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# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCE (NEW)  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
AS/Advanced**

**SUMMER 2018**

Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at: <https://www.wjecservices.co.uk/MarkToUMS/default.aspx?l=en>

### **Online Results Analysis**

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### **Annual Statistical Report**

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Page</b>
1A. An Introduction to the Study of Christianity	1
1B. An Introduction to the Study of Islam	8
1C. An Introduction to the Study of Judaism	13
1D. An Introduction to the Study of Buddhism	18
1E. An Introduction to the Study of Hinduism	25
1F. An Introduction to the Study of Sikhism	30
2A. An Introduction to Religion and Ethics	35
2B. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion	38
3A. A Study of Christianity	41
3B. A Study of Islam	46
3C. A Study of Judaism	51
3D. A Study of Buddhism	54
3E. A Study of Hinduism	59
3F. A Study of Sikhism	63
4. Religion and Ethics	66
5. Philosophy of Religion	71
6. Textual Studies (New Testament)	76

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**UNIT 1A: An Introduction to the Study of Christianity**

**General comments**

It is pleasing to note that the examination paper did not raise any concerns and so fulfilled its aim of setting appropriate questions in a fair and accessible manner. The full range of marks were employed to the answers provided. The following report will more naturally focus on obvious areas of improvement and does not negate the excellent attempts shown by many candidates.

**Administrative rubrics**

Examination officers are reminded to please complete the details on the plastic sacks sent to Examiners including your Centre Number and the number of scripts being sent. This is an important part of the audit trail for your candidates.

**Candidate rubrics**

As required on the front page every candidate should enter the question numbers that they have attempted in the box. This should be in the format of:  
2a 2b 4a 4b

Unlike 2017, there were minimal rubric infringements whereby the wrong number of questions were answered from the wrong sections of the paper, but for those candidates who did the best marks were credited for each section.

A surprising number of candidates only completed part of a question, or only one whole question (a) and (b), with no attempt made at all at others. Anything credit worthy would have been credited had candidates attempted a response and they should be encouraged to do so.

Generally, it should be noted that all questions carry equal marks. Many candidates wrote considerably more in the (b) answer.

At the point of examination accurate grammar/spelling of core terminology often required attention e.g. **G**od, **J**esus, **H**oly **S**pirit, resurrection, psalms, **E**aster, and **C**hristmas.

## Section A

### 1. (a) Examine the nature and identity of Christ in the doctrine of the Trinity. [AO1 15]

#### *Features of stronger responses:*

- identified that the central key here was the nature and identity of Christ through his incarnation;
- there was an appropriate introduction by most to the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- higher level answers tended to be able to address this with a particular understanding of *kenosis* and thereby avoid the aforementioned pitfalls;
- as such, the question produced some very good answers from candidates who kept a focus on the question and discussed Christ as part of the Trinity.

#### *Features of weaker responses:*

- for too many at this or a future point attention turned to the Filioque clause, often in the form of narrative rather than using it to apply the answer to the question set i.e. the relationship between Father and Son in relation to the Holy Spirit – focusing particularly on what that means for Christ's nature and identity;
- too frequently the above also lead to the claim that the Orthodox do not believe in the Trinity, which is taking the filioque difference too far! Might the visual use of Rublev's famous icon of the Holy Trinity assist (see [https://kerkvaders.be/artikels/triniteit\\_rublev](https://kerkvaders.be/artikels/triniteit_rublev))?
- heresies were often listed, but not utilised to give the required depth to the response that would provide 'accurate and relevant / thorough, accurate answers (B4 & B5) rather leaving this part of the answer as 'Limited knowledge / Mainly accurate (B2 & B3);
- some candidates wrote generalised responses about the Trinity and did not discuss the specific nature and identity of Christ in the Trinity. As such there was rare mention of Christ's nature being: co-equal, co-eternal, co-existent and consequently many answers did veer into one of the aforementioned heresies.

### 1. (b) 'The doctrine of the Trinity is necessary to understand the God of Christianity.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

#### *Features of stronger responses:*

- there were some very good evaluations that engaged with the idea of how necessary the doctrine of the Trinity is, citing biblical justification (the question of whether the Bible quietly reveals the Trinity - Genesis 1v26 – 'Let us...');
- other forms of evidence cited, included historical detail from heresies, the creeds and the role of the Trinity in prayer, hymns and Holy Baptism;
- the idea of God's nature and the need to understand the immanent and economic Trinity were also cited and Barth and other scholars were used in strong answers;
- these evaluations also included suggestions that the Bible is integrally more important than a human doctrine formed from 325 AD because there was an argument about this very question in the Church itself;
- Sally Fague was also occasionally and effectively employed.

**Features of weaker responses:**

- if not repeated the *filoque* clause was introduced here, but rarely utilized at its best to evaluate the claim of the question.;
- some gave general answers concerning ideas about the Trinity rather than addressing the question;
- the idea that Jews and Muslims cannot understand the doctrine was curiously used more of an 'against' argument rather than also realising this means that the Trinity is necessary to distinctly understand the God of Christianity.

**2. (a) Explain the following Atonement theories:**

- (i) Christus Victor, and**
- (ii) The death of Jesus as substitution.**

[AO1 15]

This question produced some excellent answers and the full band range was employed.

Many began with an appropriate short introduction of what 'Atonement' means generally to advance the specific understandings as requested by the question.

**Features of stronger responses:**

• **Christus Victor:**

Most candidates had the correct understanding of ransom theory via Anselm and Aulen (do look at Irenaeus as this fed into the part (b)).

• **The death of Jesus as substitution:**

It was pleasing to see candidates who were able to accurately and ably explain both substitution as sacrifice and then go onto explain penal substitution.

**Features of weaker responses:**

• **Christus Victor:**

Sadly only about half the candidates mentioned the 'harrowing of hell' (again, utilize some art as theological teaching?) which is crucial to this defeat of Satan and hence the liberation of all the former departed from the dead – bodily.

- As such, mention of Christ's resurrection from the dead, it is this act that makes – Christus Victor – was too rarely mentioned and yet without it the very theory along with its title falls.

• **The death of Jesus as substitution:**

The goat seems to have caused much confusion ! Leviticus 16 – Yom Kippur – The Day of Atonement – The Goat for Azazel was the one that got away, the scapegoat, carrying the sins of the people into the desert, alive, while the second goat was sacrificed for the sins. In terms of Jesus' substitution the identification with Yom Kippur as well as Passover (very rarely mentioned) is the sacrificial death.

- Some candidates wrote about the Moral Example Theory which the question did not ask for and was therefore irrelevant and uncredited.

- 2 (b) 'The Atonement shows God is a God of love rather than a God of wrath.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 15]

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the key to this evaluation is 'The Atonement' rather than a generalised problem of evil answer utilized particularly through Noah and the flood (no atonement) to counterbalance ideas of God being a God of love;
- those that attained the higher bands did so by effectively considering the atonement theories including the Moral Example Theory. Looking at Christus Victor there was the idea that God dishonestly tricked Satan. As above, if Irenaeus is used there is an important, but missed counterfoil that in his view the debt was not God's to Satan but humanity's to Satan which God pays; no trickery, much love;
- some candidates entertained the idea of God's love being shown through atonement throughout salvation history showing the constancy of God's forgiveness and love.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- once focused on the Atonement some answers were one sided, limiting the ability to evaluate to the higher Band descriptors;
- listed points but then failed to supply evidence or reasoning to substantiate any argument made.

**Section B**

- 3 (a) Explain the teaching the Bible gives about the meaning and purpose of life.**  
**[AO1 15]**

This proved to be the least answered question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the key to the question is 'the Bible', but that is not asking for an answer on the Bible per se;
- thereafter for those who knew the material, there was some accurate and clear knowledge and understanding evident. Very good use of specific Old Testament and New Testament biblical texts to discuss the various meanings and purposes of life;
- some candidates carefully utilised Aquinas' precepts and where based on their biblical evidence proved an effective model and way to answer the question and fully credited whilst not to be found on the mark scheme.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- nowhere will you find a Biblical promise that if Christians will but follow the Ten Commandments they will enter heaven, this is wrong and prevents candidates from learning what is creditworthy material to employ in its stead;
- the theological virtues, arising from the Bible, could also have been utilised as then faith in Christ, hope in his redemption and Charity as he has exemplified could all have been usefully employed;
- some wrote in a very generalised way with little detailed knowledge and did not know enough biblical material to produce a good or any answer above the lowest Bands.

**3. (b) 'The Psalms are ancient songs that provide no guide for living as a Christian today.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- some candidates had studied this area and did indeed pick this question in order to flourish and they did with confident knowledge of what the Psalms are and are not, or what they can, might and cannot offer as a guide today.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- it became clear that many candidates had no idea at all what the Psalms are, crediting them with Gospel teaching or throwing in that they provide no guide due to their stance on homosexuality or the role of women;
- it extremely rare that it was mentioned that Psalms are used in every Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox service let alone that they are the bedrock of daily Morning and Evening Prayer / The Divine Office.

**4. (a) Explain the role of the Churches in providing two of the following:**

- (i) Worship and sacraments**
- (ii) Religious teaching**
- (iii) Mission, service and outreach.**

**[AO1 15]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- strong answers were able to choose two areas and clearly identify the role of the Church in the provision of them;
- there were some very strong answers with detailed knowledge about the role of the church in the chosen areas.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some candidates only did one area or tried to do all three and some were unclear about what the role was and were muddled and generalised about the terminology used in the question;
- with regard to Worship and Sacraments some candidates unnecessarily self-limited themselves to Acts 2;
- (iii) mission, service AND outreach was especially mixed up with the three areas not always being distinguished into the three areas required by the specification. 'Service' does not mean 'church services.' It is acknowledged that there can be overlap between them nevertheless, this did not prevent candidates from effectively drawing their own distinctions.

4. (b) 'Christian churches today should follow the New Testament model.'  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

**Features of stronger responses:**

- strong answers evaluated well and kept a focus on the statement – able to provide arguments for and against the New Testament model of Church, here appropriately utilising Acts 2, and reach a conclusion;
- Biblical texts, tradition and doctrine about the Church were used very well in some answers.

**Features of weaker responses:**

- the examiners were often left baffled as to how this question, arising from the specification, resulted in too many answers concerning the relative merits of the Old Testament and New Testament;
- some of these answers began to be credit worthy if / once they began to relate this unnecessary evaluation to the church today.

5. (a) Explain the different ways in which Eastern Orthodox and Western churches celebrate Easter. [AO1 15]

**Features of stronger responses:**

- this proved a popular and high attainment question for those who understood the differing ways Easter is celebrated in the Eastern and Western churches;
- strong answers wrote about both churches clearly and in a balanced way and provided detail about practices and used terminology well too.

**Features of weaker responses:**

- some answers did not understand the differences and wrote general descriptions of Easter and its celebrations or even attributed the wrong practices to the wrong Church or wrong season e.g. the Paschal Candle being confused with Christingle;
- there was rare mention of the full Lenten practices of Prayer, fasting and Almsgiving while too much comment about the fact that Orthodox have painted eggs and Western church have chocolate eggs and an Easter bunny;
- referring to rituals such as "going to the top of a hill in Wales to watch the sunrise" may be a good exercise, but what is it saying about a celebration of Easter comparative to the Orthodox? (It is a 'natural paschal candle' – light overcoming darkness).

- 5.(b) 'Easter is the most important of the Christian festivals.'  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

**Features of stronger responses:**

- some candidates really engaged with the debating point in the statement and were able to offer supported evaluation about the importance of Easter making relevant references to Christmas to support or challenge the statement;
- strongest answers were able to introduce Pentecost into their responses.



***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses produced a one sided evaluation either supporting or rejecting the statement, but were not able to offer valid alternative views for another festival or thereby a full evaluation of the statement;
- some candidates misunderstood the actual meaning of festivals and wrote about the importance of sacraments.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2018

#### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

### UNIT 1B: An Introduction to the Study of Islam

#### General comments

This Unit's option had a relatively small entry. The question paper consisted of two sections. In Section A the most popular answer was Q2. on jahiliyya. All option questions gained responses from candidates, with Q3. on akhirah being the most popular option choice amongst candidates.

The standard of answers displayed the full range, but what was again noticeable this year in relation to the Legacy papers was the improved quality of responses in response to (b) [AO2] questions. It is obvious that there had been more preparation in developing critical analysis skills for this specification to reflect the shift in weighting of assessment objectives. Overall, the paper proved accessible, but also provided opportunity for candidates to illustrate their strengths in particular areas of the specification selected.

#### Section A

**1. (a) Explain how the basic tenets of Islam were established by Muhammad in Madinah following the Hijrah (migration). [AO1 15]**

This question was not the most popular question. Some candidates were distracted by explaining the background to the Hijrah and the Hijrah itself even though the question stated 'following' the Hijrah. Hence they failed to address the question and chose to take an anecdotal approach of Muhammad's migration and or life. Some just described the Mosque and one or two of its key functions. Those that did focus on the events in Madinah included stronger responses that gave a detailed overview of Muhammad's arrival, establishment of the first masjid, and then went on to explain Muhammad's role in Madinah in popularising Islam and establishing the ummah and key practices of Islam.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- gave details about Muhammad's arrival;
- the main focus of their response was on Muhammad's role in establishing the 'tenets' of Islam;
- highlighted functions of the masjid and related them to how they reflected the 'tenets' of Islam.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- did not really address the focus of the question;
- went off focus and described Makkah and the Hijrah;
- described how prayer was established at the masjid.

- 1.(b) **‘The community in Madinah can no longer be the model for Islam today.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

This question was answered better than Q1(a) and most answers took a 'list' approach of how things were compared to today. Responses included references to the mosque/masjid (e.g. design and function), 5 pillars and also the separation of men and women for prayer. Stronger responses identified the variety and diversity of masjids today that are not always as multi-functional as the original masjid. The importance of the ummah was stressed.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- a clear balanced argument considering the original model against diverse variety today within Muslim communities;
- an awareness that the ummah is still the same, but that geographical and historical context tends to define the purpose and role of the hub of the community i.e. masjid.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- basic outline of similarities without much awareness of differences;
- just focused on masjids instead of the Muslim community as a whole.

2. (a) **Explain why the term jahiliyya (ignorance) is used to describe life at the time of Muhammad.** [AO1 15]

This was the most popular question in this section and was generally answered well, with most attempts understanding the question and the meaning of jahiliyya. Most candidates were able to give a good account of the key issues such as tribal living, lack of morality and lack of political stability and religious disparities.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- clearly identified social, moral, political and religious aspects;
- a clear understanding of jahiliyya as ignorance on different levels.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to be less detailed or just recall moral ignorance;
- not aware of the full range of the social, moral, political and religious aspects.

2. (b) **‘The nature of Muhammad's message to the Makkans meant that it would fail.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

The responses to this question were not as good as those in 2(a) and most arguments discussed the influence Muhammad had on people around him that were close to him. The issue of introducing monotheism was a popular topic of discussion but the aspect of revelation, divine will and underlying support and strength were not always discussed.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were able to distinguish between ‘apparent’ failure in light of the success of Islam as a whole;
- used divine will to argue that Islam was never likely to fail;
- related the content of Muhammad’s message to the obvious reasons for rejection by the majority and contrasted this with Madinah.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- focused on Muhammad’s rejection in Makkah and saw it as a failure;
- did not relate the content of the message to the context of Makkah in contrast to the opportunities in Madinah.

**Section B**

**3. (a) Explain Islamic teachings about akhirah (Day of Final Judgement).**

This question was answered well. The focus of the question meant that there were three possible ways of answering: (1) as the term akhirah means ‘last’, ‘end’ or ‘final’ and is usually translated as ‘afterlife’ then a general discussion in breadth of events from death onwards; (2) a focus on judgement day itself from the blowing of the horn; (3) differentiation between the stages of judgement (sometimes referred to as ‘days’). Any approach was acceptable. Most were able to give a full account of the meaning of the term akhirah with good examples. Nearly all candidates were able to discuss the role of angels, and the punishments that awaited sinners.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- details about the specific teachings/events;
- awareness of the specific roles of angels;
- descriptions of heaven and hell.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- lacked specific detail;
- just focused on generic understanding of heaven and hell.

**3. (b) ‘Muslims should never live in fear of Final Judgement.’  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

A good response to this question. Most responses focused on the fact Muslims should not fear the afterlife if they continue to live a good life and follow the faith correctly, whilst others focused on the need to follow the warnings of the afterlife. In general, a good balance between the two aspects above in stronger responses and an awareness of the delicate difference in perspectives.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- argument presenting clear evidence from texts and scholars about the role of ‘fear’ and the need to submit;
- an awareness of the mercy of Allah and the need not to be anxious but to focus on following Islam.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to argue in less detail for fear of judgement;
- did not use references to Qur'an or scholars to help their arguments.

**4. (a) Explain how three of the five categories of action can help guide a Muslim during life. [AO1 15]**

There was a wide range in the quality of responses to this question. When it was answered correctly it was done well, with good discussion of three categories, usually fard, mustahab and haram. Unfortunately, many candidates misinterpreted the question and focused on the 5 pillars rather than the five categories. In the latter case there was very little that could be awarded.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- correct understanding of the 5 categories and their overall purpose;
- accurate description of three categories indicating how they guided a Muslim.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- misinterpreted the five categories for the five pillars;
- gave an outline only of three categories that lacked the required depth for an 'explanation'.

**4. (b) 'The five categories of action provide clear guidance for Muslims today.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

When the question was interpreted correctly the responses were good on the whole. Unfortunately, once again, the pillars were used by those who made the error of misinterpretation in (a) and little could be awarded other than recognition of alternative guidance possible. Stronger responses recognised some flexibility with reference to halal and mustahab. Some perceptive arguments focused on the change in society and the differences between 'then' and 'now'.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- details about changes in attitudes and interpretations;
- a recognition of a solid core of guidance;
- a recognition of other factors for guidance in life e.g. Imam, Qur'an, Hadith, etc.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- totally misunderstood the categories as the pillars;
- there were some basic arguments that included the idea of guidance in daily life with clear reference to haram in particular.

**5. (a) Outline the importance of the functions of the first masjid (mosque) in Madinah.** [AO1 15]

These answers were generally good on the whole. Responses included clear reference to internal aspects of the mosque with explanation of some key sections. All were able to some extent to explain uses of the masjid other than worship and prayer. Most answers included references to the community aspects involved. Stronger responses recognised variety and diversity in purpose and use.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the multi-functional role of the masjid related to the need to establish Islamic principles and the ummah;
- an awareness of historical context e.g. conflicts, political aspects, serving the new community.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- only aware of its role as a place of prayer and community gathering;
- gave the story of how Muhammad established the masjid.

**5. (b) 'Masjids today in no way reflect the first masjid in Madinah.'** [AO2 15]  
**Evaluate this view.**

Poorer answers were a little confused. Most arguments focused on the fact that society has changed but the masjids are the same. Other stronger responses included the idea that the first masjid was built for a time that bears no resemblance to today and therefore cannot be reflected today.

Other ideas included references to the key aspect that still exist today but also the differences e.g. separation of men and women.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- an awareness of the historical context of Madinah and the difference to today;
- an awareness that there are many different masjids today;
- an awareness that the extent to which they reflect the first masjid is dependent upon the former bullet point;
- functions were clearly contrasted e.g. hospital and military functions.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- were more generic comparisons;
- just one or two features considered to base their arguments upon e.g. prayer and design.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**UNIT 1C: An Introduction to the Study of Judaism**

**General comments**

Many candidates had been well prepared for this examination and there was sufficient scope in the questions for candidates to demonstrate their wide range of knowledge and understanding of the Jewish religion and Jewish beliefs. Where candidates were writing at the higher levels, there was evidence of sophisticated analysis and complex evaluation in their responses.

The quality of work from candidates varied this year and there was evidence of many scripts of a middle standard; there were only a few examination scripts where the answers indicated candidates had gained very little from following this course.

Most candidates correctly followed the rubric and attempted the right number of questions. It is pleasing to note that nearly all candidates attempted both parts of each question. There were, however, less scripts demonstrating a standard of work at the very highest levels.

Candidates must pay proper attention to the specific wording of questions; failure to answer the demand of the question penalised any candidate who ignored the demands of the question and appeared to simply write all they knew on a particular topic. It is important the focus of any answer is directed towards the specific demands of the question. It is also important candidates use the specific key terms of Judaism, where appropriate, and employ specialist language throughout responses.

As required on the front page, every student should enter the question numbers that they have attempted in the box provided on the far right hand top corner of the script.

Unfortunately a very large number of candidates did not do so this year.

**Section A**

**1. (a) Examine how a synagogue is a place for prayer and ritual. [AO1 15]**

This was a popular choice of question and many candidates correctly focused their responses on the topics of prayer and ritual in a synagogue.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the more able candidates were able to give a range of examples within their responses, commenting on the different nature of prayers and rituals in a synagogue;
- were able to use a variety of specialist terms in their answers;
- referred to the use of prayers and rituals during festivals;
- made reference to prayers during Shabbat;
- referred to the daily acts of prayer in a synagogue;
- the important role of the mikveh was also discussed;
- candidates also used forms of dress in the synagogue as an example of ritual.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- the weaker candidates simply wrote about prayer with little or no reference to ritual;
- answers focused on rituals alone;
- included irrelevant material in their responses with information on prayers and rituals at home rather than the synagogue;
- included irrelevant reference to how Shabbat was celebrated at home.

**1. (b) 'The synagogue is where Jews should learn about Judaism.'  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- considered carefully the importance of the synagogue for learning about the Jewish faith in comparison to other places such as in a Jewish home;
- responses included discussions on the role of the home as a place of learning about the faith, and particularly the role of the mother in teaching children about the faith;
- responses discussed the various roles of the synagogue as a place for learning.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- the weaker candidates simply wrote generally about the role of the synagogue;
- they failed to address the fact that the focus of the question was on the synagogue as a place of learning and failed to use appropriate terminology such as the term 'bet midrash';
- no reference to the role of a rabbi;
- little or no reference to the community role of other Jews in the synagogue.

**2. (a) Explain the practices of Pesach and their significance.**

**[AO1 15]**

This was a popular question, as questions about Pesach frequently are.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- made explicit reference to Elijah and the Haggadah;
- were able to discuss the complete contents of the Seder plate in some detail with an unpacking of relevant symbolism;
- used religious terminology accurately when describing the Seder plate and the practices associated with Pesach;
- gave an overview of the celebration of Pesach.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- adopted an anecdotal approach concerning the history of the slavery in Egypt;
- gave a response centred only on one or two features of the Seder plate;
- gave observations on only the Seder plate; no reference to other practices of Pesach;
- failed to use religious terminology at all or incorrectly.



2. (b) **'Festivals are the most effective way of reinforcing Jewish identity.'**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

In the evaluation of this statement there were generally well developed responses.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- focused on how other aspects of Judaism, such as dress and food rules, are able to reinforce a sense of Jewish identity;
- explored the idea of rites of passage as an alternative and better way of reinforcing Jewish identity;
- made reference to different festivals to support their evaluations; Pesach, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Shabbat were all used in support of the statement;
- made reference to how being a member of a Jewish family and community provides a reference point for reinforcing Jewish identity.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- no references to any individual Jewish festivals and answers generic in nature;
- no discussion of the issue of what constitutes Jewish identity;
- no reference to the importance of being part of a Jewish community;
- no or little reference to the celebration of festivals within a synagogue community.

**Section B**

3. (a) **Explain the significance of Abraham's faith and how it was tested.** [A01 15]

The quality of responses to the first part of this question varied.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- unpacked biographical details to explore the idea of Abraham's faith;
- explored important aspects of Abraham's life and linked these to the issue of test of faith;
- demonstrated understanding of the significance of Abraham's faith within the context of monotheistic belief;
- good responses were able to discuss the issue of the sacrifice of Isaac.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some responses included a simple narration of the story of Abraham's life in detail; the focus of the question is to explore faith and not to simply give a potted biography of the main events of Abraham's life;
- narrative of Abraham's faith journey without any reference to how his faith was tested.

**3. (b) 'The covenant made with Abraham was a universal covenant.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

In the evaluation of this statement some candidates struggled with this part of the question and it was generally not as well done as part (a).

***Features of stronger responses:***

- a discussion of the general importance of the covenant within Judaism and the concept of what universality means was unpacked;
- candidates were able to compare the significance of the Abrahamic covenant to the covenant established with Moses;
- context of the historical covenant within the story of human beings, including reference to Adam and Noah.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- little understanding of the nature of a universal covenant;
- no reference to the distinctive nature of the covenant established with Abraham; just a simplistic, generic response;
- no or little use of specialist terms.

**4. (a) Explain Jewish beliefs about the characteristics of God.**

**[AO1 15]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- responses were able to give a full description of Jewish beliefs about the characteristics of God;
- characteristics, such as God being merciful, holy, just and perfect were given, along with the usual reference to terms such as omnibenevolent;
- made reference to 'qodesh' and the concept of the distinctive holiness of God.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- only a list of words to describe the characteristics of God with no explanation;
- focus on one idea without reference to a range of characteristics;
- no distinct element of Jewish beliefs included.

**4. (b) 'In Judaism it is impossible to know God.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

In the evaluation of this statement answer were generally good.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were able to discuss how Jews could get to know God through a variety of practical ways, including worship during Shabbat, the use of prayer generally and personal study of the Torah;
- referred to God revealing himself to individuals and how other people could learn from this;
- good responses also included reference to kavod and shekinah.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- generic response about general issues about belief in God, often in the context of a secular society;
- generic response without reference to Judaism;
- no use of specialist language.

**5. (a) Explain how the Ten Sayings (Aseret ha-Dibrot) are the basis for Jewish religious life. [AO1 15]**

This was not a popular choice of question and very few candidates attempted this question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- those candidates who did attempt this question were able to discuss the relation of the Ten Sayings to the mitzvot and comment on how these are the foundation of Jewish faith.;
- able to explore, using practical examples as illustrations, how the Ten Sayings are the basis for Jewish religious life;
- focus on Jewish religious life.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker candidates simply wrote out their version of the Ten Sayings without explanation or commentary;
- focus on the Ten Sayings as a basis rather for a moral life; ignored the aspect of the Ten Sayings as a basis for Jewish religious life;
- the question is asking for an explanation of how the Ten Sayings are the basis for Jewish religious life; a detailed description of how they were received is not required and did not answer the question.

**5. (b) 'The Ten Sayings are the most important guide for Jewish ethical living.' Evaluate this view. [AO 2 15]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- often included reference to the importance and significance of Moses and how the Ten Sayings set out a path for Jewish ethical behaviour;
- referred to the significance of the Ten Sayings and that this meant that without these commandments, Jews would not in fact know how to live an ethical life;
- other responses unpacked some of the Ten Sayings as a way of demonstrating their importance.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- were unsure of the meaning of the Ten Sayings and gave a generic response about how Jews use the Torah as a guide for life;
- some reference was made to the fact that these are general rules for life for all, and not just for Jews;
- focus on moral conduct rather than a focus on Jewish religious life.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2018

#### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### UNIT 1D: An Introduction to the Study of Buddhism (English version of the paper only)

##### General comments

There were a full range of responses including some excellent critical analysis. However, candidates from a small number of centres were under prepared for both questions in Section A. Centres are advised not to omit themes. Some candidates were able to perform well in AO1, but had weak evaluation skills in AO2. Very able candidates answered creatively, showing independent thinking. Some centres use formulaic answers, where candidates seemingly follow either a writing frame, or a prepared answer. This limits independent thinking skills in the more able. Introductions were mostly concise and relevant. Most candidates wrote coherently and organised their answers well. However, many wrote in 'storytelling mode' when describing events from the life of the historical Buddha. When asked to 'explain' or 'examine' many candidates simply described or listed information. Weaker responses did not focus on the question, or provided irrelevant material.

Candidates need to use key terms consistently and to spell them correctly. There was some confusion over the correct use of the terms Buddha, Buddhism, Buddhist, Theravada and Mahayana. Note also the correct use of Theravadin and Mahayanist. Better responses defined specialist language. A small number of candidates used the word 'stupid' when describing beliefs or teachings. Candidates should be encouraged to use appropriate academic language when making an argument.

This year there were fewer simplistic comments such as 'I believe,' 'I think,' 'I agree' and fewer 'for' and 'against' type discussions in part (b). Candidates attempted to clarify and develop answers and ideas as they progressed through the answer. However, candidates should avoid making unsubstantiated assertions, as marks are gained for the quality of their argumentation, and not for opinions. Candidates need to consider issues from a range of viewpoints, bringing out complexity in a convincing way. They should deal effectively with counter arguments and alternative perspectives, coming to a strong conclusion.

Fewer candidates supported their reasoning or evaluation by engaging with sources of wisdom. When scholarly opinions were used these tended to refer to the 'stock' opinions and authors that crop up every year, e.g. 'Be a lamp unto yourself'. Use of quotations should be appropriate and effective, rather than 'thrown in' in the hope of scoring some marks. Some candidates also deliberately invented quotations and misquoted sources. Candidates need to be supported and challenged to engage with a more extensive range of background reading material within the widest possible context (articles, books, documentaries, video clips, etc.). Candidates also need to be carefully guided and supported in knowing what, when and how to cite. They should appreciate why they are using other people's words, work and ideas and how these ideas can support their answers.

There was an issue with candidates viewing Theravada as 'strict' or 'old fashioned' and Mahayana as 'modern', 'liberal', 'lenient' and 'relaxed.' This led to poor judgements. There was a misguided assumption that Theravada is 'orthodox' and Mahayana a deviation. Stronger responses reflected the diversity of Buddhism effectively and analytically. Candidates should recognise that daily practice is a key feature of all schools of Buddhism, and not just Theravada Buddhism.

More support in understanding the concepts of anatta and samsara may be needed as some candidates erroneously wrote about the concept of a soul in Buddhism. Another common mistake was that candidates described Buddhist practices in answers requiring a discussion on Buddhist teachings.

## Section A

### 1. (a) Examine the Theravada notion of the arhat (worthy one). [AO1 15]

Whilst this was a very popular question providing a range of responses, it was clear that candidates from a small number of centres were not fully prepared to answer it effectively.

#### *Features of stronger responses:*

- detailed discussion on the four-stage path of arhatship;
- identification of the solitary nature of this path, along with it being aligned with monasticism;
- accurate use of key terms and full explanations for specialist language;
- a discussion of the characteristics of the arhat concerned with wisdom and morality.

#### *Features of weaker responses:*

- confusion as to whether or not the arhat remained in samsara;
- misunderstanding of the difference between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, and between the teachings about arhats and bodhisattvas;
- lack of reference to sources of wisdom;
- not linking back to the question to retain relevance;
- candidates' inability to spell the term Theravada correctly.

### 1. (b) 'The arhat, rather than the bodhisattva, best reflects the teachings of the Buddha' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

The majority of candidates were able to give at least a 'satisfactory' answer to this question.

#### *Features of stronger responses:*

- convincing arguments including comparisons between the arhat and bodhisattva paths;
- reference to evidence in sources of wisdom, such as the Pali Canon and discussion about the place of arhats and bodhisattvas within Buddhist scripture;
- links back to the question with sound judgements and conclusions being made;
- effective answers identifying the compassionate aspect of the bodhisattva tied in with the Buddha's teachings.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- writing solely about the bodhisattva or the arhat;
- interpreting the question as being a bodhisattva verses arhat discussion, giving superficial answers as to why one is better than the other, rather than making links between both and the teachings of Buddha;
- few candidates could see why the arhat path could also be seen as compassionate;
- referring to Mahayana Buddhism as 'less strict' and, either implying or stating, that this tradition was watered down or 'untrue' Buddhism;
- the muddling of ideas between the Mahayana and Theravada schools in relation to these paths to enlightenment;
- evaluations with statements such as 'an arhat would agree with this question' causing them to deviate from the question set often containing merely descriptions of general beliefs about the arhat and bodhisattva with no evaluation material;
- mixing 'teachings' with Buddhist 'practices'.

**2. (a) Examine the notion of pratityasamutpada.**

**[AO1 15]**

The fact that most candidates started the sentence with 'The pratityasamutpada' shows that there is some confusion here.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- correctly explaining the concept of pratityasamutpada as interconnectedness or dependent origination;
- successfully linking the wheel of life and samsara to the notion interconnectedness by explaining the twelve links of existence;
- connecting back to the question in order to keep the answer centred around pratityasamutpada;
- engaging with sources of wisdom e.g. referring to the words of the Buddha 'when this arises, that arises' or using secondary sources such as Dr Wendy Dossett.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- writing that pratityasamutpada was the wheel of life, merely focusing on explaining the iconography of the Tibetan Wheel of Life;
- using simple explanations, or merely a list, of aspects of the wheel, as opposed a discussion on how pratityasamutpada is reflected within it. Phrases such as 'symbolised by', 'shown in' etc. would have allowed candidates to use the information appropriately;
- the inability to explain interconnectedness, dependant origination or the chain of causation;
- when referencing the wheel of life some candidates incorrectly referred to 'Mara' eating the wheel as opposed to 'Yama'.

**Q2. (b) 'Pratityasamutpada accurately describes reality.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- good understanding of the terms pratityasamutpada and 'reality';
- the ability to correctly evaluate the issue using appropriate examples to show how pratityasamutpada does or does not represent reality;
- linking the teaching of pratityasamutpada with the three marks of existence and referring to the difficulty of trying to describe reality both past and present;
- giving examples from everyday life to assist them with the evaluation;
- ideas such as observation of cause and effect and exemplification of how karma is linked to pratityasamutpada.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- insecure knowledge and understanding of pratityasamutpada in part (a) led to difficulty in evaluating this statement;
- missing the point of the question or repeating the same information as in part (a) resulting in poor evaluation of the issue;
- merely discussing karma with no understanding or links to pratityasamutpada.

**Section B**

**3. (a) Examine the practices of metta bhavana (loving-kindness) and zazen (just sitting).**

**[AO1 15]**

The majority of candidates who answered this question were able to give at least a satisfactory response. There were very few weak answers seen.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- focused answers with relevant examples and scholarly references which were fittingly used;
- the ability to describe how each meditation is practiced, together with a sound explanation of its purpose;
- detailed and confident explanations about metta bhavana and the stages of the spreading of loving-kindness;
- references to the Dalai Lama as a source of wisdom, showing synopticity;
- appropriate links to Samatha meditation;
- reference to the use of koans and of satori when explaining zazen;
- good use of key terms such as 'karuna' aided examination of the practices.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- explanations of zazen meditation were less detailed;
- confusion of zazen meditation with mindfulness as practised in everyday life. Zazen is seated meditation where the practitioner sits on a zafu (cushion). At AS level reference to intuition, the use of koans and satori could be made;
- confusing various types of meditation and incorrectly stating that zazen is practiced in the Theravada tradition;
- writing more extensively about either metta bhavana or zazen resulting in an imbalanced response.

**3. (b) 'Meditation is a waste of time in modern society'.  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

This question was generally well-answered with a full range of marks awarded.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- focusing on the key words in the statements to construct answers;
- linking points to the question to produce a successful evaluation;
- referencing the use of meditation in popular culture and referring to its benefits;
- identifying the fact that modern society is too full of other concerns which limit meditation time;
- giving examples of contemporary uses of meditation, such as stress relief or health benefits, to support the points made within the evaluation;
- accurate explanations of the attitude of Pure Land Buddhists to the value of meditation.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- only focusing on part of the statement ;
- solely focussing on the importance of meditation today with no comment on 'modern society'.

**4. (a) Explain the Threefold Trainings in the Eightfold Path.**

**[AO1 15]**

It was clear that the vast majority of candidates were well prepared for this question which was generally well answered.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- discussion on each of the Threefold Trainings using relevant examples to support explanations;
- correct and effective use of key terms;
- identifying and explaining aspects of the path;
- accurately including sources of wisdom to stress the importance of the Eightfold Path in Theravada Buddhism, together with explanation as to why other traditions of Buddhism do not focus on it as much.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- simply listing aspects of the Eightfold Path without expanding or giving meaningful examples;
- not setting the Trainings into the context of the middle way;
- confusion over 'right effort' with candidates not really understanding the idea of training the mind to put aside negative thoughts, taking it more as 'trying harder.'



**4. (b) 'Morality without wisdom and meditation is worthless.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

This question proved to be generally accessible. Many candidates engaged well with the question and gave meaningful answers.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- reference to the idea that one is worthless without the other;
- reference to each stage of the Eightfold Path being linked together;
- reference to the diversity of traditions, noting that the focus in Pure Land Buddhism is on the Amida Buddha and in Zen focus is upon meditation;
- points regarding why morality or meditation could be stand-alone characteristics;
- links between all three aspects, showing that wisdom entailed acting morally and could be gained from meditation.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- a lack of knowledge as to what the Threefold Trainings are led to poor evaluation;
- some candidates were not able to evaluate all three of the Trainings;
- a lack of reference to the diversity of views on the Trainings from both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism;
- few candidates were able to use sources of wisdom effectively in this question.

**5. (a) Explain what the Four Sights mean to Buddhists.**

**[AO1 15]**

This was the most popular question answered in Section B. A wide range of answers were seen, with a spectrum of marks being awarded.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- effective explanations of what each sight might mean to Buddhists;
- references to the Buddha setting out to find answers to the meaning of life, his development of the three marks of existence and finding the middle way, etc.
- reference to the Pali Canon and the words of the Buddha himself;
- the ability to draw upon key concepts such as dukkha, anatta and anicca.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- falling into 'story-telling' mode, which does not allow for an explanation of the impact of the four sights;
- writing extensively about background information rather than focusing on this one life event;
- the inability to comment on what each sight means to Buddhists, which was the focus of the question;
- lack of reference to sources of wisdom.

**5. (b) 'The life of the Buddha is not important to Buddhists.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

This evaluation was well-answered with a wide range of marks being awarded.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- reference to the teachings being more important than the Buddha's life, noting that the life of the historical Buddha gave the context for the teachings;
- explaining specific parts of the Buddha's life and linking events to a particular teaching;
- the ability to fully evaluate the importance of the life of the Buddha to Buddhists by referring to scripture and the fact that by many it is seen as a hagiography and is not taken literally;
- effective use of secondary sources such as Dossett, Williams, Keown, Cush, etc.
- explanation of the impact of the Buddha's discovery of the Dharma making him a role model for Buddhists today;
- reference to the diversity of traditions, including a focus upon Pure Land Buddhism providing a contrast between Amitabha/Amida and the historical Buddha.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- the 'throwing in' of quotations from scholars without attempting to link their views to the context of argument which would support effective evaluation;
- too much focus on comparing the importance of the life of the Buddha with other important teachings/practices within Buddhism, which sometimes led to a loss of focus on the question.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2018

#### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### UNIT 1E: An Introduction to the Study of Hinduism

##### General comments

It was pleasing to see that as centres are becoming more familiar with the new specification there was an improvement in the quality of the responses. The excellent standard of some responses showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate and extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms. The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the range of bands.

However, some weaknesses persist from year to year - candidates need to focus on the question set and answer the demands of that question. Some failed to do this and answered on what they thought the question should be e.g. on Q.3(a) on Vaishnavism and Shaivism some candidates focused on the features of Vishnu and Shiva. Others did not read the question carefully enough especially in part (b) and therefore did not address the issues raised by that question.

On an administrative note a number of candidates persist in not filling in the box noting the questions that they have answered on the front of the answer booklet leaving the examiner to do this. Some candidates did not use (a) or (b) to differentiate between the different parts of the question they were answering leaving the examiner to guess where one finished and the other began. Although this was clear in the majority of cases this was not always the case.

##### Section A

**1. (a) Outline the main features of the Indus Valley civilisation and the Aryans and their culture.**

**[AO1 15]**

This was a very popular question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- many responses clearly demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of both the Indus Valley Civilisation and the culture of the Aryans;
- candidates wrote confidently about the Indus Valley Civilisation citing archaeological evidence such as the Great Bath at Mohenjo-Daro and the small square seals used for trading to support their points;
- strong candidates identified a number of features of each, organised their responses coherently and used specialist vocabulary. They were also able to relate the features to specific Hindu concepts;
- many centres had obviously prepared their students well for such a question. There were some imbalanced answers with candidates focusing much more on one than the other.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some weaker responses confused the two elements of the question;
- some only referred in their answers to either the Indus Valley Civilisation or the Aryans;
- others failed to refer to any aspects of their culture.

**1. (b) ‘There is no doubt that Hinduism originated in the Indus Valley.’  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- there were many excellent responses; some candidates answered this question with confidence and offered a number of key arguments to support the claim that Hinduism originated in the Indus Valley, and balanced such arguments with other views;
- arguments were well-supported with archaeological evidence and although there was some repetition of content used in part (a), it was credited if relevant and used evaluatively.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- however weaker responses simply repeated what they had put in part (a) without any effort to use it to evaluate the statement given in the question;
- there was often a lack of evidence to support the answers given.

**2. (a) Explain Krishna’s teaching in the Bhagavad Gita on dharma and varnadharma.**

**[AO1 15]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- there were some excellent responses with candidates being able to refer directly and sometimes quote from the Bhagavad Gita;
- good candidates were also able to give a brief overview of the varna system so as to put the teaching in context;
- they demonstrated very good understanding of the teachings, with a clear focus on varnadharma and its effect on the atman within the cycle of samsara;
- were also able to explain the conflict of personal dharma.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker candidates spent too long describing the story and too little on explaining Krishna’s teaching on dharma and varnadharma;
- a number of answers simply explained the caste system.

2. (b) 'The relationship between Krishna and Arjuna is central to Hinduism.'  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

The responses to this question were on the whole disappointing.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- good candidates were able to offer a wide variety of alternative viewpoints in their answers, ranging from the relationship between Rama & Sita or Krishna & Radha, as being more central;
- they also argued that broadly, other tenets or practices, such as belief in karma and samsara, ahimsa, worship, or festivals are more central to Hinduism;
- They also focused on the virtues of the relationship itself such as friendship and trust and how those virtues are important in Hinduism.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- a number of candidates missed the focus of the question on the 'relationship' between Krishna and Arjuna;
- there was little understanding of the qualities of the relationship such as inseparable friendship representing the cosmic inseparability of Brahman and atman or the essence of the universe and the soul.

## Section B

3. (a) Outline the main features of Vaishnavism and Shaivism. [AO1 15]

This was a popular question. There were some imbalanced answers which focused much more on one than the other.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- there were many excellent responses which demonstrated clear understanding of the features of Vaishnavism and Shaivism;
- they included references to the main features of both traditions in terms of beliefs and philosophies relating to God and the atman, and styles of worship;

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses included those which missed the focus of the question set;
- many offered responses which focussed on the deities of Vishnu and Shiva, and gave a simple description of their physical features and myths associated with them.

**3. (b) 'Vaishnavism and Shaivism are religions in themselves.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

There were some very good and balanced answers to this question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- good candidates presented a number of valid arguments which included a discussion on what is meant by Hinduism; their monotheistic nature suggesting that they are indeed religions in themselves;
- they were also able to argue that they cannot be separate since they are all aspects of Brahman;
- others considered the different beliefs, philosophies and practices of Vaishnavism and Shaivism in their arguments for them being treated as separate religions.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses were imbalanced and lacked support for any arguments presented;
- merely described some of the features of Vaishnavism and Shaivism e.g. that Vaishnavites regard Vishnu as the supreme God without relating/comparing it to the belief in Brahman and then relating it further to the question set.

**4. (a) Examine the concept of ahimsa in Hinduism.**

**[AO1 15]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- there were some excellent responses to this question showing high levels of understanding of the Hindu concept of ahimsa, including its Jainian origins and practices and the political use made of it by Gandhi;
- good candidates demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of Gandhi's development of the concept into what he called satyagraha.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses were limited to understanding ahimsa as only 'non-violence';
- made no reference to Gandhi's interpretation of the concept;
- there was no evidence of the influence of ahimsa on Hindu lifestyle.

**4. (b) 'Truth has an inherent force.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

A number of candidates found this question challenging and the responses were generally disappointing.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- good candidates attempted to discuss Gandhi's use of ahimsa in his satyagraha and the importance he placed on truth;
- they were also able to refer to truth giving the moral high ground in any situation; quotations from Gandhi were used to support the arguments made.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- missed the focus of the question, 'truth has an inherent force'. A number misunderstood 'inherent' and interpreted it as 'inherited'. They then mistakenly wrote about the caste system;
- others took the question to mean that it is important to 'always tell the truth';
- some candidates made no attempt to answer the question set or simply wrote a few sentences or a single paragraph.

**5. (a) Examine the nature and importance of congregational worship in Hinduism. [AO1 15]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- there were many excellent responses to this question demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding of congregational puja, with extensive and accurate use of technical vocabulary;
- strong answers examined a variety of congregational puja including arti, havan and darshan.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- it is imperative that candidates read the question carefully and highlight the key words before attempting the answer. Weaker candidates missed the focus of 'congregational puja' and instead described in detail the nature and importance of puja in the home;
- a small number linked this with the extended family, and these responses were credited. Others linked it with festival worship, and likewise, these responses were credited.

**5. (b) 'Puja is not a religious experience.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Many candidates found this question to be challenging and generally the responses were disappointing.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- The strongest responses focused on elements of puja which were indicative of a religious experience, such as its multi-sensory nature, the relationship developed, and the reciprocal act of darshan;
- arguments were challenged with the habitual nature of puja suggesting it is nothing more than a duty or chore.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses simply described some of the features of puja with no evaluation and no reference to the statement given in the question;
- there was no real link made between the features of puja and a religious experience.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**UNIT 1F: An Introduction to the Study of Sikhism**

**General comments**

It was pleasing to see that as centres are becoming more familiar with the new specification there was an improvement in the quality of the responses. The excellent quality of some answers showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate and extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms. However, it is imperative that centres focus on the detail of the specification content.

The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the range of bands. However, some weaknesses persist from year to year - candidates need to focus on the question set and answer the demands of that question. Some failed to do this and answered on what they thought the question should be e.g. Q5. (a) on how the festival of Vaisakhi expresses Sikh identity some candidates focused entirely on how the festival is celebrated. Others did not read the question carefully enough especially in part (b) and therefore did not address the issues raised by that question. This was particularly true in Q2. (b) where candidates chose to evaluate the importance of the Guru Granth Sahib rather than evaluating whether it is worshipped or not.

On an administrative note a number of candidates persist in not filling in the box noting the questions that they have answered on the front of the answer booklet leaving the examiner to do this. Some candidates did not use (a) or (b) to differentiate between the different parts of the question they were answering leaving the examiner to guess where one finished and the other began. Although this was clear in the majority of cases this was not always the case.

**Section A**

- 1.(a) Examine how key events in Guru Nanak's life influenced on his teaching.**  
[AO1 15]

This was a popular question.

***Features of stronger answers:***

- in the stronger answers a number of key events from Guru Nanak's life were considered e.g. his refusal to wear the sacred thread, his vision of God and his spiritual journeys;
- in addition to the above, a clear and specific explanation was given on how these events influenced his teaching.



***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker answers were either limited in the number of events they referred to or were very descriptive in nature, describing the event without explaining its influence on Nanak's teaching;
- others gave Nanak's key teachings without linking them to any events in his life.

**1. (b) 'There was nothing new in the teachings of Guru Nanak.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

Many candidates were able to answer this question with confidence.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- focused on the demands of the question and were able to differentiate critically between what Nanak had inherited as beliefs and the concepts he presented himself;
- they included a rejection of the caste system, the role of women and his teaching on equality.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- the weaker answers were limited in scope and referred mainly to his rejection of the caste system without really evaluating to what extent his teachings were new or just a development of Hindu and Muslim beliefs;
- others could not differentiate between Nanak's teachings and those that were already taught by Hinduism and Islam.

**2. (a) Examine the authority of the Guru Granth sahib in Sikhism. [AO1 15]**

The responses to this question varied greatly in quality.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were able to refer to a range of reasons why the Guru Granth Sahib has authority including its role as a living guide, expression of the word of God and its role in Sikh worship and life;
- the answers were focused on the question and linked the roles to authority.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker answers were descriptive in nature, describing how the Guru Granth Sahib is treated in the gurdwara and/or describing its role in the Sikh community;
- little effort was made to link these roles with authority.

**2. (b) 'Sikhs worship the Guru Granth Sahib.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

The responses to this question on the whole were disappointing.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the stronger answers included a definition of what constitutes worship and the considered if the way Sikhs view, treat and use the Guru Granth Sahib fulfils this definition;
- were able to evaluate the difference between regarding something as important and showing respect and worshipping;
- were also able to refer to Sikh teaching that only God should be worshipped and that idol worship is completely rejected.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker answers did not differentiate between worship and respect;
- many ignored the word worship altogether and evaluated the importance of the Guru Granth Sahib in Sikhism.

**Section B**

**3. (a) Examine Sikh understanding of karma and rebirth.**

**[AO1 15]**

This was another popular question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- there were some excellent responses which demonstrated clear understanding of both concepts and how they are interrelated;
- they were able to refer to God as creator of first karma, but that it does not mean that everything is preordained;
- they also referred to Sikh belief in reincarnation and that the soul can be reborn many times.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker answers were imbalanced which focused much more on one than the other;
- they were also very superficial in their discussion on karma merely stating that it is cause and effect and not expanding or exemplifying particular Sikh teaching on the concept.

**3. (b) 'The greatest influence on Sikh lifestyle is belief in karma.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

There were some very good balanced answers to this question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the stronger answers included a number of valid arguments which were supported by specific examples to show the influence of belief in karma on Sikh lifestyle e.g. living a virtuous life;
- they were also able to consider in a thoughtful and balanced way other factors which influence a Sikh's lifestyle such as their relationship with God and being part of the Sikh community.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses were imbalanced and lacked support for any arguments presented;
- they also listed anything and everything within Sikhism as having more influence on a Sikh's lifestyle.

**4. (a) Explain the concepts of Kirat Karo and Vand Chakko. [AO1 15]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- there were some excellent responses to this question showing high levels of understanding of the Sikh concepts of Kirat Karo and Vand Chakko – e.g. the understanding of Kirat Karo as exercising God-given skills, abilities and talents and Vand Chakko as living as an inspiration and support to the entire community;
- they also recognised the relationship between the concepts and the third pillar Naam Japo, and how they influence a Sikh's lifestyle.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses were limited in their knowledge and understanding of the two concepts;
- there were also examples of candidates mistaking one concept for the other.

**4. (b) 'Vand Chakko is more important in Sikhism than Kirat Karo.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

A number of candidates found this question challenging and the responses were generally disappointing.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the better answers were able to evaluate the needs of the community (Vand Chakko) with the focus on the individual (Kirat Karo) and balance one against the other;
- were also able to see that they are interrelated and therefore that it is difficult to say that one is more important than the other.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses found it difficult to find any valid arguments for the importance of one over the other;
- some in desperation, noted that other concepts were more important than both.

**5. (a) Examine how the festival of Vaisakhi expresses Sikh identity. [AO1 15]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- there were some excellent responses to this question demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding of the festival of Vaisakhi. The answers were completely focused on the demands of the question which was on Sikh identity;
- they were able to link successfully the practices of the festival with Sikh identity and how they express it – e.g. reminds Sikhs of their history and traditions and is therefore a chance to express the pride Sikhs take in their religion.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker answers ignored Sikh identity completely and gave a description of the background to the festival and the practices involved;
- they also included other festivals and practices which they argued were better expressions of Sikh identity.

**5. (b) ‘Sikh festivals are more social than religious occasions.’  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

There were some excellent and well-focused answers.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the strongest responses focused specifically on the customs associated with Diwali and Vaisakhi and evaluated thoughtfully whether they were social or religious in nature;
- considered whether celebrating these festivals could be considered a social or religious experience;
- also considered the view that religious and social aspects are sometimes inseparable.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker answers were imbalanced and did not discuss the religious significance and experience of celebrating festivals in any great depth.
- some were unsure of what social occasions actually meant.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**Unit 2A: An Introduction to Religion and Ethics**

**General comments**

Most candidates were able to access the questions set and many demonstrated very good application of the theories to the ethical issues tested. Many candidates made very effective use of key ethical terms such as teleological, relativist etc. both in English and Welsh medium scripts.

Some candidates spent too long explaining the theories and their responses showed little or no application – lengthy explanations of context are not required in ‘apply’ questions. Others explained a great deal about the history and background of Fletcher’s theory without actually applying the theory itself.

The trend for improved evaluation answers continued, with the vast majority of responses showing at least some evaluative comment.

**Section A**

**1. (a) Apply Fletcher’s Situation Ethics to ethical issues relating to homosexual relationships. [AO1 30]**

This was the more popular of the two questions. Some well-written responses were seen which were unable to access the higher bands as they simply explained Situation Ethics in great detail with very little reference to homosexual relationships.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- good answers clearly applying the working and fundamental principles to the issue of homosexual relationships in a systematic way showing good knowledge and understanding;
- clear reference to scholarship was seen and candidates made effective use of examples from both contemporary society and the Bible;
- even in good responses, the working principle ‘Positivism’ was widely misunderstood and only a few explained and applied this accurately.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses simply talked about ‘doing the most loving thing’ and did not appear to know more than this about the theory, often getting confused about the type of love involved or mixing in the ideas of Utilitarianism;
- the example of Alan Turing was widely used, but not always to good effect – it was only relevant when used to exemplify the application of Situation Ethics;
- finally, some candidates saw this as an evaluation-type essay and offered detailed reasons why Christians should not accept homosexual relationships which were not relevant to the question.

**1. (b) 'Agape (selfless love) should replace all religious rules.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

Most responses identified key issues relating to this question and presented arguments supported by reasoning.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- strong answers questioned the assumption in the question and argued that agape was already part of religious rules;
- some very good arguments were seen, in which candidates drew on relevant evidence, scholarship and examples to support their line of reasoning, leading to sound conclusions;
- Situation Ethics was often contrasted with either Natural Law, Divine Command Theory or specific Biblical teachings in order to draw out the main issues;
- also, some good links to other religions, notably Buddhism were seen.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses often gave some rather strange examples of actions that would be based on agape, showing a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept;
- Others simply looked at the strengths and pitfalls of using agape with no specific reference to religious rules.

**2.(a) Apply Bentham's hedonic calculus to the use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent.**

**[AO1 30]**

This question was not as popular as Q1. , but some very strong answers were seen.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- good responses often gave a brief introduction about act utilitarianism and an outline of issues relating to nuclear deterrence, before quickly moving to a systematic application of the criteria of the hedonic calculus to the specific issue of nuclear deterrence, showing clear understanding of each aspect;
- strong responses were characterised by very effective use of examples drawn from, for example, the Cold War;
- the relativist nature of the theory was identified and some good responses recognised that there would be no general 'answer' to the issue without a specific situation in mind.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses often lost the focus on nuclear deterrence and instead discussed the use of nuclear weapons; given that nuclear deterrence is clearly identified in the specification, the number of responses which made this error was surprising;
- as is often the case, candidates struggled to distinguish between fecundity and extent, and often could not clearly apply propinquity through a lack of clear understanding of this criterion.

- weaker definition of terms was more obvious in Welsh medium scripts; some responses were very general and made little reference to any criteria of the hedonic calculus.
- others confused Bentham and Mill, discussing irrelevant material such as higher and lower pleasures.

**2. (b) 'Pleasure is the only true basis for morality.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This question seemed very accessible, with most answers demonstrating arguments supported by reasoning.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- contrasted pleasure with alternative bases for morality such as divine commands, Natural Law or agape;
- many considered the subjective nature of pleasure and gave good examples of pleasure being used to justify immoral actions, however evaluations would be stronger if candidates also realised that such actions may not actually be justified by the correct application of the hedonic calculus;
- most good responses clearly identified this view with Bentham's Utilitarianism, and considered the evidence for pleasure as the basis for morality.
- others related pleasure to Ethical Egoism, to greater or lesser degrees of success.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- did not identify any links to Utilitarianism and, while this was not required to answer the question, answers which considered pleasure in very general terms did not often gain high marks;
- some responses only considered the issue from a Christian perspective and had a very weak grasp of ethical theory;
- a few candidates attempted to use Mill's theory as a different perspective on the issue, but sometimes failed to grasp that both Mill and Bentham would see pleasure as a basis for morality, even if they understood this in different ways.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2018

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### Unit 2B: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion

##### General comments

Candidates are making considerable use of the available resources and this is enhancing understanding and answers. There is clear evidence of some excellent teaching which is enthusing candidates to respond as they have done. Candidates have been prepared well to meet the demands of the paper.

However, there is some evidence of candidates including information about philosophers who have not been asked for in the question. This wastes time and gains no marks in that part of the question. Also there were often long introductions and/ or conclusions in part (a) questions which were unnecessary, resulting in some candidates running out of time.

##### Section B

**3. (a) Explain the different ontological arguments for the existence of God presented by Anselm and Malcolm. [AO1 30]**

Features of most responses - generally the differences between Proslogion 2 and 3 were acknowledged.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- candidates appropriately referred to the fact that the ontological argument was a priori and deductive and were able to explain these terms;
- they knew how God's definition is crucial to the entire argument;
- with regards to Malcolm, there were references to God's existence being either impossible or necessary;
- better candidates even noted not just Malcolm's understanding of God as an 'unlimited being', but also demonstrated how this is a development of the ontological argument.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- candidates referred to the fact that the ontological argument was a priori and deductive, but it wasn't always clear whether they knew what this meant;
- the idea of existence as a perfection was at times confused, with the idea being given that 'God must be perfect' without understanding that this is because existence is a perfection which a perfect being must have; this needs to be used when explaining that God must have the property of 'existence' or else another being who would be greater than God could exist, explaining why this is absurd;
- there were some references to God's existence being either impossible or necessary, but this needed considerable development;
- candidates need to comprehend what Malcolm was presenting when suggesting that God's existence is either impossible or necessary.



3. (b) 'The ontological arguments for God's existence are completely ineffective'.  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

***Features of stronger responses:***

- there were some fabulous explanations of the challenges to the argument. Kant in particular was most prominent;
- the majority understood his main challenge that existence is not a predicate and it was useful to read his thalers example;
- a few noted his general issue with arguments that involved reference to the noumenal world;
- on the effective side of the argument in the main candidates used the deductive nature of the argument. It would be good practice to widen this perhaps by suggesting that existence can be considered a predicate, as 100 real thalers does have the property of purchasing-power (S. Davis).

***Features of weaker responses:***

- features of a weaker answer-often these were restricted to Gaunilo and even then the main point he was making was not realised with many saying that perfection is subjective;
- little mention was made of the deductive nature of the argument.

4. (a) Explain the different teleological arguments for the existence of God presented by Aquinas and Tennant. [AO1 30]

***Features of stronger responses:***

- references were made to Aquinas' archer/arrow analogy and this was related to God and the universe;
- better answers stood out by candidates stating that Tennant's principles are not denying evolution, giving the relevant reasons as explained by Tennant and also by referring to the specific pieces of evidence that Tennant gives for his conclusion that God facilitates evolution;

***Features of weaker responses:***

- most candidates made reference to Aquinas' archer/arrow analogy, but not all made the vital step of carrying it forward to God and the Universe;
- it would perhaps be easier to learn in such a way as to gain more marks if 'purpose' and 'order/regularity' were separated; there is considerable overlap in the ideas; however, learning them separately with distinct examples might help to ensure that candidates do not conflate them in essay-writing;
- Tennant's anthropic principle was included as was his aesthetic principle. The former was done in a fairly general fashion. Answers could be improved by two things. Firstly, candidates stating that this principle is not denying evolution and secondly referring to the specific pieces of evidence that Tennant gives for his conclusion that God facilitates evolution;
- the aesthetic principle equally needs to state that the point is that the appreciation of beauty is not necessary for survival, hence explaining why God must be involved in the process.

**4. (b) 'Scientific arguments are more persuasive than teleological arguments in explaining the universe'.**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the inductive nature of the teleological argument was used as a persuasive aspect of the arguments;
- the use of analogies was also championed with candidates drawing out a persuasive comparison between mechanical objects and the Universe;
- conversely, Hume was used well as a rebuttal of such analogies. As an empiricist he can be validly used as a scientific challenge to the argument.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- there were, however, considerable 'throw-away' points that were either irrelevant or did not add anything to the evaluation. Examples of this were inaccurate references to the Big Bang and Hawking and challenges to teleological arguments that were not scientific;
- indeed, many answers were very 'general' with regard to Science, failing to show any scholarly input whatsoever;
- using information such as the Anthropic Principle would be pertinent and would be of substance.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**Unit 3A: A Study of Christianity**

**General comments**

It is pleasing to note that this first examination paper did not raise any concerns and so fulfilled its aim of setting appropriate questions in a fair and accessible manner. The full range of marks were employed to the answers provided.

The following report will more naturally focus on obvious areas of improvement and does not negate the excellent responses provided by many candidates.

**Administrative Rubrics**

Examination Officers do need to complete the details on the plastic envelopes sent to Examiners including your Centre Number and the number of scripts being sent. This is an important part of the audit trail for your candidates.

**Student Rubrics**

As required on the front page every student should enter the question numbers that they have attempted in the box. This should be in the format of: E.g. 1 3 5

There were no 'rubric' infringements whereby the wrong number of questions were answered from the wrong sections. However, a number of weaker students only completed one or, more generally, two questions with no attempt made to complete the paper. This did not present itself as a time issue. Anything credit worthy will be credited even if contained in the briefest answer.

At the point of examination accurate spellings for core curriculum or associated words often required attention e.g. **G**od, **J**esus, **H**oly **S**pirit, resurrection, psalms, **E**ngland.

## Section A

1. **Examine the views about Jesus that have been developed by J.D. Crossan and N.T. Wright.**

[AO1 30]

This was the least popular of the Section A questions.

### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- for many candidates this question proved a gift with 'Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding' achieving a Band 5 mark;
- there was a clear balance between the two scholars' views as the question required.
- where there was an imbalance between the two scholars, e.g. where one was mentioned in a final paragraph which, depending on what was written, brought it into Band 3 'answers main demands of the question' or possibly just Band 4 'answers the specific demands of the question set';

### ***Features of weaker responses:***

- failed to realise the importance of presenting a balanced answer to the question set, or the need for accuracy; this generally appeared to be easier achieved with Crossan and it is understandable that his works appear offer more to 'Examine' and within that seem to have been more accurately learnt compared with representing the orthodox view of Wright;
- however, in another sense, Wright's orthodox view sense is less complicated and should be equally accessible and weighted in the answer e.g. that Wright presents the crucifixion and bodily resurrection of Jesus as real and trustworthy and upon which Christianity is based unfolds much of his view of Jesus that was too frequently missed;
- this was not a question about Crossan's views of Jesus' parables and his classification of them; this could and sometimes was appropriately used material in presenting Crossan's view of Jesus; sometimes it was written with little if any reference to Jesus or what it may mean to Crossan's views of Jesus;
- some candidates confused the scholars totally, others mixed their views up so it was difficult to know who they were referring to and such answers were more typically Band 2 'basic level of accuracy and relevance'.

2. **Explain the arguments for and against the U.K. being called a 'Christian country' in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

[AO1 30]

This was the preferred Section A question. Candidates should be reminded that Section A questions test your knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- for those candidates who answered the question set and in the format it was asked this was a question to excel in and Band 5 was readily accessed;
- as such no hurdle was presented by the use of the word 'arguments' in the question, clarifying both a 'for and against' case to be presented within a question which in Section A *test your knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.*

**Features of weaker responses:**

- in spite of this being a very straightforward opportunity for candidates to *Explain* a case for and a case against too many candidates answered a question as if it came from Section B and was an AO2 question; the question they appeared to want to address was "The U.K. in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is still a 'Christian country'. Evaluate this view";
- such evaluative answers that were pre-prepared in revision were placed on the answer paper without reading or thinking about the exam paper structure or the question actually being asked;
- ensuring candidates are familiar with the Section A and Section B part of the curriculum and how that affects their approach both to the exam paper and the information they have learnt is the single most important point here;
- those who answered 'as if Section B' were not a majority of candidates, but a significant proportion; some still achieved higher bands as the 'knowledge and understanding' aspect of the answer was extrapolated from their evaluation; however, it left a lot of redundant evaluative writing;
- Within this, a whole range of statistics were quoted – the source rarely, it needs to be in a question of knowledge and understanding not least of all as those statistics sometime appeared to have more flexibility in them than expected to the point of contradiction.

**Section B**

3. **'The Bible is the inspired Word of God.'**  
**Evaluate this view with reference to Christianity.** [AO2 30]

**Features of stronger responses:**

- many candidates read the question, knew it was seeking an evaluation and then with the knowledge of 'objective and subjective inspiration' applied began to answer the question set;
- several of these candidates would then go further and provide 'test cases' for what is regarded as the Word of God given it is followed compared to something that is not followed / believed albeit still found in the Bible;
- some candidates appropriately brought in other sources of opinion e.g. Bultmann, Barth, Wright and Crossan to make different evaluations of the question and consequently 'Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue' was presented and Band 5 marks awarded alongside other bands.

**Features of weaker responses:**

- for a number of candidates their approach to this question was the mirror image of Question 2 (not necessarily the same candidates);
- most answers referred to 'Objective' and 'Subjective' inspiration in a Section A format of *knowledge and understanding* rather than of *testing your skills of analysis and evaluation* – as stated on the Examination Paper;
- the above two ideas were presented and Calvin's 'accommodation' was generally the third aspect mentioned, but too frequently as information not evaluation between them.

- some candidates referred to the physical make-up of the Bible, rarely to the formation of the Canon of Scripture and what that may offer to the evaluation of the Bible being the inspired word of God;
- quotations from the Bible concerning inspiration were also used, but rarely the argument that the Bible is a self-confessed mixture of literature emanating from declared different sources for different reasons e.g. Pentateuch, Psalms, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, the Gospels compared to Acts of the Apostles compared to Letters from different authors; what impact does this have on both the 'objective and subjective' views of inspiration?

**4. 'Science has reduced God to being the 'God of the gaps'.'  
Evaluate this view with reference to Christianity.**

**[AO2 30]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- candidates approached this question as one to typically evaluate. The mode of this was setting out Dawkins v McGrath. The methodology used then spread the answers across the Bands;
- some concentrated on Dawkins and wrote much about his view (often wrongly attributing 'God of the gaps' expression to him). Having set out the basis of the question some then gave an equal and considered presentation of McGrath's views; such answers often achieved a Band 4 mark 'Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue';
- the Band 5 answers were those that intertwined Dawkins (and sometimes others) and McGrath (and sometimes others) and were able to add other scholars or their own thoughts within the answer and who arrived at a clear conclusion.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some relegated McGrath to a one paragraph response, sometimes within a conclusion itself and as such depending on the quality of the analysis included a Band 3 or Band 2 were more appropriate;
- others omitted McGrath, but gave their own analysis to Dawkins; it may be noted that McGrath is not alone in his stance and candidates may be aided in 'balancing' their answers by utilising other scholars old and new.

**5. 'The UK should be regarded as a modern mission field'.  
Evaluate this view with reference to Christianity.**

**[AO2 30]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- this proved a popular question particularly for those who read it, assessed what was needed in the answer and delivered it in a debating style analysis throughout with a clear conclusion and in so doing achieved Band 5;
- much of the material in the marking scheme was referred to, but other relevant points when accurately used as analysis were also credited i.e. the fact that Christianity is a missionary religion and so will always see a mission field wherever it exists.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- meanwhile, most candidates understood and presented 'reverse mission' as an indication of one side of the argument; others confused this with a debate about immigration per se which was rarely creditworthy to the question set;
- neither were arguments presented that are factually wrong e.g. 'most churches have now been sold off';
- in this sense this question attracted candidates who thought they could write something for a third question rather than nothing and in so doing generally achieved some marks (see general comments - 'Student rubrics').

**6. 'Natural explanations of charismatic experiences weaken their religious value.'  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was by far the least answered question of Section B and comment is very much more restricted.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- most candidates referred to 'tongues' as a Charismatic experience, rightly so;
- some also referred to other Charismatic experiences e.g. healing and the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit e.g. what natural explanation can be given about the gift of Wisdom?

***Features of weaker responses:***

- very weak arguments were too often replicated in the sense of tongues must be an expression of them all being drunk and confused, while healings are coincidences;
- little counter argument that the first analysis of being drunk goes back to the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and was counter argued then or by Peter, at what point is credulity stretched by the sheer number of coincidences that explain away every charismatic experience reported historically or today?
- part of this arose because the question does not read 'destroy their religious value', but 'weaken', so within each argument itself there could be analytical consideration given to both sides.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**Unit 3B: A Study of Islam**

**General comments**

This paper was a relatively small entry and, overall, was generally well answered. It was very positive to see that all questions were attempted demonstrating both accessibility and the opportunity to showcase the depth and breadth of knowledge, understanding, critical analysis and evaluation skills developed by candidates.

The AO1 answers in Section A often displayed sufficient detail and an awareness of variety within Islam.

The AO2 questions in Section B tended to contain quite a lot of knowledge and explanation, sometimes at the expense of limiting AO2 skills of critical analysis and evaluation. Weaker responses tended to spend a lot of time explaining and then adding an evaluative summary.

In contrast, stronger responses recognised that Section B was evaluative and so used their knowledge and understanding as evidence and examples to support evaluative points made rather than in isolation. The full range of marks were awarded in this Option.

**Section A**

**1. Explain Muslim understandings of jihad (struggle). [AO1 30]**

This was the most popular question from Section A. Most candidates were able to define the two classifications of jihad: lesser; and, greater. One or two candidates knew the different interpretations of jihad, but got the classifications the wrong way around. Although lesser and greater were explained well on the whole, very few candidates went on to discuss further sub-categories of jihad such as the heart, tongue, hand and sword. Nearly all candidates discussed the misinterpretation of jihad in the West with some anecdotal evidence that was sometimes given the main focus of the answer which limited opportunities to demonstrate a greater depth and breadth of understanding.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- balanced discussion of the two types of jihad;
- a range of examples to support daily struggles;
- a discussion of lesser jihad within its historical context;
- awareness of the specific rulings associated with lesser jihad;
- an awareness of the variety of interpretations and applications within Islam.



***Features of weaker responses:***

- too much focus on lesser jihad and ISIS;
- a general understanding of daily struggle without specific examples;
- confusion of the two classifications.

**2. Explain the beliefs and practices distinctive of Shi'a Islam. [AO1 30]**

This was not as popular as the first question but those that chose to answer this did reasonably well. There were some excellent responses that dealt with the historical division, the focus on the Imam, interpretations of the pillars, Ashura, pilgrimages, muta and taqiyya. Weaker responses were very basic descriptive responses about the pillars of Islam and Ashura. The question asked for beliefs and practices but these were not discrete areas always and tend to overlap in practice. A balance between the two was often achieved but was not necessary to access the full range of marks.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- balanced reference to beliefs such as the succession of Ali and divine qualities of the Imam;
- a good range of distinctive features;
- explained the significance of Ashura and associated practices rather than just a description;

***Features of weaker responses:***

- too much focus on describing the historical split;
- too much focus on describing Ashura;
- a general comparison of prayer.

**Section B**

**3. 'Islamic teachings on punishment should not be applied today.'  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This question was answered to varying degrees of success depending upon how much detail was given over to an explanation in isolation on the one hand, and explanation that was integral to critical analysis and evaluation on the other hand. Better answers constructed good lines of argument and different lines of reasoning with evidence from Shari'a law itself as well as different interpretations of the law around the world with reference to scholars such as Tariq Ramadan and James Rachels. Many discussed human rights violations with reference to some countries as well as the importance of the Qur'an. Weaker responses tended to offer, sometimes in detail, an explanation of what the three different types of punishments were in Islam and then gave a personal response to each which completely missed the opportunity to draw comparisons between the different ways punishments are applied within Islam today in different parts of the world.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- brief explanations of the three types of punishment that were integral to a point made in evaluation;
- use of explanation/examples as evidence for an argument;
- awareness of the great diversity within Islam, the contrast between Islamic and non-Islamic countries, but also the awareness of variety within Islam e.g. Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- Too much focus on describing the three types of punishment;
- lacked specific examples;
- lack of awareness of the great variety within Islam as to the application of punishments.

**4. 'In Islam, there is inequality between men and women.'  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This is always a favourite area for debate and this question was generally answered well. The weaker responses tend to trawl through a list of roles of men and women and then point out inequalities without a depth of understanding about the debate concerning 'apparent' inequalities. Better answers had more of an awareness of the specific reasons for 'apparent' inequalities. Most answers focused on clothing, marriage/divorce laws, rules about prayer at the masjid, as well as cultural differences. Many were able to discuss Muhammad's views on women and use this in a very positive way in contrast to the history of some other world faiths. Most were also able to include evidence from contemporary studies, for example feminism, and the inclusion of some famous Muslim women were also seen.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- an awareness of the distinction between role and status;
- good use of evidence and examples from scholars, the Qur'an and references to Muhammad (Hadith and Sunna);
- an ability to contextualise the debate within a broader understanding of the rights of women throughout the historical world.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- too much focus on describing the specific roles of men and women;
- taking distinctions at face value .e.g. separation for prayer, education and earnings
- little use of examples from the contemporary world;
- a conclusion that did not always link with what preceded it.

5. **‘To refer to Shari’a as a ‘law’ misrepresents what it is.’  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

Most answers were generally able to discuss how following Shari’a was *din*, a way of life and encompassed the entirety of Islamic life, teaching and practice. Many failed to recognise that Shari’a refers not just to legal matters and so some answers were duly sidetracked and focused solely on the negatives of Shari’a as viewed in the media and in the West. Some answers raised the issues of whether or not Shari’a had relevance today when some laws are old as well as pointing out the historical context for Shari’a. There were a few good answers that recognised that the word ‘law’ had different levels of meaning such as family laws, religious laws, social laws, criminal laws and civil laws. Some answers also recognised that Shari’a is a divine and eternal law in Islam and so embraces all aspects of law under the canopy of religion.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- a recognition of the different ways in which the word ‘law’ is used;
- Understanding of the very different interpretations and applications of Shari’a law in society within the Islamic world;
- good use of evidence and examples to illustrate diversity and variety;

***Features of weaker responses:***

- too much focus on harsh penalties such as cutting off the hand for theft and murder by stoning for adultery;
- narrow interpretation of Shari’a law as just the criminal courts;
- no real awareness of variety within Islam in how Shari’a is interpreted and applied.

6. **‘Islam is not represented accurately in Britain today.’  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was a popular question. Many of the answers included reference to media representation, especially after events such as 9/11 and the Manchester bombings but also on the stereotypes of Muslims in particular, often derived from association with terrorism. Weaker responses tended to focus on this in the main. However, stronger responses: were more balanced and also made effective use of positive examples of public, celebrity and sports figures, for instance Sadiq Khan, Mo Farah and Mo Salah as positive role models. Also, examples of Mosque open days, cultural awareness days, the role of R.E. in schools and the work of the Muslim Council of Britain were presented to support arguments that things were changing and that negative stereotypes were being challenged. Some answers, also related to the latter point, discussed how the media fail to report on the positive aspects of the faith.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- a recognition of the different ways in which the media misrepresents Islam;
- an awareness of the impact of negative stereotyping on the wider community;
- good use of evidence and examples to illustrate diversity and variety within Islam in promoting a more positive image and therefore more balanced, hence accurate, representation of Islam throughout Britain.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- too much focus on terrorism;
- lack of positive examples to support accurate representation;
- unawareness of the variety of ways in which Islam is represented throughout Britain.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**Unit 3C: A Study of Judaism**

**General comments**

It is evident from candidates' responses that all questions on the paper were accessible, and answers covered the full range of responses. Where responses were good, the answers displayed excellent use of evidence and examples, and a thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. It was also noticeable that students had been exposed to a range of views of scholars/schools of thought which were well-used by the stronger candidates especially in Section A.

The responses to Section B questions show that many candidates have been well prepared for the requirements of critical analysis and evaluation with only a minority of answers showing a basic 'for' and 'against' formula. However, it is evident that there are some candidates who are failing to recognise the difference between knowledge and understanding (AO1) and analysis and evaluation (AO2), thus limiting their ability to achieve marks from the higher bands especially in (but not exclusive to) Section B.

There are some general areas in which improvements can be made, such as a greater use of references from sacred texts and sources of wisdom. Also, too many answers in Section B failed to make any reference whatsoever to the views of scholars/schools of thought. Candidates should also continue to be reminded to pay close attention to the specific wording of each question as weaker answers sometimes failed to address all aspects of the issues required.

On an administrative note, the majority of candidates did not fill in the box on the front of the answer booklet to indicate the questions which were attempted and should be reminded to do so.

**Section A**

1. **Explain the content, style and importance for study of the Mishnah and the Gemara within Judaism.** [AO1 30]

***Features of stronger responses:***

- where responses were good, all the requirements of the question were met, and there was a balance between the Mishnah and the Gemara, with detailed explanations of content, style and importance for study;
- stronger candidates also illustrated their answers with relevant examples from the texts.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses lacked balance between Mishnah and Gemara in their responses;
- some candidates were unable to give even a brief outline of the Mishnah and its six orders.

**2. Examine the different ways in which Ignaz Maybaum and Richard Rubenstein have responded to the Holocaust. [AO1 30]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- strong responses included detailed and accurate accounts of the ways in which Maybaum and Rubenstein responded to the Holocaust; however, many candidates displayed an inaccurate understanding of Maybaum's concept of the Jews as the Suffering Servant, and did not discuss the churban or the concept of the Remnant;
- as far as Rubenstein is concerned, most were able to cite his concepts of the death of God and the Ultimate Nothing, but few discussed his view that Jews can still find spiritual vitality through traditional Jewish observances, or the renewal of Jewish existence in Zion.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- a minority of candidates presented a confusion of concepts, or presented views of other Holocaust theologians such as Wiesel, Berkovitz or Fackenheim in error;
- others gave an extensive account of the historical background to the Holocaust which was not required by this particular question.

**Section B**

**3. 'Maimonides is rightly claimed to be the most complete Jewish scholar.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- where responses were good, candidates displayed a detailed knowledge of Maimonides' contribution to Jewish scholarship and used specific examples from his work to engage in confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue;
- strong answers also made use of the views of scholars/schools of thought as part of the evaluation process.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses tended to be superficial, and candidates need to ensure that views given are supported by reasoning and/or evidence rather than merely raising the issue and leaving it up to the reader to decide;
- some candidates wrongly approached the question as if it were a Maimonides versus Rashi comparison; and, while it is valid to include Rashi as an alternative 'complete Jewish scholar' within the debate, the focus should primarily have been on the strengths and weaknesses of Maimonides regarding this claim.

**4. Evaluate the view that in Judaism women cannot be regarded as equal to men. [AO2 30]**

This was the most popular question in Section B.

***Features of stronger answers:***

- many candidates gave a confident response to this question and were able to discuss the issues of equality/inequality with reference to synagogue practices, divorce, and laws of purity for example;
- most were also able to discuss the roles and perception of women across different Jewish denominations. Stronger responses included a meaningful discussion of the views of Jewish feminists such as Plaskow and Wenig.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses showed a failure to recognise the difference between knowledge and understanding (AO1) and analysis and evaluation (AO2);
- these candidates, although able to write in depth about the status of women within Judaism, failed to offer any or little analysis or evaluation of the issue.

**5. 'Assimilation into British society without a loss of Jewish identity is impossible.' Evaluate this view with reference to Judaism. [AO2 30]**

This was a popular question in Section B.

***Features of stronger answers***

- where responses were good, candidates engaged in a discussion of the complexities of the issue regarding Jewish identity, which, in itself, is not clear-cut;
- they also addressed the nature of British society and argued that in a multi-cultural society it could be argued that there is no need to sacrifice religious identity in order to assimilate;
- generally, arguments recognised the diversity of Jewish groups within British society and candidates used food laws, education, Shabbat practices and distinctive appearance in order to support their claims.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some weaker candidates however, lost the focus of the question and included very little analysis or evaluation, writing instead an AO1-type response;
- others focussed only on the assimilation part of the question without addressing the 'loss of Jewish identity'.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**Unit 3D: A Study of Buddhism**

**General comments**

The overall quality of answers was high this year. Good answers were sophisticated, critically analytical, with candidates using a variety of lines of reasoning, justifying viewpoints and working through to conclusions. Most candidates are to be commended for showing satisfactory to good descriptive writing skills providing introductory and background/contextual information, outlining key facts, supporting key themes with examples, establishing a relationship between different elements of the question.

Good quality Section B answers avoided the 'for' and 'against' type of discussion, and simplistic statements prefaced with 'I feel' or 'I believe'. Candidates were able to consider a range of different angles, and could deploy evaluative verbs 'suggest, imply, support, justify, prove, demonstrate' and other tools of analysis, such as comparing and contrasting, exploring relationships between ideas, drawing on texts, reaching modest yet valid and committed conclusions.

It was interesting to note that the 'new' material on the specification garnered some of the higher quality answers. Some of the material carried over from the legacy specification seemed not to be taught to the same high standard. Some centres may need to address the shift in emphasis from knowledge and understanding to evaluation in the new specification. Just repeating the legacy specification style delivery without attending to the new balance of assessment objectives may disadvantage candidates.

Handwriting was still an issue from some candidates. On the whole specialist vocabulary was used correctly. However, there was evidence of whole centres making the same error with key words. In one centre all candidates called the three poisons the three lakshanas. Candidates are advised to use the glossary of terms from the WJEC. Candidates should also be encouraged to use gender-neutral language (humanity rather than mankind).

Some centres are clearly giving students essays to learn by rote. This limits candidates who fail to engage with the actual question. This was particularly the case in question 6 where candidates wrote on why Buddhism is popular in the West, rather than responding to the precise question set.

Using sources of wisdom: while the quality of reference to sources of wisdom has improved, more could be done to ensure that candidates do this in way that enhances their arguments. Evidence that they understand why they are quoting is not always present, and quotes can seem rote-learned and thrown-down regardless of context. Candidates need to recognise that authors do not quote, they do. 'Denise Cush quotes that...' indicates this broader lack of understanding of their relationship to the sources of their learning. Candidates should use the surname of scholars in a proper academic style. 'Gross argues...', not 'Rita argues...' Thich Nhat Hanh should be referred to as Nhat Hanh and not Thich.



## Section A

### 1. Examine the role and importance of the Pali Canon within Buddhism. [A01 30]

This was a very popular choice of question. The majority of answers were at least satisfactory.

#### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- clear focus on both the role and importance of the Pali Canon;
- recognition of its importance to Theravada Buddhism but more thorough answers also focused on the views found within a variety of schools within the Mahayana tradition;
- comparing its importance to the Lotus Sutra and the Heart Sutra;
- identifying the importance of writing down the Dharma of the historical Buddha in order to preserve Buddhism;
- using specialist vocabulary in context;
- demonstrating understanding of the value of components of the Pali Canon such as the Dhammapada and the Jataka Tales.

#### ***Features of weaker responses:***

- focusing on the structure (not role and importance) of the Canon;
- lacking detail, e.g. mentioning the Nikayas;
- completely ignoring its role in Mahayana traditions;
- misidentifying texts from the Sanskrit corpus (such as the Lotus) as part of the Pali Canon;
- Canon was frequently misspelled as Cannon.

### 2. Examine the background and work of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. [A01 30]

This was the less popular of the Section A questions and the answers were mixed in terms of quality.

#### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- addressing both the background and the work of the Dalai Lama;
- demonstrating rich and detailed knowledge;
- drawing on material from across the specification (for example, Socially Engaged Buddhism and Mindfulness);
- exploring beliefs around his reincarnation.

#### ***Features of weaker responses:***

- missed one of the aspects (background or work);
- failing to mention the link to Tibet or mention Tibetan Buddhism at all;
- focusing only on the present day. Some candidates believed that the Dalai Lama now lived and worked solely in the West and missed the fact that his base is in Dharamsala with the Tibetan Government in Exile;
- focusing only on interaction with celebrities which although relevant, on its own is rather superficial;
- there was evidence of quotations from the Dalai Lama in many of the answers; however, candidates need to show that these quotations are supporting and enriching their responses, rather than being included as a 'bolt on.'

## Section B

3. **‘The practices of koan, nembutsu and daimoku represent accurate expressions of the Buddha’s teachings.’**

**Evaluate this view**

**[AO2 30]**

Fewer candidates attempted this question. Where candidates had addressed all components of the question they were able to access a full range of marks.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- engaging with sources of wisdom, for example reference was made to the Pure Land Sutras for the account of Amida’s Pure Land and the practice of the nembutsu;
- thinking through links to the Buddha’s teachings beyond the fact the Pali Canon does not record him giving these practices.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- only addressing part of the question;
- mixing up the practices;
- failing to place the practices within schools of Buddhism;
- failing to engage with sources of wisdom beyond the Lotus Sutra;
- some analysis stopped at mentioning that the Pali Canon does not record the Buddha teaching these practices;
- failing to make interpretive links to standard Buddhist notions;
- presenting the Pali Canon naively as ‘what the Buddha said’; better candidates are able to show their awareness that the Pali Canon is not a ‘report’ of what the Buddha taught, but a summary of oral tradition;
- a common spelling mistake was diamoku for daimoku.

4. **‘Buddhism supports feminism.’**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was a very popular question with some excellent, high quality answers. However, very few candidates defined feminism, and their answers were weaker for it.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- discussion of the evolution of attitudes and beliefs about women from the time of the foundation of the Nuns’ Order to today;
- discussion around the views of feminist writers such as Rita Gross;
- engagement with primary sources such as the Lotus Sutra, especially the story of the Dragon King’s Daughter (chapter 12) which candidates interpreted in a variety of different ways;
- discussion of the ambiguous views of the Dalai Lama as a contemporary leader;
- some good answers focused on core Buddhist teachings, subjected them to a feminist analysis and found them unoppressive to women; from this they argued the source of patriarchy is not the teachings, but the culture;
- a few good answers argued that Buddhism opposes suffering, patriarchy causes suffering for women and men, and therefore Buddhism must support feminism;
- some made effective links to Socially Engaged Buddhism, and some demonstrated knowledge of Sakyadhita.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- suggested that Buddhism is only concerned with feminism because of its exposure to western values;
- most candidates suggested that Buddhism was not feminist because there are more rules for monks than nuns, however, weaker answers failed to contextualise this historically; where candidates did attempt to do this by reference to the caste system, they sometimes failed to make clear that Buddhism rejected caste;
- failing to recognise the reason women are not fully ordained is due to a break in lineage.

**5. 'The contemporary Mindfulness movement has nothing to do with Buddhism.'**  
**Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was another popular question. There were several very strong, engaging answers.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the history of the movement;
- referring effectively to primary sources such as the Satipatthana Sutta and the Metta Sutta and evaluating the contributions of John Kabat Zinn and Thich Nhat Hanh to contemporary notions;
- linking to the views of Stephen Batchelor and David Brazier on whether Buddhism is a religion and built this into their answer;
- discussing the idea of skilful means and suggesting that the modern mindfulness movement is no less a skilful means than the development of specific Japanese forms of Buddhism in the Kamakura period;
- exploring the argument that mindfulness addresses suffering and might therefore be considered as fully aligned with Buddhism's soteriology;
- exploring the critique of mindfulness proposed by Slavoj Zizek, that because the practice is a 'sticking plaster' over the suffering caused systemically by capitalism; mindfulness is a capitalism-supporting practice and therefore cannot be considered as a form of Buddhism;
- demonstrating a high level of evaluative skills with good examples and scholarly opinions to support answers, e.g. Slavoj Zizek on Buddhism and the self, the philosophy of David Brazier, and Stephen Batchelor and secular Buddhism.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- mere description and failing to develop any analytical depth;
- focusing only on the benefits of meditation, offering no awareness of the varieties of modern Mindfulness;
- opportunities were missed here to engage with the Welsh dimension.; candidates could have mentioned any number of centres in Wales which offer Mindfulness training. Cardiff Buddhist Centre, Vajraloka (Corwen), Kalpa Bhadra Kalampra (Colwyn Bay), Satipanya Buddhist retreat (Powys).

6. **‘British Buddhism is unique.’**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was a less popular question and many of the answers were weak.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- making links between British Buddhism, the rise of the mindfulness movement, and the work of atheist Buddhist, Stephen Batchelor;
- referring to Buddhist communities in Britain (Amaravati and Chithurst), and Wales specifically (Cardiff Buddhist Centre; Lam Rim, Raglan).

***Features of weaker responses:***

- extensive accounts of why British/Western Buddhism is popular, yet failing address the question about uniqueness;
- lack of reference to Triratna which is the best-known form of ‘British Buddhism’ (as distinguished from ‘Buddhism in Britain’);
- this question was an opportunity to display rich knowledge of Buddhism in Britain, but few candidates took this opportunity;
- presenting Buddhism as ‘not strict’ or even ‘more chilled’ than Asian Buddhism. Candidates need to learn how to more effectively describe the range of types of engagement with Buddhism in Britain;
- deploying terms like baptism inappropriately or claiming the most unique thing about British Buddhism was that it celebrated Christmas;
- while there is certainly a point about the place of Buddhist practice in the context of wider post-Christian British culture, candidates fail to put their point across in a religiously literate and convincing way;
- missing opportunities here for referencing the Welsh dimension.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**Unit 3E: A Study of Hinduism**

**General comments**

It was pleasing to see that centres have risen to the challenge of the new specification. The excellent standard of some responses showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate and extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms. There was some excellent use of scholarly thought and candidates supported their arguments with quotations. However, it is imperative that centres focus on the detail of the specification content. The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the range of bands.

There were some general and familiar weaknesses to be seen in candidates' answers. Some still fail to address the question set. It is imperative that candidates read questions more carefully so as to meet the demands of that particular question. Some of the AO2 responses were far too similar to the AO1 and presented knowledge and understanding rather than evaluation. There were also more of the traditional evaluation answers – arguments against and then arguments for the statement given. Whilst this is creditworthy to a certain extent it does not lead to a complete evaluation of an issue and therefore makes it difficult to attain the higher bands.

One issue highlighted by examiners was the contrived efforts by some candidates to make synoptic links and in a way that broke the flow of the answer considerably e.g. 'In my study of AS I can link this (e.g. IVF) with "A synoptic link here with my study of A2 Ethics is ..." In some cases, it meant that candidates were going off on a totally irrelevant tangent for a whole paragraph. Centres need to understand that synopticity needs to ensure natural links are made in answering the question not contrived ones.

**Section A**

**1. Examine Gandhi's contribution to Hinduism. [AO1 30]**

This was a very popular question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- candidates demonstrated both broad and deep knowledge and understanding of Gandhi's contribution to Hinduism, focusing on a variety of different aspects such as ahimsa and satyagraha, universalism and advaita Vedanta, varna and untouchability, brahmacharya ashrama and aparigraha lifestyle;
- many candidates wrote with confidence, using concepts and technical terms with accuracy, and supported their ideas with quotes and evidence. Other candidates wrote more narrowly with a single focus on Dalits or his resistance to British rule.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some candidates had clearly missed the religious focus of the essay question and a number gave an account of his 'life story' or described scenes from the Attenborough film with no application to the question itself;
- some focused completely on his political contribution to Indian independence.

**2. Examine Hindu responses to the challenge of secularisation. [AO1 30]**

Generally the responses to this question were rather disappointing.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- some responses referred in detail to the current political situation and Modi's government;
- many defined what is meant by secularisation;
- There were references to the work of Ram Mohan Roy and Dayananda Saraswati allowing a plurality of ways of responding to secular society e.g. Roy's belief that the perfect society could emerge from a combination of Western scientific rationalism and Eastern spirituality.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- responses were very limited in scope and dealt with two responses to secularisation – universalism and exclusivism/Hindutva; details focused on extremist actions such as the demolition of the Babi Masjid;
- there was little reference to rational and scientific responses, nor the ideas of Ram Mohan Roy or Dayananda Saraswati;
- there was little discussion on what is the meaning of secularisation.

**Section B**

**3. 'Feminism has little influence on Hinduism.'  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was a popular and generally a well answered question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- most answers were well structured and there was a clear attempt to present good argument;
- the better answers focused clearly on feminism and explored the influence of Ram Mohan Roy, Indira Gandhi and Madhu Kishwar, and they provided evidence of their impact; many students made good use of examples and wrote with confidence about sati, dowry, female foeticide and inheritance, for example;
- textual sources were used widely; good answers offered some scriptural support and good understanding of the concept of shakti.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker answers missed the focus on feminism and wrote at length about the roles of men and women in Hinduism;
- they were unable to support the view that there had been change with any specific examples or evidence.

**4. ‘Hindu attitudes to wealth and poverty are not practical in today’s world.’  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

Generally the responses to this question were slightly disappointing.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- there were some strong responses which showed good understanding of wealth and poverty, and focused on the purushartas, including artha with its requirement of earning money by honest and lawful means;
- clear links with karma were made and this was used by some students to justify lack of charitable giving in Hinduism;.
- many students used Bhave’s projects to exemplify care given to those in poverty but argued that since much land remains unclaimed, it has been unsuccessful in today’s world; they also referred to the work of Gandhi. Some very good answers referred to Kautilya and were able to quote him as well as using teachings from the Rig Veda.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- many responses digressed into broad and basic descriptions of the caste system and the generic poverty experienced by shudras and Dalits without really engaging with the demands of the question;
- there was an absence of understanding about wealth and poverty and a focus on its ‘practicality’ in today’s world.

**5. ‘Ramakrishna’s greatest contribution was in the development of Hinduism as a world religion.’  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

The responses to this question varied in quality.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- many candidates demonstrated good understanding of the successes and limitations of Ramakrishna;
- the best answers argued convincingly that Ramakrishna’s greatest contribution was not the development of Hinduism as a world religion, but rather in his advocacy of a universalist ideal of Advaita Vedanta, or his emphasis on mystical experience, or the devotion he showed to Kali and his wife as Shakti;
- many good responses argued that whilst his own contribution was limited, it was his influence on Vivekananda that did much to promote Hinduism as a world religion.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some weaker responses offered biographical descriptions of his life or wrote at length about Vivekananda, whilst losing the question's focus;
- others misread the question and discussed whether Ramakrishna was the greatest 'contributor' to Hinduism, rather than his greatest contribution;
- therefore there were a number of answers which compared him with Gandhi, Ram Mohan Roy and Vivekananda.

**6. 'IVF can never be compatible with Hindu teaching.'  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was generally a well answered question. Candidates were well-prepared and many excellent answers were given. The focus of the question on 'compatibility' was maintained by most students throughout their answers.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- strong responses demonstrated excellent understanding of ahimsa and atman with their applications to IVF and the injury caused to spare embryos;
- good use of karmic debt was made to justify childlessness; candidates showed clear understanding of the importance of children in the grihastha ashrama;
- here was also relevant and effective use of Hindu teachings; many referenced and applied to the question, teachings from scripture such as the Mahabharata, and the scholarly thought of Cromwell-Crawford and Swasti Battacharya were used in effectively.
- some candidates made useful, broader links with adoption and surrogacy.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some weaker responses simply described at length some Hindu teachings such as that of Kunti, whilst making few links to IVF;
- the views of Battacharya and Cromwell Crawford were often missing and there was quite a lot of confusion between the Mahabharata and the Bhagavad Gita and the possible stories of A.I.D. in the Epic.



**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**Unit 3F: A Study of Sikhism**

**General comments**

It was pleasing to see that centres have risen to the challenges of the new specification. The excellent quality of some responses demonstrated that the candidates had been well prepared, with accurate and extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms. There was also some excellent use of scholarly thought and candidates supported their arguments with quotations. However, it is imperative that centres focus on the detail of the specification content. The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the range of bands.

There were some general and familiar weaknesses to be seen in candidates' answers. Some still fail to address the question set. It is imperative that candidates read questions more carefully so as to meet the demands of that particular question.

For weaker candidates the AO2 responses were far too similar to the AO1 and presented knowledge and understanding rather than evaluation. There were also more of the traditional evaluation answers – arguments against and then arguments for the statement given. Whilst this is creditworthy to a certain extent it does not lead to a complete evaluation of an issue and therefore makes it difficult to attain the higher bands.

**Section A**

**1. Examine the role and significance of the Mul Mantra in Sikhism. [AO1 30]**

The responses to this question varied in quality.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- stronger answers showed knowledge and understanding of the content of the Mul Mantra and therefore discussed its significance in a specific and detailed way;
- referred to the teaching on the nature of God and the Oneness of God, that mukti is by God's grace and that God is eternal;
- also referred to the Mul Mantra as a statement of faith. They were also able to explain the role of the Mul Mantra in daily prayers.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker answers were imbalanced and too general when dealing with the significance;
- there was little or no reference to the words contained in the Mul Mantra.

**2. Examine the development of the Sikh aspiration for Khalistan. [AO1 30]**

Generally the responses to this question were rather disappointing.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the better answers were able to give a chronological overview of the development of Sikh calls for a homeland from the days of Ranjit Singh onwards;
- not only gave a brief explanation of the events but also of their significance in the context of the history of Sikhism.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- the weaker answers tended to be very limited in scope and only dealt with some events and not always the key events in the context of the question;
- tended either to list the events or to describe what happened without any explanation of its significance in the call for Khalistan.

**Section B**

**3. 'The Rahit Maryada is irrelevant to the life of Sikhs today.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was a popular question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the better answers were well structured and there was a clear attempt to present good arguments;
- focused clearly on the Rahit Maryada and showed good knowledge and understanding of the content;
- this led to a thoughtful evaluation of its relevance to Sikhs today and to a discussion whether it is more relevant to diaspora Sikhism.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker answers were too general in nature and had no real knowledge and understanding of the rules of the Rahit Maryada;
- the evaluation of its relevance was therefore superficial without any specific references as support.

**4. 'Science poses no threat to Sikhism.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

Generally the responses to this question were slightly disappointing.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- there were some strong responses which showed good understanding of the relationship between Sikhism and science; there were references to Sikh belief that any new discovery made by science is a celebration of the marvels of God and his creation;

- there were informed references to the Big Bang theory and the Big Crunch and to evolution;
- however the answers also presented the counter-argument that evolution is only acceptable if it is a process watched over by Waheguru.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker answers were very superficial in nature and although they referred to the Big Bang and evolution;
- there was no real understanding of their relationship with Sikh belief and teaching.

**5. 'IVF is completely compatible with Sikh teaching.'  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was generally a well answered question. Candidates were well-prepared and there were some excellent answers.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- better answers focused on the question on 'compatibility'; they demonstrated excellent understanding of the Japji Sahib which states clearly that all life is given by God;
- the arguments presented were clearly supported by evidence and references to sources of wisdom and scholarly thought; they also referred to theological, social and moral arguments.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker answers did not focus on compatibility or Sikh teaching;
- the arguments presented were therefore superficial and lacking in support in terms of evidence and reasoning.

**6. 'Sikhism is an inclusivist tradition.'  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was generally a well answered question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the better answers could define the meaning of inclusivism and then discuss to what extent Sikhism was a religion in tune with that definition;
- there was also an explanation of the difference between inclusivism and pluralism;
- arguments were supported by evidence and quotations from sources of wisdom especially the teaching of the Gurus.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker answers had no real understanding of the meaning of inclusivism;
- any evaluation offered was therefore very superficial in nature.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**Unit 4: Religion and Ethics**

**General comments**

Candidates on the whole appeared to be well prepared for the content of the specification at A2. All questions appeared to be clear and accessible for candidates and, while some questions were more popular than others, all were attempted and gave access to the full range of marks.

A notable feature this year was the number of responses in Section B where candidates simply explained opposing points of view with very little in the way of evaluation. This is perhaps a result of the decoupling of AO1 and AO2 questions. Candidates should be advised that lengthy explanatory introductions gain little credit and that it is more important to engage with the issues raised by the question.

Candidates were clearly considering the specification as a whole, making appropriate connections between different elements of the course. It should be noted, however, that these connections need to be appropriate and relevant as some were tenuous at best and served little purpose in the essay.

**Section A**

**1. Compare the meta-ethical approaches of Intuitionism and Emotivism. [AO1 30]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- good responses made clear comparisons between the two theories with detailed explanations of the views of Moore and Ayer;
- accurate use was made of technical vocabulary to show the differences between the theories;
- there was accurate reference to a range of relevant scholars including Prichard, Ross and Stevenson.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses struggled with the concept of meta-ethics and treated the theories as normative, with some bizarre examples of their application by the Nazis;
- comparison skills were often quite poor, with many simply explaining the two theories and making no attempt to draw out similarities or differences;
- candidates were often aware of the technical language required to answer the question, such as analytic/synthetic, but could not use this vocabulary accurately in context.

**2. Explain Bernard Hoose's Proportionalism. [AO1 30]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- good responses were able to clearly demonstrate how this theory has its origins in Aquinas' Natural Law and to provide further background about the debate within Catholic thought;
- most were able to identify the Proportionalist maxim and discuss the difference between good and right acts, ontic evil and ideas of value and disvalue;
- candidates had clearly studied the theory in depth, and accurate quotations from Hoose's writing were a regular feature;
- better responses also made reference to other scholars in support of their explanations;
- abortion, immigration and capital punishment were often used to illustrate the theory and some excellent, detailed and accurate examples were seen.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses struggled with the technical vocabulary and explanations were often somewhat confused; such responses also tended to lack effective use of examples;
- some very weak responses confused Hoose with Finnis and wrote about the Basic Goods or claimed that Proportionalism was identical with Situation Ethics.

**Section B**

**3. 'The strengths of Finnis' adaptation of Aquinas' Natural Law theory outweigh its weaknesses.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was the least popular question on the paper, but some outstanding answers were seen.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- candidates used practical examples as a means to critically analyse Finnis' approach and to draw perceptive conclusions;
- better responses considered the importance of the common good and the approach towards the law in their responses, in addition to evaluating the value and nature of the basic goods;
- many considered the suitability of this theory for believers and non-believers, which proved a productive line of reasoning, and some impressive responses used meta-ethical theories, particularly Intuitionism, as a means to analyse the effectiveness of the adaptation;
- A few candidates had obviously studied Finnis' later adaptations to his theory and argued successfully that these would not sit well in contemporary society, in spite of the many strengths of the theory.

***Features of weaker answers:***

- weaker responses tended to treat this as an AO1 answer and simply outline Finnis' goods and principles with little analysis or evaluation;
- most were able to identify some strengths and weaknesses, but tended to assert these rather than to evaluate their relative merits;
- some candidates had obviously prepared to apply Finnis' theory to the specified moral issues and so their answers were heavily focused on application with little analysis.

**4. 'The whole of a person's life is predestined by God.'  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the most popular question on the paper and most candidates were able to successfully identify the focus on the religious predestination/free will debate.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- good responses used the views of Augustine, Calvin, Pelagius and Arminius effectively to create purposeful arguments;
- effective answers tended to refer to supporting evidence from scripture for both sides of the argument and to draw on the more secular aspects of the free will and determinism debate in a convincing way to support their evaluations;
- good responses also looked at the implications for the nature of God and made accurate and effective use of key vocabulary.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- many responses to this question were very descriptive and lacked any analysis and evaluation; candidates simply juxtaposed different responses in the way that would be expected for an AO1 'compare' question with a very brief evaluative conclusion at the end;
- such responses often had a detailed understanding of the views of the scholars, but this was insufficient to access the higher evaluation mark bands;
- some weaker responses also brought in theories of determinism or libertarianism without recognising that these are not arguing for predestination;
- weaker responses made minimal reference to scripture and often could not distinguish between the different approaches of Augustine and Calvin or Pelagius and Arminius.

5. **‘Hard determinism is far more convincing than soft determinism.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 30]

***Features of stronger responses:***

- candidates mostly had a good understanding of different hard determinist perspectives and were able to evaluate whether these were convincing, usually by pointing to the quality of the evidence available;
- soft determinism was less well understood, with many candidates confusing this with libertarianism, however good responses made excellent reference to the views of Ayer and Hobbes to support their arguments, with effective examples being used;
- a few were able to discuss how soft determinism reflects our legal system, with the focus on personal accountability but the recognition of diminished responsibility on occasions;
- some good responses used libertarian views to demonstrate the flaws in hard determinism, but often could not then go on to evaluate soft determinism, thus failing to respond to the precise question set.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- many candidates appeared to believe that there is no evidence at all to support soft determinism and that the evidence to support hard determinism, particularly biological determinism, is conclusive;
- candidates also demonstrated some fairly serious misconceptions such as that Darwin invented DNA and argued for scientific determinism;
- as with Q4., some candidates treated this as an AO1 ‘compare’ question and simply explained the differences between the two approaches with no evaluation.

- Q6. **‘Free will means that God is not responsible for evil.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 30]

***Features of stronger responses:***

- candidates took a wide range of approaches to this question, with some drawing on material from the AS and discussing the inconsistent triad and the two named theodicies, while others answered purely from the perspective of the A2 material; both approaches led to strong answers and were credited accordingly.
- good responses were able to relate this question to Pelagius’ rejection of inheritable sin and Arminius’ desire to defend God from the accusation of being the source of evil;
- better responses were able to discuss some more complex theological issues such as the notion that foreknowledge is not the same as predestination, or that natural evil makes God more accountable;
- a common line of argument was to consider God’s responsibility in giving humans free will in the first place; some answers brought in the views of Sartre to argue that God cannot be responsible for evil and the concept of ‘bad faith’ as a way to avoid the responsibility of free will was used effectively.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- weaker responses tended to be very similar in approach to Q4, simply describing religious views about evil or sometimes focusing more on predestination than on the question set, although fewer candidates gave no analysis or evaluation at all in their answers to this question;
- many candidates discussed Augustine without seeing any link to his theodicy and seemed completely unaware that he had mentioned evil at all;
- very weak responses were unable to relate to any scholarly views at all or did not recognise the link to evil and simply described points about free will.



**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**Unit 5: Philosophy of Religion**

**General comments**

Candidates are making considerable use of the supporting resources available and this is enhancing understanding and answers. There is clear evidence of some excellent teaching which is enthusing candidates to respond as they have done. Newer elements of the specification varied in terms of the range of answers, but this was not considerably different to the established areas of the legacy specification. Candidates have been prepared well to meet the demands of the paper and thankfully there were no 'rubric' issues. It is apparent that candidates are able to choose a diverse range of questions and some material from other themes is being used in an answer which is most encouraging.

**Section A**

1. **Examine the criticisms of verification and falsification in relation to religious language.** [AO1 30]

***Features of stronger responses:***

- excellent use of scholars specifically mentioned in the specification were seen, along with a good degree of understanding demonstrated about them;
- the idea that religious statements could be verified in the afterlife (Hick) was popular, but few mentions were made of the conjoined fact that if there is no afterlife, they could not be falsified either;
- use was made of Swinburne's toys in the cupboard example, often as an argument against both verification and falsification;
- pertinent examples relating to religious language were given, the idea that under weak verification some religious statements, particularly historical ones, could be verified was also noted.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- whilst a context for an answer is good literary style, under timed conditions it is advisable to essentially avoid 'flowery' introductions that are not in the main relevant to the question;
- it was unfortunate that some who clearly knew the material and went on to give criticisms of the Principles, did spend a considerable amount of time explaining both the Verification and Falsification Principles; an understanding of both of these should shine through as the candidate examines the criticisms levelled at them anyway;

- many were able to recall the idea that the Verification Principle ‘fails its own test’.; however, not all candidates explained this and hence the marks awarded could not be as good as they should have been. They needed to say that ‘The Verification Principle says that only analytic or synthetic statements are meaningful; this sentence is neither analytic nor synthetic so fails to be meaningful’;
- it is felt that the true meaning behind Mitchell’s parable of the partisan and the stranger was at times lost with candidates needing to grasp the point that Mitchell is saying believers do seriously take into account evidence against God’s existence; however their pre-existing ‘bias’ towards faith is stronger than the doubt.

**2. Explain Freud’s view of religious belief.**

**[AO1 30]**

This was an extremely popular question and was generally done well.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- candidates were able to identify a substantial number of key aspects about the views of Freud. General introductions to his work that were quite short were acceptable;
- most were able to note that ‘religion is a neurosis’ but only the better answers really unpacked this, explaining what a neurosis is and the implications this title has for religious belief;
- the same could be said for religion as ‘wish-fulfilment’. An understanding of what human wishes Freud is claiming religion can fulfil would add substance to the answer; the Oedipus complex appeared in the majority of scripts as a self-contained aspect; better candidates showed how this fits in to Freud’s beliefs concerning religion;
- the historical trace that Freud believes there is from primitive times onward, showing the development that led to the belief in one God could also be found in such responses;
- many were able to show the link that Freud identified between certain behaviours ritualistically performed and religious rites such as the Eucharist; this was coupled with the observation that certain ritualistic acts and beliefs can be accompanied by a sense of guilt.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some provided rather lengthier accounts about, for example, psychoanalysis, which severely restricted the amount of time they were able to give to the main body of the question;
- also, material on the primal horde and the Oedipus Complex was often simply explained rather than them being used to illustrate Freud’s view of religious belief;
- brief references to such things as ‘Freud considered religious belief to be a neurosis’ were often just stated; no explanation of either neurosis or why he considered religious belief to be such, marked out weaker responses.

## Section B

3. **‘Religious experiences have little influence on religious beliefs and practices’.**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 30]

This question could be answered by referring to religious experiences in a general or a specific way or a combination of the two.

### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- where candidates homed in on particular type of religious experience such as miracle or a conversion experience this did generally enhance answers; we did see candidates using AS material effectively; this is because they were able to give specific examples which formed the backdrop of their explanation of the influence that the experience had on either their belief, practice or both;
- those who were able to compartmentalise material such as that religious experiences can be faith restoring for an individual and can strengthen community cohesion were at a genuine advantage; it is abundantly clear, particularly when using the AO1 material, that there is a valid claim that religious experiences do influence religious belief and practice; however it should be noted that the points in the Specification are not just there to be cited, but must be explored with examples of how, for instance, a religious experience can strengthen faith in the face of opposition.

### ***Features of weaker responses:***

- candidates found it much more difficult to argue against religious experience influencing beliefs and practices; here they needed to explore how family background and values may influence beliefs and practices and the fact that many religious people have never claimed to have had a religious experience;
- equally, reference was not made to the idea that influences such as strengthening faith and community cohesion can come about by factors other than a religious experience;
- weaker answers did not cite examples which could have provided evidence to support their arguments.

4. **‘Religious responses to New Atheism have been unsuccessful.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 30]

### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- the specification gives details which should form the backbone of answers. These details should make it easier for candidates to write effective answers as they give them a structure to both remember and work from. Those that did that already had the basis of a fantastic answer; of course, candidates should not write out AO1 material, but it can clearly be used as a basis for their evaluation of the relative successes of New Atheism and religious responses to it; for example, evaluating whether the New Atheist claim that religion impedes scientific progress, against religious claims that scientific and religious claims are compatible can come directly from the specification;

- a suggestion would be that candidates use AS information here, particularly the anthropic principle in order to enhance their answer; it was also relevant for candidates to use information from work on 'religious language'; this could include a rebuttal of forcing religion to subscribe to scientific testing; this information was found in many good responses.

***Features of weaker answers***

- material attempting to show the success of religious responses to New Atheism tended to be 'basic', possibly just using phrases such as 'faith schools have increased in number' with little substance attached to that fact;
- with regard to material specific to New Atheists this tended to extend no further than Dawkins; there were general references to some ideas that may be attached to him, but these seemed to be second-hand;
- By far the biggest weakness were candidates who gave anachronistic references to such things as the classical arguments for God's existence being the religious response or referring to authorities such as Augustine and Pelagius; the message is to keep it contemporary; some case-study of others would be a task that students could be given, particularly as the New Atheist 'brand' arose after Harris' book 'The end of faith' post 9/11.

**5. 'The definition of miracle, as written by Hume, is the least problematic of all definitions of miracle.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

There were relatively few good responses to this question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- good candidates suggested that laws of nature are not set in stone, referring to the hard and soft understandings of miracle;
- a methodical approach whereby the candidate looked at the relative problems with various definitions of miracle as well as less problematic aspects would avoid an answer that jumped from one view to another;
- the specification also asks candidates to undertake a comparative study of Hume and Swinburne; considerable material from this study could have been used in this question and some did; this would allow candidates to show the contradictions within Hume's arguments with regard to the credibility of witnesses and contradictory faith claims; many pertinent examinations of what Swinburne said against Hume were interesting to read.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- most started with Hume's definition of a miracle. Some are getting 'volition' and 'violation' confused in terms of meaning; it would also be useful for candidates to have a little historical context so that they are aware that Hume did not have a direct conversation with Aquinas regarding their views on miracles;

- many identified that Hume had something to say about the laws of nature. They also knew a most popular phrase ‘a wise man proportions his belief to the evidence’; a structure would then allow the link to be made that the laws of nature ‘holding’ carries a large amount of evidence whereas miracles well-attested, do not;
- references were made to the type of person Hume suggests gives testimony to miracles; these include deceivers or the deceived, those who are ignorant and those who love superstition; less was made of Hume’s bias in this matter which could have been explored;
- unfortunately some continue to misunderstand what R.F. Holland’s view is; many write that he is saying that something is either a miracle or a coincidence; this can lead to a flawed evaluation of his view;
- equally, when evaluating Aquinas’ view on this matter, candidates should note that he is saying miracles are different from the usual order of things as opposed to completely separating his types of miracle; in the main, weaker answers simply answered an AO1 question entitled ‘Examine the various definitions of miracle.’

**6. ‘Symbolic religious language is only meaningful for religious believers.’**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- as the question was on symbolic language one expected to read about the contributions made by Tillich and Randall; this gave candidates considerably more information to evaluate; many were able to use the material from both scholars in an evaluative sense, actually with reference to many lines of different inquiry;
- the area of this specification it was drawn from is that which asks for a consideration of whether symbolic language can have adequate meaning; this draws one to discuss whether there is adequate meaning for a believer, a non-believer or both;
- many commented on the fact that some symbols have changed over time; most then concluded that the permeable nature of symbols means that symbols lose their meaning, thus so does symbolic language lose its meaning.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- failed to make the case for a change in the symbols contributing to their dynamic nature, with the symbol then having a different, yet still adequate meaning;
- some use was made of the function of symbols and how they are important factors in the life of both a believer and a non-believer; here the answer would have been greatly enhanced by the inclusion of Randall’s four functions of symbols where candidates could have shown these functioning in different areas of life;
- a further line of inquiry, which was alluded to, but not given in detail was the difference between the ‘academic’ understanding of symbols and those to whom a symbol is fundamental to their life; this could then have shown that a non-believer can indeed understand the concept of a religious symbol, its origin and its use; but they lack the ‘passion’ felt by believers about that particular symbol;
- a number simply wrote about symbols rather than symbolic religious language; many weak answers simply answered issues concerning ‘Is religious language meaningful?’

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**Unit 6: Textual Studies (New Testament)**

**General comments**

It is pleasing to note that the examination paper did not raise any concerns and so fulfilled its aim of setting appropriate questions in a fair and accessible manner. The full range of marks were employed to the answers provided. The following report will more naturally focus on obvious areas of improvement and does not negate the excellent attempts shown by many students.

**Student Rubrics**

As required on the front page every student should enter the question numbers that they have attempted in the box.

At the point of examination accurate spellings for core curriculum words often required attention e.g. **God**, **Jesus**, **Holy Spirit**, resurrection, psalms, **Easter**, **Christmas**.

**Section A**

1. **Examine the different types of Jesus' parables with reference to John Dominic Crossan's classifications.** [AO1 30]

***Features of stronger responses:***

- almost without exception all candidates accessed the four types of parable classification as determined by Crossan; thereafter, the full band range was utilised;
- the higher band range were able to accurately examine Crossan's work with regard to: Riddle, Attack, Example and Challenge parables and provide Crossan's examples of which parables fit which and examine why;
- some candidates went further and examined how, quite legitimately as written by them, there can be cross overs between the parables particularly with regard to e.g. the Parable of the Sower offers examples of what reactions to avoid in life; such work was appropriately credited where accurately examined.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- middle band range candidates may have done the above accurately for some, but not all four types of parables; confusion would begin to creep in mixing either types of parables; Attack and Challenge most noticeably, or applying the wrong parable and not thereby examining it beyond B3 'Mainly accurate';
- In lower band ranges confusion often began to reign between both the accurate examination of the four types of parables and those parables attributed to them and why; challenge was the weakest here with the Good Samaritan hijacked to being an Example parable;
- pure narrations of parables provided a very limited response with little attempt to address the question.

2. **Examine the historical origins, structure and possible theological messages of the parable of the sower.** [AO1 30]

This was least popular question from Section A.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the highest band was reserved for those who answered the threefold element of the question. A good structure assisted their response;
- these candidates variously considered the three themes, not necessarily equally, but drawing on examples of each as found in the mark scheme.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- wrote un/consciously about some of the threefold element of the question to those who wrote generally about the parable leaving it to the examiner to tease out that which was most advantageous to the candidate;
- pure narration of the parable provided a very limited response with little attempt to address the question.

### Section B

3. **'The accounts of Jesus' miracles should be interpreted literally.'** Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

***Features of stronger responses:***

- candidates understood that there was to be a consideration of whether the miracles were real or not;
- other candidates developed the idea further that if they were not literal was that because they were metaphorical;
- some candidates gave a developed and considered evaluation attaining the highest bands as accurate considerations were provided on both sides;
- a few candidates made the connection that Jesus birth and resurrection are miracles that also have to be understood literally or in another way;
- whilst the specification provides suggested miracles it is permissible to read and consider others and these were appropriately credited where utilised in analysis.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some candidates developed an answer in terms of miracles and philosophical attitudes to them without referencing Jesus' miracles which is the main issue of the question;
- not all candidates understood what metaphorical means and fewer still could accurately describe what a metaphorical understanding of a healing miracle or feeding of 5000 might be; to say the latter was a slight of hand on Jesus' part that he had more bread hidden is not a metaphorical explanation.

4. **‘Jesus’ miracles were the most important part of his ministry’  
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the majority of candidates were stronger on their evaluation for this statement; most quickly accessed ideas that Jesus’ miracles either aided or were the very proof of his divinity and evidence He is the Messiah;
- some miracles were introduced to develop the ideas;
- some candidates identified that there were different types of miracles and occasionally this was appropriately used to evaluate whether the question might be answered differently depending on what type of miracle you were considering.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- the interaction of this part of the evaluation and an alternative view varied from a rare intertwined assessment of each to an almost standard – these are the arguments for and these are the arguments against; with this approach some candidates almost veered into narrative accounts of miracles vs parables.
- the main area raised as to a feature that would be more important than miracles was the parables, or a more generalistic ‘teaching’ of Christ e.g. including the Sermon on the Mount;
- it was rarer for students to mention the fact that the greatest miracle was the resurrection and the very basis of Christianity itself; rarer still to combine this with the miracle of the incarnation of Christ.

5. **‘The messages of submission in 1 Peter presents no problem for modern readers’.**

**Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the focus of the answers rested on the question of wives being submissive to their husbands; the anticipated answers here were provided particularly with regard to it being sexist through various arguments and illustrations;
- the argument of submission to the state authorities were generally referred to and where good exemplars were provided as to the benefits or otherwise of such submission.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- it was almost unique that the counterbalance to wives being submissive to their husbands within 1 Peter was utilised i.e. the consequent responsibilities of the husband to the wife;
- possible cross cultural exemplars were not used the question was not restricted to Christian readers, so would those modern readers identify with this writing in terms of their role and their husband’s consequent role?
- many candidates did not reach a third area of either state authorities or slaves being obedient to their masters, with the present media awareness of modern slavery this current affair opportunity to evaluate the modern readers’ view was a surprising omission;
- it was a rare candidate who encapsulated their arguments on any or all of the above into the exemplar of Christ being submissive unto death and therefore being the model that all followers emulate in their human lives, hence Peter’s examples for the world in which he lived and we now live.



**6. 'There is a clear distinction between apocalyptic and eschatological literature.'  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

With less than a dozen responses to this question the feedback is considerably limited.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- None.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- Some of those answers had a vague or one point answer to provide while, unfortunately, others were more knowledgeable and expressed an understanding of apocalyptic and eschatological, but in so doing did not evaluate the difference but rather simply described it.



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