4.2 New Religious Movements, New Age Movements and Religiosity: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write full sentences for questions worth 4 marks or more. Allocate your time so you can attempt the final 12 mark question.

1 Explain two practical reasons why someone attracted to New Age practices might prefer workshops and short courses to joining a formal religious group.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 State one piece of evidence sociologists might use to argue that New Age spirituality is becoming more common in the UK, rather than less common.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the growth of New Age movements shows that religion is becoming more individualistic in contemporary society.

(Total for Question 3 is 12 marks)

4 Define what sociologists mean by a 'new religious movement' in the study of religion in society.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

5 Identify and explain two features of a world affirming new religious movement, according to Wallis.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 4.2 New Religious Movements, New Age Movements and Religiosity: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies a practical reason, e.g. convenience and fit with busy working and family lives	**B1**
develops reason, e.g. workshops are short, scheduled and require no long term commitment so fit around jobs and childcare	**B1**
identifies a second linked reason, e.g. variety and consumer choice	**B1**
develops second reason, e.g. people can try different practices, pick what helps them and avoid organisational obligations	**B1**

Answer: A practical reason is convenience for busy working and family lives: workshops are short and require no long term commitment so they fit around jobs and childcare. Another linked reason is consumer choice: people can try different practices and pick what helps them without taking on organisational obligations.

Question 2

identifies a hypothetical indicator, e.g. if comparable UK surveys over time showed increasing attendance at yoga or mindfulness sessions among participants who identify their practice as New Age spirituality	**B1**
brief development, e.g. evidence of participants' New Age spiritual identification or meaning would link the hypothetical attendance increase to spirituality; attendance or related business growth alone could reflect secular health or relaxation interests	**B1**

Answer: If comparable UK surveys over time showed increasing attendance at yoga or mindfulness sessions among participants who identify their practice as New Age spirituality, this could indicate that New Age spirituality is becoming more common. Evidence of their spiritual identification or meaning is needed because attendance or related business growth alone could reflect secular health or relaxation interests.

Question 3

Level 1 Simple statements about New Age movements or individualism with little development or balance	**1-3**
Level 2 Some relevant knowledge and argument offered, with basic links between New Age features and individualism but limited evaluation or balance	**4-6**
Level 3 Clear argument showing how New Age features support the view that religion is more individualistic, supported by sociological ideas such as Heelas and Bruce, with some counter-arguments considered	**7-9**
Level 4 A well developed balanced evaluation, integrating evidence and sociological perspectives, considering counter-evidence such as communal NRMs, continuing organised religion, and arriving at a supported conclusion	**10-12**

Indicative content:

- Arguments that support the view: Heelas' subjective-life spirituality shows personal inward focus and self spirituality; emphasis on choice, pick and mix spirituality and consumerist spirituality suggests individualised religion; workshops and practices fit individual schedules rather than collective worship.
- Evidence for individualism: growth in mindfulness, yoga, spiritual retail and self-help markets; many describe themselves as 'spiritual but not religious', indicating detachment from organised religion.
- Counter-arguments: Wallis' typology shows some NRMs remain communal and world rejecting, emphasising collective commitments rather than individualism; organised churches and denominations continue to provide collective rituals and community for many people.
- Bruce's social change explanation: modernisation and loss of traditional community can drive individual search for meaning, but Bruce also notes institutional decline can lead to both individual spirituality and new communal movements.
- Sociological caution: membership patterns vary by class and age; New Age often attracts middle class people but other NRMs attract marginalised groups, so generalising about 'religion becoming individualistic' risks oversimplification.
- Methodological points: measuring 'individualism' is difficult; survey evidence on beliefs and practices must be interpreted cautiously and may not capture informal communal spiritual networks.
- Conclusion guidance: on balance, many sociologists would argue there is a trend towards more individualised forms of spirituality, especially in New Age movements, but this coexists with continued communal religion and new communal NRMs, so the claim should be qualified rather than accepted without reservation.

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Question 4

identifies that a new religious movement is a recently formed group with religious or spiritual beliefs, not part of an established church or denomination (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. often centred on novel teachings, charismatic leaders or alternative spiritual practices **B1**

Answer: A new religious movement is a recently formed group with religious or spiritual beliefs that is not part of an established church or denomination, often centred on new teachings, charismatic leaders or alternative spiritual practices.

Question 5

identifies one feature, e.g. emphasis on techniques for personal improvement or spiritual development while keeping ordinary life **B1**

explains how this shows world affirming, e.g. these groups accept the world and offer tools to succeed within it rather than rejecting society **B1**

identifies a second feature, e.g. lack of strong communal demands so members can remain part of mainstream institutions **B1**

explains further, e.g. members can use practices for personal benefit without abandoning jobs, family or social roles **B1**

Answer: One feature is an emphasis on techniques for personal improvement or spiritual development while continuing ordinary life, showing world affirming character because the group accepts mainstream society and offers tools to succeed within it. Another feature is the lack of strong communal demands, allowing members to remain part of mainstream institutions and use practices for personal benefit without abandoning jobs or family.

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