

## THE BASIS OF CORRECTNESS IN THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES CLASSROOM

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### Abstract

What is it that makes a student's answer correct or incorrect in Religious Studies? In practice, the standards of correctness in the Religious Studies classroom are generally applied with relative ease by teachers and students. Nevertheless, they are problematic. We shall argue that correctness does not come from either the students or the teacher believing that what has been said is true. This raises the question: what is correctness, if it does not come down to truth? We propose, and examine, three rival solutions, each of which, to an extent, rationalises a fairly natural response to the problem. The first, the *elliptical approach*, says that correct contributions have some tacit content: they are elliptical for true sentences about beliefs (e.g. a sentence of the form 'Christians believe that ...'). The second, the *imaginative approach*, seeks to replace appeals to truth and belief with an appeal to imagination, treating Religious Studies as a 'game of make-believe' in which teachers and students imaginatively engage with certain worldviews. The third, the *institutional approach*, locates the root of correctness in the practices of the Religious Studies institution, which include making endorsements of some judgements and not others. We show that the first of our proposed approaches encounters a number of significant objections. We find the second of our proposed approaches to be better, but the third is the most attractive, providing a direct, intuitive and comprehensive route through the problem of correctness.