.

(c) Explain differing attitudes to remarriage.

This question provided a mixed response from candidates. It was answered mostly from the Christian view of remarriage though other faiths were used along with an occasional non-religious response. Many candidates who answered it well were able to identify that Catholics did not believe in remarriage as they believed that marriage is a lifelong bond 'Till death do us part', though they accepted it after the death of a partner. Other Christians however believed it could be a good thing as if the marriage was causing suffering, then it should end, and a new marriage could then provide great solace. Some candidates gave incorrect beliefs for particular religious groups and so dropped marks. Others lacked development so moved between Level 1 and low Level 2 marks.

(d) "Euthanasia should be legalised."

This was a well answered question with candidates able to develop answers that saw most accessing high Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4 marks. The main argument against the statement was based upon the understanding that all life is sacred so only God can give and take life. This was then further developed by many candidates by also referring to the fifth commandment 'Do not kill'. Countering this was the non-religious view of situation ethics and allowing people to die, with some candidates mentioning the current assisted dying act in parliament. Also, included was the teaching to 'love thy neighbour' which could also be seen as something that makes Euthanasia acceptable. Higher candidates reached a conclusion and those who provided a balanced reasoned conclusion moved up into Level 3 and 4.

Question 4

(a) Identify three ways a person may make the world a better place

This question saw many candidates gain 3 marks by identifying ways that they can help improve the natural environment such as lowering their carbon footprint, recycling more and not littering. Other responses saw helping the poor, being kind and looking after your family as creditable responses.

(b) Outline two attitudes religious people may have to same-sex relationships.

This question was answered well by candidates offering two different developed points, one being in favour of same sex relationships. Many answers in favour stated same sex relationships were good as Jesus told us to love our neighbour. The second point was then usually the opposite saying they were bad because of teaching in Leviticus and other scripture. Also, often included in answers was the inability to procreate which works against natural law.

(c) Explain differing religious responses to sex outside marriage

Candidates were able to develop good points around the understanding that sex outside of marriage was not a good thing as it could lead to pregnancy and a child should only be brought up in a marriage. The other idea developed was the understanding that sex outside marriage was also adultery and this could lead to the breakup of the family so was unacceptable. A different

view was that held by others who explained that times have changed and as long as the couple intend to get married then sex before the marriage was acceptable. Most candidates were able to gain low Level 2 marks with some development. Higher-scoring candidates developed points fully to gain highest marks. Some candidates limited their responses and so were unable to move beyond Level 1.

(d) "A God centred life is needed for an afterlife in paradise."

Candidates approached this question in two ways. The first approached it through the understanding that a God centred life was essential to reach paradise. If a person did not approach their lives by putting God at its centre, then they would be unable to access heaven. This was countered most often by the second approach which was a non-religious argument along the lines of a God centred life was not needed, as God and an afterlife in paradise do not exist. Candidates who reached Level 3 marks showed logical chains of reasoning before reaching a justified conclusion. Level 4 candidates further included appraisal throughout their answer before reaching a balanced conclusion.

Section 3: Peace and conflict

Question 5

(a) Identify three non-religious attitudes to crime

Candidates were mostly able to provide three correct attitudes with many taking the approach of it being unacceptable, disruptive to an ordered society and something that must be sanctioned in order for it to be stopped. Other candidates used points such as crime being caused by a person's environment, it being just when the law is unjust, and acceptable in some circumstances such as stealing to feed starving children.

(b) Choose one religion. Outline two reasons why some of its followers are opposed to capital punishment

In answering this question candidates focused on the sanctity of life principle that only God has the right to take life. They also focused on the fifth commandment 'Do not kill'. This enabled candidates to gain full marks when each point was developed. Some candidates focused on why their religion of choice was in favour of capital punishment and so dropped marks.

(c) Explain the issues that may cause conflict

This was quite an open question that enabled most candidates to access Level 2 marks with some development and high Level 2 marks with good development. The issues used mostly to explain causes of conflict were religious differences between groups, with the crusades being a popular example here. Political differences and owning of land with the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine were also popular examples. Scarcity of resources was also something that many candidates identified as a cause of conflict.

(d) "Bullying should be a crime."

Many candidates approached this firstly from the point of protecting the dignity of the human person as God's creation. They developed the point by emphasising the fact that bullying someone as a child can lead people to suffer lifelong anguish which can cause great difficulties. Therefore, bullying should be a crime, and the perpetrators dealt with by law. This was countered by bullying being something that happens mostly among children and as such they weren't fully aware of how their actions were impacting on those who may have been more sensitive than them. Therefore creating awareness around how bullying is wrong rather than it being a crime was proposed as a better solution. Some candidates developed this further with a focus on bullying being something adults also engage in, and which should be a crime. High-scoring candidates showed good development identifying chains of logical reasoning with highest-scoring candidates giving appraisal throughout.

Question 6

(a) Identify three reasons why society may support capital punishment

Almost all candidates were able to identify three correct reasons as to why society may support capital punishment. Most aligned their answers with concepts such as the protection of society, justice for the families of victims and it being cost effective as opposed to life in prison. There was the occasional candidate who included reasons against capital punishment and so dropped marks.

(b) Choose one religion. Outline two teachings about why inclusion is important.

Many candidates who answered this question based on teachings of Jesus, such as how we should love our neighbours. The parable of the Good Samaritan was also used regularly as was the Jewish teaching of welcoming the stranger. Good development saw many candidates gain full marks. Some candidates did not develop points and so were limited to less than the 4 marks available.

(c) Explain the role of religion in peacemaking

Candidates often moved into Level 2 by highlighting how religion can have an impact through its teaching such as in Christianity 'Blessed are the peacemakers' along with other teachings on peace in other faith traditions. Highest-scoring candidates then applied this with a practical commitment to peacemaking by highlighting groups such as Pax Christi and the work it does. Similar groups do similar work in other faith traditions that seek to promote peace in areas of conflict.

(d) "Committing a crime is always sinful."

Many candidates were able to access high Level 2 and Level 3 in this question. They approached the idea of crime being sinful mainly through the biblical teachings of St Paul in which he states that Christians must obey authority. Also, the teaching of Jesus 'Give to God, what is God and Caesar what is Caesar's' again highlighting the fact that in the world there are political systems

that must be respected in order to promote an ordered society. This was then countered by candidates explaining that sometimes the law can be unjust, and it is not sinful to break an unjust law such as when Martin Luther King broke laws that were discriminatory to black people and brought civil rights to all Americans. The idea that situation ethics could lead a person to break the law was also highlighted particularly in the case of having to steal to survive. Highest-scoring candidates identified logical chains of reasoning in their development and reached a balanced conclusion

Section 4: Equality and social justice

Question 7

(a) Identify three attitudes to the role of women in society.

This question was mostly answered well by candidates being able to highlight three attitudes to the roles of women in society. These roles were most commonly described as the roles of homemakers caring for the family, the role of mothers providing guidance for children, the role of being equal to men in all aspects of life, the role of being independent and being able to pursue any roles they wish. All of these were creditable answers.

(b) Outline two reasons why equality before the law is important.

This answer was given a mixed response from candidates. Many identified the importance of inclusion before the law as it created a just and peaceful society. It also provided an understanding that no one was above the law and so stopped prejudice and discrimination. Some candidates quoted religious beliefs about equality without directly referring to the question and so dropped marks.

(c) Explain why wealthy countries should support the poor

Many candidates were able to attain Level 2 in this question demonstrating good understanding and development around reasons such as those who have the most wealth have a moral obligation to helping those who are struggling financially. Some candidates argued that if this obligation was not fulfilled then it was an attack on the poor and directly against religious teachings. Candidates also pointed out the importance not just of helping the poor in other countries but also the poor within their own countries which creates a better society for all. Candidates who did not develop answers stayed within the Level 1 grade boundary.

(d) "It is wrong to try to convert people to a religion."

Many candidates approached this question primarily in agreement through the teaching of the Christian tradition. They highlighted the teaching of Jesus in the 'Great Commission' that Christians had a duty to spread the gospel and make people aware of the teachings of Jesus. Candidates also developed this understanding by pointing out that some Christians believe that if they did not try to convert others to their tradition then they were failing in the commandment to love your neighbour. This was countered by the understanding that people of other faith

traditions may find this offensive and so for someone to presume another's faith is incorrect is lacking in respect and an understanding of another's faith tradition, this then is the opposite of loving your neighbour. Regular answers also highlighted non-religious people's reactions to trying to be converted being seen as disrespectful and offensive. Taking this approach saw candidates gain high Level 2 marks and high Level 3 marks and above, when showing logical chains of reasoning and reaching a justified conclusion.

Question 8

(a) Identify three ways non-religious people can support human rights.

Candidates mostly answered this question well finding three ways that non-religious people can support human rights such as volunteering to support groups who support human rights, going on marches to support human rights and making protests when people are not given their human rights. Candidates sometimes gave examples of what human rights are. This did not answer the question, so they lost marks. Some candidates gave religious reasons and so did not answer the question correctly.

(b) Outline two examples of gender bias

This question was answered well with most candidates able to gain full marks. The idea of gender bias created in the workplace with more male than female in the highest positions was highlighted often as was bias against women who cannot become priests or figures of religious authority in some faiths. The idea of gender bias against males was highlighted in roles that women were seen to be better in, for example when a divorce occurs custody of the child is almost always given to the mother.

(c) Explain the benefits a religious person may experience in a multi ethnic society

This question was not answered well with many candidates not moving beyond Level 1. They read the question as being about a multi faith society rather than a multi ethnic society and so answered the question from what benefits many religions living together could bring rather than the benefits many ethnicities living together would bring, which is what the question was referring to. Some gained marks by explaining how a religious person could gain understanding of different races and cultures through experiencing music, food and community and thereby answering the question correctly.

(d) "Charity is the best way to help the poor."

This was answered well by candidates gaining higher levels and marks with good development, logical chains of reasoning, appraisal and conclusion. Those that included all of these aspects were gaining Level 3 marks and above. Candidates used the argument in favour of the statement based on teaching in faiths about the importance to help the poor such as Zakah in Islam or the teachings of Jesus in loving our neighbour. This was then countered with the understanding that charity is just a quick fix and brings no permanent change. Responsibility for true change comes

through enabling the poor to be self-sufficient and helping and supporting them in doing this. Candidates who gave limited development in their reasoning then limited their marks.

Paper Summary

In summary, this was a well answered paper, and some candidates demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of aspects of religious belief and practice, as well as how to respond effectively to the different question types. However, as always, there are lessons that can be learned from this year's examination.

- a) Questions were answered well throughout, but it is important that candidates read the questions carefully in order to give the correct information. For example, they should not give a religious response to a non religious question
- b) Questions are answered well when a candidate makes a point and then develops it to get full marks. They must do this twice as the question asks to outline two attitudes or reasons to explain the answer for full marks. If a point is not developed it cannot be awarded more than one mark
- c) Candidates need to show greater development in c) questions as the question is being marked in levels. There are two levels and each of these levels describes what is expected of each candidate. If a candidate describes more than explains, then they will be limited to Level 1. If they explain and develop their reasoning fully, they will gain access to Level 2.
- d) Questions are knowledge and evaluation based. To gain higher levels candidates must demonstrate logical chains of reasoning when explaining and answer in agreement/disagreement with statement and then explaining the counter argument. A justified conclusion then must be reached. Greater appraisal in this process and a balanced evaluative conclusion would see candidates move into Level 4. Less development in answers means lower-level scores.

