



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

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

SUMMER 2022

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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.

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2022

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 1A. An Introduction to the Study of Christianity

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q1 (attempt% 86.5%). The most popular question in Section B was Q3 (attempt% 46.4%). Q1 was the question with the highest mean score in Section A (mean=7.8 for (a) and (b) combined), Q3 was the question with the highest mean score in Section B (mean=7.0 for (a) and (b) combined). Apart from Q2b, the mean score for the part (b) AO2 questions was higher than those of the part (a) AO1 questions.

It is pleasing to note that the examination paper did not raise any concerns and fulfilled its purpose of setting appropriate questions in a fair and accessible manner.

The full range of bands and marks were awarded to the responses provided.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 (a) Examine Sallie McFague's response to the belief that God is male.
[AO1 15]

Features of stronger responses

- This was by far the most popular Section A question which candidates chose to answer. That illustrates an almost universal interest and matched ability to deliver some answer and thereby gain various credit.
- It was appropriate that most candidates understood the metaphorical nature of McFague's response and so understood she was not simply arguing that God is, or ought to be better understood, as female.
- From the above most were able to identify McFague's three metaphors for Father, Son and Holy Spirit – Mother, Lover and Friend and candidates variously explored the meanings of each.

Features of weaker responses

- Candidates often failed to use capital letters for: God, Jesus / Christ / Christian and Holy Spirit.
- There was often confusion about the persons of the Holy Trinity and their relationship to each other as one God, three persons. This was added to by the wrong presentation of the Hebrew word Elohim for God being neutral (thereby enabling McFague's propositions) whereas Elohim is in male plural form.

- Repeatedly, the phrase ‘strong Christians believe’ – but is unclear what this phrase actually means. It is used to reinforce points, but rarely with any meaning. Points made often became evaluative as the language of McFague was absent - metaphor, patriarchy, ecofeminism, Mother, Lover and Friend.

**Q1. (b) ‘God’s gender is not important to Christians.’ [AO2 15]
Evaluate this view.**

Features of stronger responses:

- Some candidates appeared to rejoice in this evaluation more than the part (a) the mean mark was higher for part (b) AO2 than part (a) AO1. especially when the question set was not only answered but addressed throughout the answer.
- Candidates who considered Old Testament evidence, how that developed or changed in the New Testament (excellent consideration of the Logos / Word of God as person of the Trinity) and then as perceived by the teachings of the Church and / or the saints and mystics could show in with different analysis how this does or does not make God’s gender important.
- Accessing the point that this question can refer to – today – interesting considerations were brought in about present human approaches to sexual identity.

Features of weaker responses:

- The responses were often primarily, if not exclusively, addressed to an alternative question – Is God male or female? – and so were not actually responding to the question set.
- Some candidates wrote generalised responses describing views about God’s gender with little evaluation.
- Repeatedly, the phrase ‘Christians and Catholics’ was erroneously used.

Q.2 (a) Outline different theories of the Atonement. [AO1 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- Referred to different theories, including Sacrifice / Ransom / Christus Victor / Penal Substitution and Moral either all with varied understanding or less with extremes of understanding.
- Scholars and correct terminology were often effectively employed.

Features of weaker responses:

- Some responses lacked a detailed understanding of the theories and wrote only in general terms about Jesus as saviour. They did not use the specific theories or scholars that are stated in the Specification.

- Q.2 (b) 'Christians will never agree what the Atonement means.'**
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- Some responses were able to evaluate effectively whether there is a coherent and common understanding of Atonement amongst Christians
- They referred to various theories, tradition, and sound argument to argue for and against the statement and reach effective conclusions.

Features of weaker responses:

- Some responses did not analyse or evaluate, but rather descriptively stated different views on the Atonement.
- They failed to reach a clear conclusion in relation to the statement in the question.

Section B

- Q.3 (a) Outline ways in which the Bible is considered by Christians an authority in daily.**

[AO1 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- For those who knew the material there was some accurate knowledge and understanding evident including good use of the key ways that the Bible is an authority in daily life focused. Old Testament evidence was correctly applied in terms of the meaning and nature of life, the fall and salvation history leading to its culmination for Christians on the New Testament.
- This in turn could lead to Jesus' teaching, example and instruction e.g., importance of prayer – The Lord's Prayer.
- Referred to ways in which the Bible is used in worship, and in stronger responses its appropriate use (Old and New Testament) in some of the sacraments e.g., baptism (the Israelites passing through Red Sea and Jesus' own baptism).

Features of weaker responses:

- The recurring idea that the prime definition of being a Christian is to follow the 10 Commandments. Weaker responses would then go further into Levitical Law or the Torah. These remain a moral exemplars and standards but are not the key authority for Christians using the Bible as all Law has been fulfilled by Christ – the New Testament is the focus for Christians.
- Some candidates wrote generalised responses about the Bible as a holy book and God's word without explaining how it has authority in the daily lives of Christians (eg meaning and purpose of life, guide to living and source of comfort and encouragement).

- Q.3 (b) 'The Bible is all Christians need to understand the meaning and purpose of life.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses

- Some of these responses engaged in assessing many of the points raised in part (a) and setting each aspect against alternative Christian teachings on meaning and purpose e.g., is creation in the image of God as Biblically understood scientifically viable and whether that makes it invalid?
- Some responses developed new themes referring to Eternal Law, Divine Law and Natural Law arising from the Bible in Aquinas' teaching offer valid meaning and purpose or e.g., is Situation Ethics focused on agape better?
- Some responses also developed ideas that the Bible can offer conflicting advice e.g., eye for eye and tooth for tooth compared to how many times must I forgive? Higher Band responses developed the idea that while the whole Bible may be important the New Testament is where Christians will find the ultimate understanding of meaning and purpose of life.

Features of weaker responses

- Some responses while referring to the Bible neither considered it from a Christian point of view nor from the meaning and purpose of life, and so failed to address the question as set.
- Many failed to take notice of the word 'all' in the question which could have opened the door to almost anything else offering alternative meaning and purpose to life.
- Typically these candidates had not done well in part (a) and so were not able to evaluate clearly as they did not have secure knowledge of the Bible as a source of authority on the meaning and purpose of life to be able to engage in analysis or evaluation.

- Q.4 (a) Explain why the moral principles of truth and the role of conscience are important to Christians. [AO1 15]**

Features of stronger responses

- Stronger responses were able to identify the two key elements of the question as set and wrote well with good biblical references and /or evidence of understanding why truth and conscience are important to Christians.
- Balance was evident in addressing both moral principles and discussing both their importance.
- Responses that drew upon Old Testament principles and ideals e.g., thou shalt not bear false witness but developed it into Christian / New Testament exemplars of truth e.g. I am the way, the truth and the life, said Jesus opened up ways in which the importance of this to Christians could be examined i.e., Jesus is the truth so following what he did, said, taught is important.

Features of weaker responses

- Some candidates for lack of clear AO1 knowledge immediately moved into AO2/evaluation rather than showing knowledge and understanding of the importance of truth and role of conscience per se.
- Some responses did not clearly write about both key words or dealt with them simultaneously as one entity or lacked detailed examples and support for why these are important principles.
- Some responses included forgiveness, which while within curriculum (and merited general reference as another moral principle for those who made a general explanation of the same) was not in this question.

**Q.4 (b) 'Love of neighbour is the only moral principle Christians need.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Features of stronger responses

- The moral principle of forgiveness was often brought in and effectively used as 'new material' with which to analyse and evaluate the question.
- Biblical texts, ideas about the nature of God, tradition and discussion about the teaching of Jesus were used very well in some responses to evaluate the statement.
- Some candidates obviously enjoyed the question and took the love of neighbour thread and constantly wove it with analysis and evaluation compared to the other moral principles playing each off against the other e.g., can you forgive without love? Or does forgiveness engender love?

Features of weaker responses

- The Golden Rule was rarely mentioned yet foundational to a potentially stronger answer. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 13.
- Some answered the question 'What are the pros and cons of trying to love your neighbour?', which was not the question set.
- Some evaluated each moral principle rather than evaluating it in comparison to love.
- Love was often referred to as if written from a Situation Ethics standpoint, but the actual link was not made to make effective evaluation.

Q.5. (a) Explain different Protestant understandings of the Eucharist. [AO1 15]

Features of stronger responses

- For those who have gained an understanding of Protestant teaching and who had biblical texts, doctrine and relevant scholars to support their responses this was clearly a favoured question to answer.
- Key understandings of Consubstantiation, Receptionism, Virtualism and Memorialism were provided balanced and respectively in clear and a detailed ways.

Features of weaker responses

- Most typically, including Roman Catholic understandings in addition or even exclusively.
- Trans*** Con*** with these prefixes all sorts of words and meaning were incorrectly suggested.
- Those lacking the Protestant understanding with evidence simply described or even re-told the Last Supper.

Q.5 (b) 'Christians will never agree what the Eucharist means.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses

- This question enabled candidates to deliver their knowledge of Roman Catholic understanding. Some flourished using this as their new reference point but analysing and evaluating in comparison to the Protestant understanding reaching the higher Band descriptors.
- Others re-used the Protestant understanding as the foundation of their answer but now analysing it against the Roman Catholic understandings they introduced. Equally effective in approach as launch pads to effective evaluation.

Features of weaker responses

- This question enabled candidates to deliver their knowledge of Roman Catholic understanding. However, for some this was then written in a descriptive AO1 way rather than demonstrating the AO2 skills of analysis and evaluation.
- Some candidates had a lack of accuracy in their evaluation e.g., arguing all Christians agree with an understanding like transubstantiation or consubstantiation.

Summary of key points

- In online marking it is crucial that candidates place their Question number and part *in the margin* of the paper. Clearly. Should they add something later on, again, another clear repetition of the Question number and part in the margin will ensure its attachment to the rest of their answer.
- A number of students only completed part of a question, or only one whole question ((a) and (b)) with no attempt made at all at the other. 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 students wrote considerably more in their (b) response. Candidates should be encouraged to remember to focus on AO1 skills in part (a) responses and AO2 on part (b) responses.
- Capitals letters would be expected in a response to various religious terms such as: God, Jesus / Christ / Christian and Holy Spirit.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
General Certificate of Education (New)
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UNIT 1B. An Introduction to the Study of
Islam

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q1 (attempt% 72.9%). The most popular question in Section B was Q3 (attempt% 43.5%). Q2 was the question with the highest mean score in Section A (mean=9.7.8 for (a) and (b) combined), Q5 was the question with the highest mean score in Section B (mean=10.2 for (a) and (b) combined). There were only small differences in the mean scores of the AO1 part (a) and AO2 part (b) questions across the paper.

Candidates responded well to this paper and many produced detailed answers, which addressed all aspects of the questions set. The full range of questions were attempted with a broad spread of candidates choosing each question.

Candidates tried hard to make purposeful evaluations and most succeeded, although fewer achieved the confident and critical analysis required for Band 5 AO2. Such responses might have been developed and improved by paying attention to the specific wording of the question set and using this as a focus throughout the response.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 (a) Explain the nature and purpose of different types of giving in Islam.
[AO1 15]

Most candidates identified zakat, sadaqah and khums as different types of giving. Some contrasted the compulsory nature of zakat, as one of the Five Pillars of Islam, with sadaqah, an additional voluntary act. Another difference was between the specified nature of zakat and the broad interpretation of sadaqah. Khums, paid by Shi'a Muslims, was a further angle explained by some. The purpose of giving was explained according to following the traditions, helping other Muslims in need and achieving reward in the afterlife.

Features of stronger responses:

- Wrote clear paragraphs, one on each type of giving identified.
- Accurately explained the nature of each type of giving, such as by identifying correct amounts, receivers of aid, nature of payments and so on.
- Explained the differences between the various types.

Features of weaker responses:

- Only wrote about zakat.
- Gave few examples to illustrate their answers.
- Wrote that giving was a command of God, but did not go into more detail about the purpose.

Q.1 (b) 'Support for the poor is the basis of Islam.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 15]

Most discussions compared support for the poor against other aspects of Islam: The Five Pillars, prayer, and main beliefs, especially the belief in one God and Muhammad as the last prophet. A few candidates developed this into deeper discussion about whether Islam is based on ritual, belief, or society. Some consideration of what forms the basis of a religion, particularly Islam, was the basis of a good introduction by a few candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- Clearly discussed what the meaning of 'basis of Islam' might be.
- Made clear comparisons between different aspects of Islam.
- Included evaluative comments throughout, focused on 'basis', and came to a clear conclusion at the end.

Features of weaker responses:

- Wrote about why support for the poor was important, but not whether it was the 'basis of Islam'.
- Made some comment for and against the statement but referred to a limited range of possibilities.
- Did not come to a conclusion at the end.

Q.2 (a) Examine how three of the five categories of action may guide Muslims during life.

[AO1 15]

Technical terminology was used well here, and candidates generally knew the names of the categories and what they meant. Most chose to write about forbidden (haram), and cited drinking alcohol and sex before marriage as examples. Many mentioned recommended but not essential actions (mustahab), such as making additional voluntary acts of charity; and compulsory or required actions (fard), such as prayer five times a day.

Features of stronger responses:

- Wrote three clear paragraphs, one on each of the categories chosen.
- Used technical terminology correctly by naming and explaining the three categories chosen.
- Gave several examples for each showing how guidance is given to Muslims in their daily lives.

Features of weaker responses:

- Confused the five categories with The Five Pillars of Islam.
- Wrote generalised answers about categories without identifying three or considering three in depth or confused the categories.
- Gave limited examples which did not show breadth or depth. Often focused only on what is considered forbidden or haram.

**Q.2 (b) ‘The five categories are not a clear enough guide for Muslim life.’
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Modern issues such as smoking, medical ethics and living alongside those of other faiths in a multi-faith society were referred to as grey areas which were not always answered by the categories of action. Candidates discussed how far the categories themselves gave guidance or how far they were the basis to be interpreted by scholars and individuals as the need arose, and not necessarily clear in themselves. An alternative view was that they provided a clear framework for guidance.

Features of stronger responses:

- Considered a range of issues on which Muslims might need guidance from the five categories.
- Clearly added evaluative comments about how far the five categories provided guidance on those issues.
- Came to an overall conclusion, weighing up the points made, at the end.

Features of weaker responses:

- Repeated much of the answer given to the AO1 part (a) question.
- Made a one-sided argument, often that the categories were clear, without considering different perspectives.
- Often wrote that the five categories were important but did not consider if they were clear as a guide.

Section B

Q.3 (a) Explain how the Hijrah (migration) to Madinah influenced the development of Islam. [AO1 15]

Most candidates wrote about the period of stability away from Meccan persecution, and the public establishment of prayers, Friday prayers and other aspects of Islam. Some organised their responses in paragraphs contrasting the situation in Makkah with Madinah, to show the development; whereas others divided up their paragraphs to show religious, political and social development in Madinah. Both approaches were equally successful.

Features of stronger responses:

- Considered the development of Islam from the point of view of religious rituals and political and community development.
- Used quotations or referred to traditions about Muslims in Madinah, such as the Constitution of Madinah.
- Sometimes mentioned the Hijrah as an influential to Muslims today, showing its influence.

Features of weaker responses:

- Wrote a description of the Hijrah, rather than an explanation of its importance.
- Made a simple account assuming Islam started in Madinah.
- Took a narrow view of the Hijrah about how it influenced Muhammad.

Q.3 (b) 'The Hijrah to Madinah was essential for establishing Islam.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

The argument that God could have found another way if the Hijrah had not happened was mentioned by some candidates, as opposed to the Islamic teaching that the Hijrah was a clear break from the past, the start of the calendar, and the clear establishment of Muhammad's examples in practice. Various factors in the establishment of Islam were considered, such as the character of Muhammad in whatever location he was in.

Features of stronger responses:

- Drew a distinction about whether the Hijrah was important or essential.
- Developed arguments using hypothetical statements: 'if...then' with regards to the Hijrah and if it had not occurred.
- Made clear conclusions by weighing up their evaluations.

Features of weaker responses:

- Wrote in general about the Hijrah.
- Did not address the significance of the word 'essential'.
- Made paragraphs entitled agree/ disagree or strong and weak argument, which did not fit the reasoning contained in the paragraph.

Q.4 (a) Examine Islamic teachings about shahadah (bearing witness). [AO1 15]

Candidates referred to the statement of the shahadah, reflecting the belief in one God as supported by the Qur'an surah 112. They referred to occasions when the shahadah might be said, including when a person converts (or, reverts) to Islam, and during daily prayer five times a day. Most candidates were able to consider a few occasions but many lacked depth and breadth and could consider this topic in more detail.

Features of stronger responses:

- Responded to the command word examine by writing in depth on the topic.
- Linked beliefs in the oneness of God (tawhid) with the practice of saying the shahadah (bearing witness).
- Brought out the importance of witnessing to this belief in the life of Muslims.

Features of weaker responses:

- Wrote about the belief in God but missed out the shahadah in practice.
- Referred to the shahadah in conversion but few other occasions.
- Did not support answers with details or quotations.

Q.4 (b) 'The shahadah is meaningless unless it is declared in public.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

This question referred to the occasion of conversion in Islam when an adult decides to join the faith and makes their public declaration in front of witnesses. Some candidates also mentioned the declaration of the shahadah at the birth of a baby and during the call to prayer. The significance of understanding and belief in the heart as compared to acceptance in the community and support following public declaration were features of many responses.

Features of stronger responses:

- Discussed the word 'meaningless' and understood the significance of this in the statement.
- Referred to the importance of intention, made privately, and linked this with the shahadah as a condition for all Muslim acts of worship.
- Discussed the importance of identity and support, achieved through public declaration.

Features of weaker responses:

- Wrote about the importance of the shahadah in general.
- Considered the importance of saying the shahadah out loud but not the context.
- Did not directly address the word 'meaningless' in the statement.

Q.5 (a) Explain the nature and purpose of angels in Islam. [AO1 15]

This was a popular question and generally quite well answered. Candidates wrote about the role of Jibril in bringing messages from God to prophets. They wrote about the recording angels who noted a Muslim's deeds and read them out from the left and right shoulders at judgement. Many mentioned the roles of other angels regarding the sequence of events at the coming of the last days.

Features of stronger responses:

- Named angels and gave details of their roles with accuracy.
- Gave quotations or referred to Islamic traditions in support of their answers.
- Explained both the nature of angels, sinless, obedient and made of light, and their purposes.

Features of weaker responses:

- Wrote about Jibril and the revelation of the Qur'an but did not mention others.
- Described angels but did not explain their purpose.
- Wrote about Islamic beliefs in general, including angels.

Q.5 (b) 'Angels do not play a vital role in Islam today.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 15]

The role of angels in delivering messages from God, in watching over Muslims, protecting them, and recording their deeds, and reporting in the future at judgement were all part of this answer and opened themselves to division by time period, as the statement referred to the present day. Some candidates also made comparative judgements about what other features of Islam might be considered 'vital', adding to the quality of their evaluations.

Features of stronger responses:

- Distinguished between the roles on angels in the past and angels today and in the future.
- Considered the significance of the word 'vital' and discussed whether Muslims could hold a meaningful faith without necessarily referring to angels.
- When referring to revelations communicated via angels, explained how these were important today, not just in the past.

Features of weaker responses:

- Wrote in general about the roles of angels.
- Did not refer to the time period or distinguish roles played in the past from today.
- Wrote about importance but did not consider if angels were 'vital'.

Summary of key points

- Candidates had made considerable efforts to learn the subject matter and make decent evaluations. After two years of the pandemic, they should be congratulated on the progress they have made.
- Some candidates demonstrated limited knowledge and understanding of Islamic teachings about shahadah (bearing witness) when it is said and the significance of those occasions.
- In AO2 responses, candidates could focus more on the specific wording of the statement. Too many candidates referred to it as if were simply about the importance of that topic.
- There were some quotations and occasional references to scholarly views, but even at AS this should be encouraged further,
- Candidates might consider developing their arguments with hypotheses and ‘if’ statements. For example: if the Hijrah had not happened... then would Islam have survived? These can be used to develop evaluation further.

- Q.1 (b) 'God's characteristics are still meaningful for Jews today.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- Clearly focused on the meaningfulness of God's characteristics for Jews today rather than a general discussion about the importance of belief in God.
- Made reference to God's holiness, Jewish notions of mercy and justice, a belief in God's omnipotence and God's eternal nature.
- Included a wide-ranging discussion of a variety of issues, such as human suffering and the impact of science, and how Jews reconcile their faith in God in the modern world.

Features of weaker responses:

- Gave a generic response about suffering and the possible implications for belief in God.
- Focused only on the issue of suffering and why God would allow this, if both omnipotent and omnibenevolent.
- Strayed from the demands of the question, to include reference to other religions or non-religious viewpoints.

- Q.2 (a) Outline Jewish beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life.**
[AO1 15]

Question two was a less popular choice for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- Rooted the meaning and purpose of life for Jews within a religious context and used religious specialist language adeptly.
- Made a connection between the expectations of human behaviour in this life and belief in life after death.
- Made reference to the Hebrew 'tzelm', 'nefesh', 'pikuach nefesh' and 'yetzer hara' and 'yetzer hatov'.

Features of weaker responses:

- Made little or no reference to specialist vocabulary.
- Gave generic responses to the purpose of life with little reference to religion.
- Referred to irrelevant atheist perspectives.

- Q.2 (b) 'The Shema is precise enough to guide Jewish belief and practice.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- Demonstration of a purposeful understanding of the importance of the Shema for Jewish belief today and references to Jewish belief and Jewish practice, demonstrating understanding of the differences between belief and practice.
- Referred to the content of the Shema.

Features of weaker responses:

- Made little connection between the Shema and Jewish belief and practice and on occasion responses lacked a sophisticated approach.
- Several candidates gave descriptive responses; for example, simply describing the mezuzah, and not addressing the demands of the question.

Section B

- Q.3 (a) Explain the importance of the Ten Sayings (Aseret ha-Dibrot) for Judaism. [AO1 15]**

Features of stronger responses:

- The most comprehensive answers unpacked the relationship of the Ten Sayings for belief in God and the importance for Jews about belief in God and practical lifestyle.
- Made the distinction between actions to God and other people.

Features of weaker responses:

- Simply described the Ten Sayings with no explanation of their importance.

- Q.3 (b) 'The Ten Sayings do not fully summarise religious belief.' Evaluate this view with reference to Judaism. [AO2 15]**

Features of stronger responses:

- Engaged in analysis and evaluation of the nature of religious belief in Judaism and how the Ten Sayings encapsulate the beliefs of Judaism, including examples.
- Set in the context of Jewish beliefs, with examples.

Features of weaker responses:

- Stated the Ten Sayings with little or no reference to the demands of the question.
- Made simplistic reference to belief in God.

- Q.4 (a) Outline the role of Abraham in establishing the covenant of circumcision. [AO1 15]**

Features of stronger responses:

- Gave a comprehensive response, with a focus on the covenant, with some excellent detail.
- Unpacked the nature of the covenant and the unconditional nature of the covenant.

Features of weaker responses:

- Gave a complete biography of Abraham and ignored the specific demand of the question to focus on the establishing of the covenant of circumcision.
- Included unnecessary reference to Moses and the Mosaic covenant.

Q.4 (b) 'Covenant has no legal value.'
Evaluate this view with reference to Judaism. [AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- Identified the nature of the covenant for Jews, with reference to practical examples and an evaluation of the covenant's relevance in society today with clear reference to its legal value.

Features of weaker responses:

- General discussion about the relevance of the practice of circumcision today.
- General discussion about covenant in Judaism, with no reference to legal value.
- No use of specialist vocabulary

Q.5 (a) Explain the significance of Yom Kippur for Jewish communities.
[AO1 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- Made a clear connection between the celebration of Yom Kippur and its significance for Jewish communities today, including a reference to synagogue communities.
- Gave some unpacking of why Yom Kippur is important to Jewish individuals and communities; and a demonstration of an understanding of why many Jews who do not regularly attend a synagogue for worship attend during the festival of Yom Kippur.
- Made reference to Yom Kippur as the most important Jewish festival for all Jews.

Features of weaker responses:

- Gave a generic description of how Yom Kippur is celebrated by Jews, without any reference to Jewish communities.
- Confused references to the celebration of Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah with a mixing up of the two festivals.

Q.5 (b) 'Pesach is the central Jewish festival.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- The evaluation was completed in the context of the importance of Pesach against the festivals of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
- The evaluation included reference to the celebration of Pesach, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in context of personal faith, family and synagogue celebration.

Features of weaker responses:

- Gave a simple description of how Jews celebrate the Passover was not responding to the demands of the question and contained little or no analysis or evaluation.
- Only referred to the festival of Passover with reference to only one other festival.

Summary of key points

- It is important candidates divide their time equally between attempting parts (a) and (b) of each question; the total mark indicated on the question paper for each part of each question informs candidates there should be some parity of time spent on attempting each separate part of the question.
- Marks were not awarded to candidates where irrelevant responses to the question included reference to other religions or indeed non-religious world views.
- It is important that candidates use the specialist language and vocabulary in context; in the higher band responses it is an expectation that candidates are using a range of specialist language and vocabulary throughout their responses. The quality of part (a) and (b) responses are enhanced when candidates use specialist language and vocabulary appropriately and with confidence.
- In part (b) responses candidates must use the skills of analysis and evaluation; replication of AO1 material about question 'topics', without any evidence of analysis and evaluation, will not allow candidates to move up the marking bands and achieve the higher marks.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2022

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 1D. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF BUDDHISM

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q1 (attempt% 84.3%). The most popular question in Section B was Q4 (attempt% 46.4%). Q1 was the question with the highest mean score in Section A (mean=10.9 for (a) and (b) combined), Q4 & Q5 were the questions with the highest mean score in Section B (mean=8.0 for (a) and (b) combined). Apart from Q3b, the mean score for the part (a) AO1 questions was higher than those of the part (b) AO2 questions.

The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the range of bands with the full range of marks used. There were some excellent responses which clearly showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate, extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms. It was apparent that a number of questions in Section B (Q4 & Q5) were answered better than those in Section A. Many candidates genuinely attempted to summarise their AO2 arguments within their conclusion, and this could be further developed with the use of key words.

Issues for consideration by centres:

- A major weakness in some candidates' responses was that they were not focused on the question set and included a lot of irrelevant material.
- Some part (b) responses were so long that the candidate lost their train of thought and reasoning. It is quality of content that determines the band awarded not the length of the response. Successful AS answers focus on the issue or issues in the question.
- A lot of candidates' conclusions in their AO2 responses were also too long. Some were longer than the points in the 'main body'. A conclusion should be a summary or a 'final decision' being made.
- The quality of candidates' handwriting is a very important issue. Some were very difficult if not impossible to understand and if the examiner cannot credit a response they cannot read. It is imperative for the sake of candidates that centres evaluate the legibility of a candidates' handwriting and if there is any doubt to encourage the use of a word-processor.
- Centres should remind candidates to follow the instructions on the exam paper and to number their questions. For example, some candidates did not write question numbers at all in their booklets and some even wrote the wrong question number next to their response, which was clearly focussed on a different question.

- Many candidates often referred to Mahayana Buddhists as being more 'modern' or lenient practitioners. This is incorrect as Mahayana Buddhism has an equally rich history and level of practice like the Theravada tradition. Mahayana Buddhists are not modern Buddhists or seen as less devout followers.
- There seemed to be a number of rubric infringements where candidates only answered one question on the paper – e.g. answering question 2a and 2b with no other questions being attempted from Section B.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

- Q.1 (a) Explain how the Theravada monastic sangha use the Patimokkha as a source of wisdom and authority. [AO1 15]**

This was a popular question and there were no major difficulties. There were a range of answers given with a large number of candidates explaining the history of how the Patimokkha rules came into existence. This often limited the candidates in their responses as most of their response was confined to the 'history' of the Patimokkha rather than on the 'use' of the Patimokkha as a source of wisdom and authority.

Features of stronger responses:

- It was pleasing to see a large number of candidates correctly referring to the Parajikas as examples of how the Patimokkha is used to regulate the code of conduct for monastics.
- Recitation of the rules at Uposatha Days was also a key feature of many answers.
- A minority of candidates were able to 'dig deeper' past the 4 Parajikas and use other examples of rules followed as part of the Patimokkha's use and the punishments for breaking them.

Features of weaker responses:

- Some candidates were not able to display enough knowledge of how the Patimokkha is used by the Theravada Sangha.

- Q.1 (b) 'Without the Patimokkha rules the sangha would not exist today.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Features of stronger responses:

- Answers focused on the question set.
- Arguments supported by relevant evidence and examples.

Features of weaker responses:

- Many candidates lost focus on the actual statement given for evaluation. Candidates often just focused on evaluating the importance of rules in general in Buddhism rather than whether the Patimokkha ensured the Sangha's survival.

Q.2 (a) Examine ways in which Buddhists interpret narratives surrounding the birth and early life of the Buddha. [AO1 15]

This question was the most popular in Section A with a wide range of responses given. The majority of candidates showed satisfactory to good knowledge and understanding of the birth narratives.

Features of stronger responses:

- The more able candidates were able to draw on the key themes in their answers - the supernatural elements, hagiography, biography, myth etc.

Features of weaker responses:

- The key focus word 'interpret' was lost in some of the candidates' answers. Some candidates were often engaging with the birth narratives without engaging with their meaning to Buddhists i.e., describing the stories without making connections and interpreting these stories within different Buddhist traditions e.g., the supernatural elements, hagiography, biography, myth etc.
- Once again, the white elephant was held responsible by some candidates for Maya's pregnancy!

Q.2. (b) 'The biography of the historical Buddha is no longer relevant today.' Evaluate this view with reference to Buddhism. [AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- Some candidates were able to focus on the problems with the hagiography and how it is interpreted to argue that the biography is no longer relevant today.
- Some good understanding was shown between the different views held by Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists on the historical Buddha to show the biography's importance/unimportance.
- A few candidates were able to show the relevance of the biography today by showing that without looking at the biography, there would be no fundamental teachings or practices in Buddhism today.

Features of weaker responses:

- Several candidates did not focus on the question set.
- Many candidates focused on comparing the life of the Buddha to other elements of Buddhism such as meditation or the Sangha in terms of importance rather than evaluating whether the biography of the historical Buddha is relevant today or not.

SECTION B

- Q.3 (a) Outline the role and importance of dana (giving) and punya (merit) in Buddhism. [AO1 15]**

This question was the least popular in Section B. A variety of responses of varying standard were given.

Features of stronger responses:

- Candidates were generally able to connect dana with punya.
- More able candidates were able to successfully give examples of how punya can be transferred to others by referring to funeral services and actions performed in life.
- Stronger responses were able to explain the link between punya and karma correctly.

Features of weaker responses:

- Most candidates were able to give an example of how the lay community practises 'dana' by giving to the monastic Sangha. However only a limited number of candidates were able to successfully explain the counter dana practice of what the monastic community does for the lay people.
- One fundamental error made by several candidates was to confuse punya with karma.

- (b) 'There are more important teachings within Buddhism than the notion of punya.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates had a wide knowledge base of different teachings in Buddhism and were successfully able to compare/evaluate the importance of punya with these teachings.

Features of stronger responses:

- Stronger responses were able to explain the inter-relationship with all the teachings in Buddhism and how they need to be used together in order to attain nirvana.

Features of weaker responses:

- Many weaker responses were only able to superficially discuss the importance of other teachings compared to punya such as karma, Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path.

Q.4 (a) Explain the Buddhist teachings of the three lakshanas (marks of existence). [AO1 15]

This was the most popular question in Section B.

Features of stronger responses:

- Stronger responses were able to use the example of 'Nagasena and the Chariot' effectively in their answers.
- It was clear that dukkha was understood by the vast majority of candidates with a range of appropriate examples being used to support their understanding.
- Some excellent explanations were seen of the three different types of dukkha with an appropriate source of wisdom used to show the difficulty of dukkha's translation.

Features of weaker responses:

- When lists (dukkha, anicca and anatta in this instance) appear as part of a question some candidates get confused when attempting to match the terms to a definition.
- Generally, the discussion on 'anatta' was weaker compared to the other two marks of existence. Little reference was made to the important source of wisdom 'Nagasena and the Chariot' to aid the explanation of anatta.

Q.4 (b) 'The three lakshanas do not represent reality in today's world.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

A wide range of answers were presented for this question.

Features of stronger responses

- A number of stronger responses were able to successfully evaluate whether the Three Lakshanas accurately reflect reality.
- They were able to explain how each mark of existence can be seen all around us with appropriate examples to illustrate this. These responses were largely focused on the question.

Features of weaker responses:

- A number of weaker candidates often lost focus on the question. Their responses tended to focus on explaining the importance of the Three Lakshanas generally rather than evaluating whether they reflect reality or not.

Q.5 (a) Explain Buddhist teachings about the Four Noble Truths. [AO1 15]

This was the second most popular question answered in Section B.

Features of stronger responses:

- Overall, the majority of answers for this question were strong with all Four Noble Truths being covered in detail.
- It was pleasing to see good, accurate use of key terms such as Tanha, Samudaya, Nirodha and Magga.
- Accurate references were also made to the Buddha being a 'doctor' within the medical analogy to help explain the Four Noble Truths.

Features of weaker responses:

- A minority of candidates answered this question in a very superficial way.
- Weaker candidates were not able to give examples to support the concept of dukkha.
- A small number of candidates lost focus on the question completely and wrote about the Four Sights instead or referred to the Four Noble Truths as a set of rules.

Q.5 (b) 'The Four Noble Truths are the only teaching needed within Buddhism.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

The majority of candidates were able to evaluate whether the Four Noble Truths are the only teachings needed in Buddhism.

Features of stronger responses:

- Comparisons were made successfully to the teachings of the Three Lakshanas, karma and punya to aid evaluation.
- References were made to the Four Noble Truths' scientific approach with diagnosing the problems with life, its cause and cure as means of showing their importance.

Features of weaker responses:

- A number of weaker responses only concentrated on the Four Noble Truths being a 'guide to life' and 'needed for enlightenment'.
- Some candidates also failed to recognise in their evaluation that the Eightfold Path is part of the Four Noble Truths and is not solely a separate teaching.

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to focus on the question set in terms of knowledge and understanding in the part (a) questions and especially when presenting arguments in the part (b) questions. A little time spent reading the question carefully and planning a response before beginning to write the answer will be time well spent.
- Candidates could further develop their conclusions with the use of key words e.g., in closing; finally, it may be concluded; in summary; overall it may be said; in light of this analysis; considering this evaluation it may be possible to conclude, etc.
- Candidates could be more selective in their use of scholarly opinion if they wish to use this at AS level i.e., decide on a few, most suitable type of source e.g., article/book/message, which offers opinions, insights or ideas to a particular topic? Candidates could then engage purposefully with the source and use the information to support their answers in a logical and reasoned manner.
- Candidates need to be encouraged to use examples from different Buddhist schools of thought as a source of referencing. Many candidates in their answers/evaluations generalize when referring to Buddhism e.g., Buddhists believe or Buddhists argue, implying that this is true of all Buddhists rather than some Buddhists within a particular school. References are often limited to Theravada and Mahayana. They should be encouraged to show appreciation, where appropriate, of the vast group of Buddhist traditions and practices that come under the umbrella of Mahayana Buddhism.
- Quality of handwriting is an issue that needs to be addressed with appropriate provision within centres.
- Candidates also need to be reminded of the importance of correctly numbering questions in their answer booklet.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2022

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 1E. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF HINDUISM

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q2 (attempt% 52.5%). The most popular question in Section B was Q4 (attempt% 40.1%). Q2 was the question with the highest mean score in Section A (mean=10.9 for (a) and (b) combined), Q4 was the question with the highest mean score in Section B (mean=10.7 for (a) and (b) combined). Apart from Q3b and Q4b, the mean score for the part (a) AO1 questions was generally higher than those of the part (b) AO2 questions.

The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the bands with the full range of marks used.

There were some excellent responses which clearly showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate, extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms.

Issues for consideration by centres:

- A major weakness in some candidates' responses was that they were not focused on the question set and included a lot of irrelevant material.
- Some part (b) responses were so long that the candidate lost their train of thought and reasoning. It is quality of content that determines the band awarded not the length of the response. Successful AS answers focus on the issue or issues in the question.
- A lot of candidates' conclusions in their AO2 responses were also too long. Some were longer than the points in the 'main body'. A conclusion should be a summary or a 'final decision' being made.
- The quality of candidates' handwriting is a very important issue. Some were very difficult if not impossible to understand and if the examiner cannot credit a response they cannot read. It is imperative for the sake of candidates that centres evaluate the legibility of a candidates' handwriting and if there is any doubt to encourage the use of a word-processor.
- Centres should remind candidates to follow the instructions on the exam paper and to number their questions. For example, some candidates did not write question numbers at all in their booklets and some even wrote the wrong question number next to their response, which was clearly focussed on a different question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

- Q.1 (a) Explain how the status of the Dalits has improved, with reference to the Bahujan Samaj Party. [AO1 15]**

This was a popular question with no major issues.

Features of stronger responses:

- Strong responses focused on improvements made to the lives of Dalits rather than giving their history and a full explanation of the varna system. They also referred to some situations where there has been no improvement.
- Many strong responses showed thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of the contributions of the BSP, whilst also examining the contributions of other key figures, such as Gandhi and Ambedkar.
- Ideas were well supported with evidence.

Features of weaker responses:

- Limited knowledge of the BSP, with basic accuracy shown.
- Digression into explaining the origin and history of the varna system.

- Q.1 (b) 'The varna system can never be justified.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

This was a very accessible question for the majority of candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- Clearly structured responses, where candidates provided a variety of arguments agreeing and disagreeing with the statement.
- Arguments included the structure and stability given to society by the varna system; and also, the inherent discrimination which results from elitism.
- Arguments were supported by clear reasoning and evidence.
- Gandhi and Ambedkar were used to consider their different approaches to varna.
- Frequent evaluative judgements made.

Features of weaker responses:

- A limited number of arguments were made and repeated.
- Little attempt was made to support any arguments with reason or evidence.
- Some confusion between varna and ashramas.

Q2. (a) Examine the concept of ahimsa in Hinduism. [AO1 15]

This was the most popular question in this Section, with a wide range of responses given, varying in standard.

Features of stronger responses:

- Many strong responses began with the Jainian origins of the concept of ahimsa.
- Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of the concept in Hinduism – a spiritual concept, an ideal set out in the Laws of Manu, and a path to moksha.
- Some responses showed excellent understanding of the philosophies underpinning belief of ahimsa.
- Practical application of the concept was also considered with responses examining killing of animals, eating meat and warfare.
- Excellent understanding of how ahimsa was politicised by Gandhi in his satyagraha movement.

Features of weaker responses:

- Some responses described the Jain concept only, thus failing to answer the question set.
- Limited knowledge and understanding, with limited accuracy.

Q.2 (b) 'Ahimsa is not relevant in today's world.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- A variety of arguments were made, focused on relevancy in today's world.
- Arguments were clearly supported with current evidence, such as care for the environment and/or animals; conflict and war.
- Some strong responses reasoned that the existence of conflict in itself proves the concept fails and is not relevant.
- Supporting references made to Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Extinction Rebellion as evidence of the recent use of peaceful protest.

Features of weaker responses:

- A limited number of arguments made, with lots of repetition.
- Only basic attempts at analysis and little if any evaluation.
- Digression into other concepts more relevant in today's world, and thus a failure to answer the question set.

SECTION B

- Q.3 (a) Explain Krishna's teaching on varnadharma and the conflict that can arise from following personal dharma. [AO1 15]**

This was a popular question, and one which was very accessible to candidates. The question asked for two areas of knowledge and understanding - Krishna's teaching on varnadharma; and the conflict that can arise from following personal dharma.

Features of stronger responses:

- Clear context given to the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna – Bhagavad Gita, war between Pandavas and Kauravas, Arjuna's indecision.
- Thorough and accurate knowledge and understanding of Krishna's advice to Arjuna: as a warrior his varnadharma was to fight.
- Krishna's teaching explained in detail: he would not gain bad karma for taking part in war as action done out of duty, without attachment, has no karmic effects. The source of evil is not in actions, but in the intention behind them.

Features of weaker responses:

- Very descriptive responses of the war with little attempt to extract the teachings on varnadharma and the conflict which arises.

- Q.3 (b) 'Bhakti yoga is without doubt the highest path to liberation.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Features of stronger responses:

- Clearly structured and supported arguments given, with evaluative judgements made.
- Arguments supporting the statement included its advocacy in the Bhagavad Gita, based on love, and open to all people.
- Alternative arguments advocated for other yogas as being higher paths – jnana and karma yoga for example.
- The strongest responses referenced some paths being exclusive to high castes for example.
- Many concluded that all paths are of equal value, leading to moksha.

Features of weaker responses:

- Some confusion between different yogas.
- Alternative arguments going beyond the question and suggesting that practices such as puja or festival observance are better paths – thus failing to meet the demands of the question.

Q.4 (a) Examine Hindu beliefs about the Trimurti.

[AO1 15]

This was a very popular question and very accessible to candidates. Candidates approached the question in a variety of different and valid ways.

Features of stronger responses:

- Accurate identification of the 3 members of the Trimurti – Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva
- Good understanding of the concept of Saguna Brahman.
- Thorough, detailed explanations of the physical and symbolic features of each member of the Trimurti.
- Links with Shakti/consorts.
- Some strong responses examined the Trimurti with reference to the elements of earth, water and fire; the 3 gunas of sattva, raja and tamas; the student, householder and retired ashramas.
- Connections made with worshipping communities – Vaishnavite/Shaivites.

Features of weaker responses:

- Extensive confusion between the 3 members of the Trimurti.
- Brief responses, focusing on some physical features only.

**Q.4 (b) ‘The Trimurti is the most important concept in Hinduism.’
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- Well-structured arguments balancing the importance of the Trimurti against other important Hindu concepts, such as Brahman/Atman, Karma, Ahimsa, Varnashramadharma.
- Some strong responses argued successfully for Saguna Brahma over Nirguna Brahman.
- Candidates were able to argue that Trimurti is the basis for understanding other concepts in Hinduism.
- Views were supported by extensive reasoning/evidence.
- Thorough and accurate use of technical vocabulary used.

Features of Weaker Responses:

- Repetition of descriptive content from Part (a)
- Selection of alternative arguments focusing on Hindu ‘practices’ (not concepts) such as puja, festival observance, scriptures – thus failure to meet the demands of the question set.

Q.5 (a) Examine how the festival of Holi has spiritual significance for Hindus. [AO1 15]

This was the least popular question in Section B

Features of stronger responses:

- Excellent focus to the question with clear links made between the myths of Holi/celebrations of Holi and the spiritual significance for Hindus. Candidates examined how Holi promotes the victory of good over evil, the affirming of spiritual faith, the benevolence of the gods and the rewards of loyalty to them, social cohesion through community bonds, the path to moksha, and the celebration of spring.
- Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding evident throughout.

Features of weaker Responses:

- Limited, descriptive responses which either retold the myths recalled at Holi, or otherwise described how Hindus celebrate the festival – thus a failure to meet the demands of the question.
- Some confusion between Holi and other festivals, such as Durga Puja.

Q.5 (b) ‘Hindu festivals do not express religious identity.’ Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

Features of stronger Responses:

- A variety of arguments made to address the questions, including that Holi is more a social or cultural event and lacking religious identity.
- Strong responses considered the commitment or lack of, necessary to celebrating festivals and the lack of religious allegiance found within.
- Arguments such as festivals not being part of varnashramadharma were used successfully by some candidates.
- Candidates challenged the statement by arguing that festivals allow for Hindu to express their belief and values, that Hinduism is in fact a religion of festivals, and that festivals are a very public expression of identity.
- Some strong evaluative judgements found in these responses.

Features of Weaker Responses:

- A limited number of arguments made to address the question, with little attempt at analysis and evaluation.
- Some weaker responses made little reference to religious identity.

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to focus on the question set in terms of knowledge and understanding in the part (a) questions and especially when presenting arguments in the part (b) questions. A little time spent reading the question carefully and planning a response before beginning to write the answer will be time well spent.
- Candidates could further develop their conclusions with the use of key words e.g., in closing; finally, it may be concluded; in summary; overall it may be said; in light of this analysis; considering this evaluation it may be possible to conclude etc.
- Candidates could further develop their conclusions with the use of key words e.g., in closing; finally, it may be concluded; in summary; overall it may be said; in light of this analysis; considering this evaluation it may be possible to conclude, etc.
- Candidates could be more selective in their use of scholarly opinion if they wish to use this at AS level, i.e., decide on a few, most suitable type of source e.g., article/book/message, which offers opinions, insights or ideas to a particular topic? Candidates could then engage purposefully with the source and use the information to support their answers in a logical and reasoned manner.
- Quality of handwriting is an issue that needs to be addressed with appropriate provision within centres.
- Candidates also need to be reminded of the importance of correctly numbering questions in their answer booklet.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2022

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 1F. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF SIKHISM

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q1 (attempt% 62.4%). The most popular question in Section B was Q4 (attempt% 70.8%). Q1 was the question with the highest mean score in Section A (mean=9.1 for (a) and (b) combined), Q3 was the question with the highest mean score in Section B (mean=9.7 for (a) and (b) combined). Apart from Q4b and Q5b, the mean score for the part (b) AO2 questions was generally higher than those of the part (a) AO1 questions.

The paper seemed accessible to most candidates and the answers spanned the bands with the full range of marks used. There were some excellent responses which clearly showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate, extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms. It was apparent that a number of questions in Section B were answered better than those in Section A. There was also evidence in most scripts to argue and counter argue particular views throughout the response, rather than argue 'for' in the first part of the answer and then argue 'against'. There is also a genuine attempt by many candidates to summarise their arguments in their conclusion. This could be further developed with the use of key words.

The most popular question in Section A was Q2 (attempt% 52.5%). The most popular question in Section B was Q4 (attempt% 40.1%). Q2 was the question with the highest mean score in Section A (mean=10.9 for (a) and (b) combined), Q4 was the question with the highest mean score in Section B (mean=10.7 for (a) and (b) combined). Apart from Q3b and Q4b, the mean score for the part (a) AO1 questions was generally higher than those of the part (b) AO2 questions.

The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the bands with the full range of marks used.

There were some excellent responses which clearly showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate, extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms.

Issues for consideration by centres:

- A major weakness in some candidates' responses was that they were not focused on the question set and included a lot of irrelevant material.
- Some part (b) responses were so long that the candidate lost their train of thought and reasoning. It is quality of content that determines the band awarded not the length of the response. Successful AS answers focus on the issue or issues in the question.

- A lot of candidates' conclusions in their AO2 responses were also too long. Some were longer than the points in the 'main body'. A conclusion should be a summary or a 'final decision' being made.
- The quality of candidates' handwriting is a very important issue. Some were very difficult if not impossible to understand and if the examiner cannot credit a response they cannot read. It is imperative for the sake of candidates that centres evaluate the legibility of a candidates' handwriting and if there is any doubt to encourage the use of a word-processor.
- Centres should remind candidates to follow the instructions on the exam paper and to number their questions. For example, some candidates did not write question numbers at all in their booklets and some even wrote the wrong question number next to their response, which was clearly focussed on a different question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 (a) Examine the significance of the concept of sewa in Sikhism. [AO1 15]

This was the most popular question in Section A and no major difficulties or issues were observed.

Features of stronger responses:

- Strong responses focused on sewa as 'selfless service to others' in physical actions.
- They included good understanding of the different kinds of sewa – Man, Dan and Tan.
- They referred to the importance of sewa to the spiritual path.
- Also the importance of sewa to Sikh belief in equality

Features of weaker responses:

- Limited knowledge of different expressions of sewa.
- Focusing entirely on langar in the gurdwara.

Q.1 (b) 'Sewa is not practical in today's world.' Evaluate this view.

[AO2 15]

The main weakness of responses to this question was that they did not focus on practicality but rather on importance.

Features of stronger responses

- Clearly structured responses, where candidates provided a variety of arguments agreeing and disagreeing with the statement.
- Focus on the practical nature of sewa
- Arguments were supported by clear reasoning and evidence.
- Frequent evaluative judgements made.

Features of weaker responses:

- Arguments not focused on the question set.
- Focussed on importance of sewa rather than its practicality
- Made little attempt to support arguments with reason or evidence.

Q.2 (a) Examine the significance of the concept of Kirat Karo in Sikhism. [AO1 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- Reference to the three pillars of Sikhism and the relationship between them.
- Thorough focus on Kirat Karo and its implications in Sikh life
- Reference to the importance of the house-holder's life in Sikhism
- Excellent understanding of how Kirat Karo is a community philosophy

Features of weaker responses:

- Digression into explaining in detail the two other Sikh pillars – Vand Chakko and Naam Japo
- Limited knowledge and understanding, with limited accuracy.

Q.2 (b) 'Actions are more important than faith in Sikhism.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- A variety of arguments made, focused on the basis that the beliefs and practices of a religion must be taken as a whole.
- Some strong responses referred to work in Sikhism being regarded as worship.
- References to practical actions expressing faith e.g., wearing of the 5ks.
- Good arguments that many Sikh concepts are social concepts and can be acted upon for purely social reasons.

Features of weaker responses:

- A limited number of arguments made, with repetition of the few.
- Basic attempts at analysis and limited if any evaluation.
- No understanding of the link between faith and action

Section B

- Q.3 (a) Examine the spiritual significance of the Sikh festival of Diwali. [AO1 15]**

Features of stronger responses:

- Good knowledge and understanding of the historical significance of the festival of Diwali and the spiritual significance of the events.
- Clear focus on the spiritual values expressed in the festival – bravery, courage and the importance of temporal and spiritual values
- Good understanding of how Diwali represents the struggle between good and evil and how light always overcomes darkness.

Features of weaker responses:

- Very descriptive responses with little focus on the spiritual significance of the celebrations.

- Q.3 (b) 'Festivals are not an essential part of Sikhism.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Features of Stronger Responses

- Clearly structured arguments given, with evaluative judgements made.
- Arguments supporting the statement included that Sikhism is not a religion of festivals and that celebrating festivals does not necessarily show any commitment to a religion
- Alternative arguments advocated for festivals being a very effective way of expressing religious identity.
- Arguments were clearly supported with reasons and evidence.

Features of weaker responses:

- Focus of the response was not really on 'essential', but more on 'important'.
- Limited analysis and evaluation.

- Q.4 (a) Explain how Guru Gobind Singh influenced Sikh identity. [AO1 15]**

The most popular question in Section B.

Features of stronger responses:

- Accurate knowledge and understanding of the founding of the Khalsa and its significance for Sikhism.
- Good understanding of his development of the Guru Panth.
- Thorough, detailed explanations of the significance of the 5Ks.
- Reference to the new code of conduct and the significance of the names Singh and kaur.
- Reference to his establishment of the Guru Granth Sahib as the eternal Guru of the Sikhs.

Features of weaker responses:

- Listed Guru Gobind Singh's achievements without explaining their influence on Sikh identity.
- Did not focus at all on Sikh identity, but rather gave a biography of Guru Gobind Singh.

Q.4 (b) 'Guru Gobind Singh completely changed the Sikhism of Guru Nanak.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- Well-structured arguments balancing the contributions of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh to Sikhism
- Some strong responses argued successfully for the view given in the question set
- Candidates were able to argue that many of the things that Guru Gobind Singh did were a development of the beliefs of Guru Nanak
- Views were supported by extensive reasoning/evidence.

Features of weaker responses:

- Repeated descriptive information from Part (a).
- Did not focus on the question set, but rather on who was the most important Guru.

Q.5 (a) Examine Sikh beliefs about God. [AO1 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- Excellent focus on the question with clear and detailed reference to the Mul Mantra.
- Good understanding of God as nirguna and saguna.
- Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding were evident throughout.

Features of weaker responses:

- Limited knowledge and understanding.
- No specific references to Sikh beliefs about God.
- Lacked specialist language.

Q.5 (b) 'The most important Sikh teaching about God is that God is personal.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

Features of stronger responses:

- A variety of arguments made to address the questions, including that it is one of Guru Nanak's most important beliefs about God.
- Strong responses considered that it is a belief that distinguishes Sikhism from Hinduism.
- Candidates challenged the statement by arguing that other Sikh teachings about God are more important e.g., God as creator.
- Some strong evaluative judgements were made in these responses.

Features of weaker responses:

- A limited number of arguments made to address the question, with little attempt at analysis and/or evaluation.
- Some weaker responses made little reference to God as personal.

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to focus on the question set in terms of knowledge and understanding in the part (a) questions and especially when presenting arguments in the part (b) questions. A little time spent reading the question carefully and planning a response before beginning to write the answer will be time well spent.
- Candidates could further develop their conclusions with the use of key words e.g., in closing; finally, it may be concluded; in summary; overall it may be said; in light of this analysis; considering this evaluation it may be possible to conclude etc.
- Candidates could be more selective in their use of scholarly opinion i.e., decide on a few, most suitable type of source e.g., article/book/message, which offers opinions, insights or ideas to a particular topic. Candidates could then engage purposefully with the source and use the information to support their answers in a logical and reasoned manner.
- Candidates could be more selective in their use of scholarly opinion if they wish to use this at AS level, i.e., decide on a few, most suitable type of source e.g., article/book/message, which offers opinions, insights or ideas to a particular topic? Candidates could then engage purposefully with the source and use the information to support their answers in a logical and reasoned manner.
- Quality of handwriting is an issue that needs to be addressed with appropriate provision within centres.
- Candidates also need to be reminded of the importance of correctly numbering questions in their answer booklet.

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UNIT 2: SECTION A - AN INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION AND ETHICS

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q2 (attempt% 57.2%). Q2 was also the question with the highest mean score in Section A (mean=13.0) for (a) and (b) combined).

Both questions on Section A elicited answers which were rewarded across the full range of mark bands and most candidates appeared able to use their time effectively across the two parts of the questions. It was pleasing to see that candidates understood the different demands of the AO1 and AO2 parts of the question and that, for the most part, they attempted to answer the specific questions set.

Better responses were able to draw on a wide range of scholarship to support their points and it is clear that centres are using a good variety of resources in their preparation. However weaker responses often confused the different ethical theories studied and could not make clear distinctions between different approaches. There were still a number of responses that appeared very formulaic, and this did not benefit candidates who struggled to adapt their pre-prepared responses to the demands of the question

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a) Explain Virtue Theory [AO1 30]

This question allowed candidates to include a wide range of knowledge and understanding about Virtue Theory and answers were rewarded for both breadth and depth.

Features of stronger responses:

- Had a clear grasp of the nature of Virtue Ethics and the way in which this approach is different from other normative theories.
- Clearly understood the goal of eudaimonia and the role of intellectual and moral virtues in working towards this goal.
- Used examples to show good understanding of the doctrine of the mean and were able to explain the importance of phronesis in identifying the mean in each situation.
- Understood the importance of role models in developing virtue and gave specific examples to illustrate.
- Were able to show the development of Virtue Ethics from its Aristotelian roots to its use in Christianity and in more modern formulations.

Features of weaker responses:

- Often confused Virtue Theory with other ethical theories including Aquinas' Natural Law and Mill's Utilitarianism.
- Incorrectly associated Aristotle with biblical ethics and believed that Aristotle had been influenced by Jesus' teaching.
- Described eudaimonia as a 'selfish' goal and failed to understand the role of community and the idea of eudaimonia as collective human flourishing.
- Did not understand that the doctrine of the mean only applies to the moral virtues.

Q.1 (b) 'Virtue Theory offers a useful guide when facing moral dilemmas.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

Candidates mostly focused well on the question and were able to present a range of valid arguments when discussing this issue. Candidates could benefit from considering MacIntyre's approach to Virtue Ethics as this would enhance arguments relating to the cultural relativism of Virtue Theory.

Features of stronger responses:

- Identified the issue that the virtues take a long time and a lot of effort to cultivate, which can be a barrier.
- Recognised that the lack of specific guidance about actions could be both a strength and a weakness of the theory
- Gave good examples to illustrate the idea of cultural relativism
- Used other theories as a counterpoint to identify issues relating to virtue theory itself

Features of weaker responses:

- Wrote briefly about Virtue Theory then suggested an alternative 'more useful' theory and proceeded to evaluate this theory with no further reference to Virtue Theory, thus missing the point of the question.
- Argued that evil characters could be virtuous because they exhibited one aspect of one virtue, without recognising the holistic nature of the theory
- Saw Virtue Theory as a specifically Christian theory and argued for its relevance based on this idea.

Q.2 (a) Explain why Fletcher used agape (selfless love) as the 'middle way' in his ethical theory. [AO1 30]

Some candidates appeared to find the focus of this question more difficult, although most were able to answer based on either the idea of agape or the concept of the 'middle way' /on both aspects.

Features of stronger responses:

- Answered the specific question set and made reference to the reasons why Fletcher chose both agape and the 'middle way' in ethics, including clear understanding of the rejection of legalism and antinomianism, and a good grasp of Fletcher's view of conscience.

- Compared agape with other forms of love to explain why agape was the better choice, using well-chosen examples and textual quotations to illustrate the Christian background of the theory
- Were able to refer accurately to Fletcher's writings, and those of other scholars, to demonstrate the importance of agape
- Used the principles of situation ethics to illustrate the importance and use of agape

Features of weaker responses:

- Were unclear about the definition of agape and mistook this for other forms of love
- Listed the principles and did not really relate these to why Fletcher chose agape
- Did not focus clearly on the question and simply wrote general explanations of Situation Ethics
- Positivism was often incorrectly defined as 'being positive.'
- Mixed up Situation Ethics with Virtue Theory, Utilitarianism or Natural Law

Q.2 (b) 'Situation Ethics offers a useful guide in dealing with ethical issues.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

Candidates were generally able to identify a range of issues relating to this question and appeared to find it accessible.

Features of stronger responses:

- Discussed the advantages and disadvantages of flexibility in ethics, often using relevant examples such as abortion and euthanasia, or Fletcher's own examples, such as Mrs Bergmeier.
- Made effective comparisons with other theories to draw out points about Situation Ethics itself.
- Assessed the usefulness of the theory for religious believers compared with non-believers

Features of weaker responses:

- Confused Situation Ethics with the greatest happiness principle in Utilitarianism or argued that it focused too much on intention.
- Showed poor understanding of the flexible and relativist nature of Situation Ethics, instead arguing that it is absolutist and 'outdated.'
- Claimed that Situation Ethics condoned a number of extreme actions including terrorism and genocide without really understanding how unlikely it could be that these would ever show agape.
- Engaged in lengthy and irrelevant evaluations of different ethical theories.

Summary of key points

- Good responses focused clearly on the exact demands of the question and were able to select appropriate knowledge rather than writing everything they knew about an entire topic
- Accurate use of specialist vocabulary in context was a prominent feature of good responses
- Evaluating one ethical theory by making comparison with another is a valid strategy, but only if the bulk of the essay is dedicated to evaluation of the theory required by the question and not the alternative theory.
- Centres should continue to access a range of supporting resources, including the writings of the scholars named in the Specification as, where teaching has clearly included a good range of wider reading, the responses are often of a very high quality.

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UNIT 2: SECTION B - AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

General Comments

The most popular question in Section B by 0.1% was Q3 (attempt% 47.8%). Q4 however was the question with the highest mean score in Section B (mean=12.5) for (a) and (b) combined).

Candidates are making considerable use of the resources available to support the WJEC specification. As use of this Specification continues, areas of expertise broaden. However, it does seem that some areas of the Specification are addressed in more detail and with more understanding than others. In many areas 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 in terms of recognising the skills required for AO1 and AO2 answers.

However, there is evidence that some candidates are not always familiar with the meaning of a particular phrases from the Specification which causes them issues when they experience it in a question. Examples of these phrases include 'effective', 'the nature of', 'persuasive'. Candidates would benefit from regularly being given work which contains key words from the Specification, so that it they are familiar with them before attempting the examination paper.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.3 (a) Examine the nature of the following types of religious experience

(i) Visions

(ii) Conversion

[AO1 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- introduced the nature of religious experience in general and maintained a focus on the two stated types.
- understood that the two types of religious experience are not necessarily separate entities in that a vision may result in a conversion.
- showed an awareness of different categories of visions, such as sensory, intellectual and dreams, with appropriate exemplification.
- were able to further sub-divide the categories to illustrate the broad nature of those categorisations.
- referred to different types of conversion, whether that be gradual or sudden, active or passive, from faith to faith, faith to no faith or no faith to faith. Appropriate exemplification was useful.
- were able to fully explain visions and conversion with reference to specific examples which gave body to the response.

Features of weaker responses:

- gave a very broad portrayal of religious experiences without really addressing the specifics of either visions or conversion.
- If they referred to the two types of religious experience, this was done in a fleeting fashion, in a way which is far too simple for AS study.
- had little or no awareness of different aspects of visions or conversion, resulting in the suggestion that they always comprised of the same component parts.
- were able to give very few examples of either a vision or a conversion experience.

Q.3 (b) 'Visions are the most effective way of communicating religious teaching and beliefs.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- did more than just evaluate visions per se, but actually attempted to deal with the question.
- included the line of reasoning that visions do communicate religious teaching and beliefs as they are the very foundations of teaching and beliefs.
- some suggested that visions as well as prayer are direct forms of communication with good. This allowed both of these types to be effective means of communication of beliefs and teachings. These are clear and unequivocal.
- used the thought that God could work through visions and the people who receive them in order to communicate religious teaching and belief.
- compared the efficacy of visions with other types of religious experience.

Features of weaker responses:

- answered this as if it were a question on the validity and/or credibility of religious experience in general and/or of visions in particular.
- completely missed the point of what the question was asking, suggesting a lack of awareness of what they were supposed to evaluate.
- made no reference to religious teaching or beliefs which again reinforces that this particular evaluative issue is alien to many candidates

- Q.4 (a) Examine the following challenges to ontological arguments presented by:**
(i) Gaunilo
(ii) Kant **[AO1 30]**

Features of stronger responses:

- understood that ontological arguments have several challenges to them, but did focus on the two scholars.
- recognised how such arguments 'work' and with this recognition came a greater ability to understand the challenges to them.
- did not just relate Gaunilo's most perfect island example but understood that it must be used as an analogy to show why he rejected St. Anselm's ontological argument.
- realised that the major challenge to these arguments is that existence is not a predicate and expanded on Kant's challenge in this vein.
- also recounted the idea of Kant that as existence does not add anything to a concept then 100 real thalers contain no more thalers than 100 thalers in the mind alone. This adds weight to the challenge that existence in reality is not greater than existence in mind only.
- used Kant's examples of the triangle and the valley and mountain.

Features of weaker responses

- spent an unnecessary amount of time explaining the ontological argument either because they lacked the understanding to differentiate between AO1 and AO2 or because that is what they wanted the question to be.
- described Gaunilo's most perfect island example but had no awareness or understanding how it should be used in relation to ontological arguments. In other words, the description stopped at the perfect island, with no reference to God in the explanation.
- did not understand ontological arguments and consequently could not examine challenges.
- had little or no understanding of separate challenges raised by Kant, nor did they use his examples with understanding. Referring his arguments to God was missing.

- (b) 'A priori arguments for God's existence are very persuasive.'**
Evaluate this view. **[AO2 30]**

Features of stronger responses

- allowed the opportunity for breadth by not make this into a question purely about the persuasiveness of ontological arguments.
- may well have included reference to ontological arguments but used these arguments perceptively as a means to draw out the persuasiveness or not of *a priori* arguments.
- made good use of a comparison with *a posteriori* arguments, suggesting that one mode of argumentation may be more persuasive than the other.
- pointed out that *a priori* arguments may be persuasive as they present unequivocal facts.
- also suggested that *a priori* arguments can rely on a play on words in order to be persuasive.

Features of weaker responses

- made this entirely into a question about the persuasiveness of ontological arguments which were not linked to *a priori*. Candidates must distinguish between different issues in AO2.
- had no real understanding of what *a priori* arguments actually are in themselves. They just stated that the ontological argument is one.
- this resulted in many answers simply not referring to the nature of *a priori* arguments whatsoever.
- made no use of the contrast with *a posteriori* arguments at all.

Summary of key points

- All areas of the Specification should be addressed with a proportionate amount of time given to it. This is particularly pertinent with regard to AO2 issues.
- Candidates should not rely on revision textbooks to the extent that they become a straight-jacket rather than being a helpful guide.
- Use the studied material in such a way that it can be adapted to the particular focus of the question set.
- Be familiar with key words and scholars in the Specification so that no question is inaccessible.
- Distinguish between the skills required for AO1 and AO2 and avoid writing irrelevant preliminary detail for either type of question.

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UNIT 3A: A STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q1 (attempt% 80.6%). The most popular question in Section B was Q4 (attempt% 86.1%). Q1 had the highest mean score in Section A (mean=15.8). Q4 had the highest mean score in Section B (mean=18.0). Based on the question 'mean' candidates scored higher in Section B (AO2) than in Section A (AO1).

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 responses provided.

With a move to online marking and segmentation of questions, it is crucial that candidates place their Question number and part clearly in the margin of the paper. Should they add something later, again, another clear repetition of the Question number and part in the margin will ensure its attachment to the rest of their answer.

Handwriting was a concern on an increasing number of scripts and centres need to be aware of their candidate's handwriting form and ability and, if necessary, make appropriate arrangements so that their work can be accessed by WJEC examiners.

Candidates should be reminded of the need for capital letters for key terminology, e.g., **God**, **Jesus**, **Holy Spirit**, **Christian**, **Psalms**, **England**.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 Examine the views of Richard Dawkins on the relationship between religion and science. [AO1 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- This was the almost universal Section A question answered. For many candidates a dream with 'Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding' achieving a Band 5 mark not only displaying knowledge of Dawkins (as illustrated in the Mark Scheme), but answering the question set regarding his views about the relationship between religion and science.

Features of weaker responses:

- The primary weakness was spending half the essay or more discussing Alistair McGrath and Gould or others. Even when POMA and NOMA were mentioned they were rarely, in this scenario, connected to Dawkins' view and so much of the response did not address the questions set.
- Unnecessary introductions and, even more so, conclusions were written.
- Some thought that Dawkins supported the 'God of the Gaps' argument in the sense of supporting God's place in filling the gaps. Others thought that he was replying to Paley (as if McGrath, et al.).
- All the above were illustrations of weaker responses often slipping into AO2 rather than AO1. Section A questions test your knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Q.2. Examine the rationale and work of the World Council of Churches.**[AO1 30]**

Those who opted for this question did not necessarily do so from a position of strength or confidence, so stronger responses were a minority.

Features of stronger responses:

- Examined the work of the W.C.C. - most candidates acknowledged: Mission, Social Justice, Service and Education, far fewer the Prophetic Voice aspect. Some attained some examination of rationale e.g., to be like a UN for Churches.

Features of weaker responses:

- Tended to answer a different question to that set – Examine the history of the WCC - within which some of the actual question was addressed, or not.
- Attempted to answer an alternative question to the one set – Is the work of the WCC successful? Again, within which some of the actual question was addressed, or not.

Section B**Q3. 'The speeches in Acts have historical value.'
Evaluate this view.****[AO2 30]****Features of stronger responses:**

- Read the question carefully, and so concentrated as required on the question of historical value. They evaluated the question set with reference to the speeches within Acts and as a result many attained purposeful analysis and effective evaluation, Band 4.
- Made effective of the different opinions of the Church Fathers, C.H. Dodd and Bultmann. Some also utilized a Positivist argument.

- Made good use of the fact that Acts was accepted as part of the Canon of the Bible and yet there are the questions pertaining to the structure of the book and comparison to St. Paul's speeches to his own writings elsewhere in that Canon.

Features of weaker responses:

- Almost no one made use of (Luke) the author's own testimony and assurance to Theophilus in the introduction to Acts. While a possible acceptable omission lack of that knowledge or awareness as to the whole purpose of Acts gave way to incredible and frequently repeated claims e.g., that Acts corrects the Gospels' mix up of the shepherds and wise men at Jesus' birth / details Jesus' birth / tells us more about the life of Jesus / discusses the early acts of Jesus / presents Christians with parables.
- Made a common error - the suggestion that because Luke is a gentile, he is not a Christian, and therefore the speeches have no historical value as he is writing about a different religion.

Q.4 'The U.K. is a Christian country.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

86.1% of candidates attempted this question and so illustrated its accessibility, popularity, and their confidence in approaching it.

Features of stronger responses:

- Confident critical analysis was generally witnessed in responses to this question to form an often complex and multi-level response e.g., debating if the reverse mission movement suggests that the UK was not Christian because it was needed or, yes, the UK is Christian because reverse mission movement is welcomed. Other asked if faith schools an indicator of faith or simply a preferred mode of education?
- Used real evidence to support their analysis and evaluation rather than creating evidence to fit an argument.

Features of weaker responses:

- Some wrote as if they were responding to an AO1 question and so may have provided relevant detail, but never or rarely developed this information into the required analysis and evaluation.
- Unfortunately, some biased or even prejudiced responses were seen in responses to this question. Rather than analyse and evaluate facts, incorrect assertions were made e.g., faith schools are not subject to the National Curriculum or external inspections, and so either never teach sex education or that homosexuality is wrong
- Some responded to the question as if it were solely on the topic of migration, which it was not.

- Evidence too frequently presented as facts which were simply wrong or presented wrongly, e.g., 70 % of the population go to Christian schools, there are several Anglican churches across the UK, a percentage of everyone's taxes in the UK goes straight to the church, faith schools teach homophobic attitudes, swearing by referring to 'Jesus Christ' and 'What the hell?' shows it is a Christian country, but rarely following up with any argument about how / why this is the case.

**Q.5 'The ascetic ideal is compatible with Christianity.
Evaluate this view with reference to Christianity.**

[AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- Were delivered in a debating style with analysis and evaluation throughout, and with a clear conclusion, and in so doing achieved Band 5.
- Utilized much of the material in the marking scheme, but other relevant points when accurately used as analysis and evaluation were also credited, i.e. that stewardship presupposes ownership and questions of whether ascetism is relevant for Christians today (compared to historically) wrapped up with the need for (more) money for good stewardship of the earth.

Features of weaker responses:

- Used lengthy introductions and continued to write as if they were responding to an AO1 question.
- Made several erroneous statements e.g., Jesus did not tell Zacchaeus to give up anything, that was Zacchaeus voluntary reaction to being with Jesus (that could be a valid point if used correctly), the Parable of the Good Samaritan is not all about love and no money; the Samaritan paid the inn keeper and promised more money if necessary, in order that he look after the injured Jew,

**Q.6 'The Charismatic Movement has more strengths than weaknesses.'
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- Embarked on a thorough discussion of strengths and weaknesses that generally considered issues in: worship, healing, cultural backgrounds, concept of 2nd class Christians if not exhibiting charismatic gifts.
- Referred to scholars such as Hick, Freud and Durkheim and also considered biblical verification of the charismatic gifts e.g., Paul's listing of them.

Features of weaker responses:

- Gave introductions that could have been made evaluative, but unfortunately remained AO1 in style.
- Attempted to answer a different question – are charismatic experiences verifiable? That was not the question set and response which drifted from this could only be credited where relevant.
- Lacked a clear and purposeful conclusion.

Summary of key points

- With a move to online marking and segmentation of questions, it is crucial that candidates place their Question number and part clearly in the margin of the paper. Should they add something later, again, another clear repetition of the Question number and part in the margin will ensure its attachment to the rest of their answer.
- Candidates' handwriting needs to be afforded more consideration by centres, as examiners cannot credit work they cannot read.
- The single most regular credit depriving activity in Section B is candidate's writing an answer to an AO2 as if it were an AO1 question.
- Capitals letters would be expected in a response to various religious terms such as: God, Jesus / Christ / Christian and Holy Spirit.

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UNIT 3B: A STUDY OF ISLAM

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q2 (attempt% 67.0%). The most popular question in Section B was Q3 (attempt% 80.9%). Q1 had the highest mean score in Section A (mean=20.5). Q3 had the highest mean score in Section B (mean=20.3).

After two years of the covid pandemic, students performed well in this series, which is a credit to them and their teachers. It was evident that most candidates had taken much time and effort to learn a great deal of information and included it, accurately and with relevance, in their responses to this examination.

Candidates chose to answer different questions and there was a good spread of responses. In section A, question 2 on media responses was the most popular choice and in section B question 3 on Islam and science, which was generally very well answered. Breadth of knowledge might be further improved on the topics of Shi'a Islam, and Western perceptions of Islam.

The skill of honing responses directly to the wording of the question, especially the statement calling for a response in Section B, proved a reliable differentiator for stronger responses. Candidates are encouraged to craft their skills for AO2 to focus more sharply on the statements and analyse every word, as each is there for a reason and invites comment and discussion.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 Examine the importance of shari'a (the way) for Muslims. [AO1 30]

Candidates explained the sources of shari'a and gave some examples from them about the importance for Muslims today, in terms of knowing what to follow with regards to various issues. A few took the approach of what is important in inspiring individual Muslims and used examples from the shari'a to illustrate this. Some, but not many, pointed out that importance depended on authority from God, which was clear through the Qur'an as the word of God. For some modern-day issues the shari'a might be seen as less important if it did not provide clear guidance.

Features of stronger responses:

- Used key terms well, such as the word shari'a, and explained the original meaning as a guide to the oasis or spring giving life.
- Explained why the shari'a might be important in terms of sources of authority: the words of God and prophet Muhammad drawn together in this code.

- Show how the shari'a might help to guide Muslims facing different issues today.

Features of weaker responses:

- Described the sources of shari'a, without explaining their importance.
- Only referred to the Qur'an and Hadith as sources.
- Lacked detail or precision with regard to terms used and their explanation.

Q.2 Examine Western perceptions of Islam.

[AO1 30]

This was the most popular question in section A, and candidates were clearly inspired by the topic. Western perceptions of Islam might be evidenced from media presentations, documentaries, the news, art and so on. Most candidates wrote that perceptions were negative but were not always clear about their evidence for this. Others wrote a more balanced account.

Features of stronger responses:

- Wrote in detail about the topic, as required by the command word 'examine'.
 - Included aspects ranging from successful politicians, positive media coverage about Islamic art, negative media coverage about jihad and a variety of other areas.
 - Referred to the views of scholars, and academic research, such as that carried out by Cardiff University.

Features of weaker responses:

- Were critical of Western perceptions and the media, without giving a broader range of views.
- Did not delve in depth to the issue and did not give sources or evidence, just general comments.
- Generally lacked reference to scholarly views.

Section B

**Q.3 'There is no conflict between Islam and science.'
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

This was a popular question and generally very well answered. Some candidates referred to their knowledge of philosophy of religion and grappled well with theories of causation, in debating whether there was a need for a first cause of the universe and if that could equate to God. Almost all pointed out that God was rejected or unnecessary as an explanation by most scientists; some went into authority and contrasted empirical evidence of science with revealed knowledge, sometimes supported by reasoning based on observation, in Islam.

Features of stronger responses:

- Showed very strong knowledge about scientific theories and gave precise details about them.
- Included quotes from the Qur'an or Hadith or Islamic traditions to support arguments about Islamic responses to science.

- Considered Islam and science from different perspectives, such as creation, evolution and the search for empirical truth.

Features of weaker responses:

- Agreed with the statement and wrote one-sided responses.
- Did not recognise the significance of the statement with regards to the core belief in God, first cause, creator, controller in Islamic thought.
- Described the contributions of some Islamic scientists without relating them directly to the statement.

**Q.4 'Islamic responses to pluralism have failed.'
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

Candidates gave a variety of responses to this, ranging from those who made strong arguments and considered different perspectives to those who simply disagreed and gave a single viewpoint. Some of the most interesting arguments directly addressed 'responses' and argued that in some ways they had failed whereas in other ways they had not, coming to an overall conclusion at the end.

Features of stronger responses:

- Defined pluralism: this might be in terms of different routes to salvation and living together in multi-faith societies.
- Gave examples of different Islamic responses, such as in different parts of the world and at different periods in the development of Islam.
- Referred to the views of scholars, such as Ziauddin Sardar.

Features of weaker responses:

- Wrote only about Muslims living alongside Christians and Jews in the days of Muhammad.
- Wrote descriptive answers which did not address the statement directly.
- Gave one-sided answers.

**Q.5 'There is no coherent approach to conversion in Islam.'
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

Candidates covered some ways in which people came to take on Islam as their faith and many had learned historical details, including how some were forced into conversion but also released from this by Akbar. The diversity of Islam in different parts of the world was mentioned according to the context different people live in, and this was used to argue in agreement with the statement. Some candidates mentioned differences about how Muslims viewed other faiths: those who accept some other religions as ways to heaven in the afterlife might take a different approach to conversion.

Features of stronger responses:

- Addressed the word coherent, a key part of the statement.
- Considered conversion in a range of contexts, such as for marriage, historically during the expansion of Islam, and as a result of mission.
- Balanced arguments and came to a clear conclusion at the end.

Features of weaker responses:

- Usually did not refer to 'coherent' but wrote in general about conversion.
- Lacked examples or illustrations of conversion in answers.
- Wrote one or two different views but did not come to an overall conclusion at the end.

Q.6 'Shi'a Islam is a unique form of Islam.'**Evaluate this view.****[AO2 30]**

Candidates referred to the practices of Islam on the whole and drew distinctions between the Shi'a Ten Obligatory Acts and the Sunni Five Pillars, pointing out similarities and differences and weighing these up to come to a conclusion. Not so many referred to the history of the division and the authority of Ali to Shi'a Muslims, although more referred to the events of Karbala behind the Muharram remembrance annually. Candidates and centres might benefit from spending more time securing understanding of the importance of these events.

Features of stronger responses:

- Considered a broad range of aspects of Shi'a Islam, including practices, authority and origins.
- Discussed the meaning of and focused on the word 'unique'.
- Referred to scholars or Islamic leaders.

Features of weaker responses:

- Focused mostly or exclusively on the marking of events at Karbala at Muharram.
- Confused Shi'a Islam with Sufism and mixed them up in answers.
- Did not focus on the word 'unique'.

Summary of key points

- Knowledge and understanding of Shi'a Islam, especially the importance of Ali as an authority for Shi'a Muslims, as well as the events of Karbala behind Muharram, might be studied in more detail.
- For Western perceptions of Islam, and any question requiring 'examine', candidates would benefit from giving more detail and referring to the sources they use, perhaps using quotes from scholars and Islamic sources where relevant.
- Candidates had performed well and demonstrated good knowledge in many cases. Some might further improve this by learning a small number of relevant quotations and the names and views of some scholars to back up their arguments – something that was achieved by the highest performing candidates.
- For Section B, candidates should respond directly to the wording of the statement and might improve their focus by ensuring they define any key terms or words given emphasis in the statement at the start of their response and refer back to them at the end when making a judgement in a conclusion.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2022
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 3C: A STUDY OF JUDAISM

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q2 (attempt % 60.9%). The most popular question in Section B was Q4 (attempt % 68.2%). Q2 had the highest mean score in Section A (mean=17.8). Q4 had the highest mean score in Section B (mean=18.4).

There were several responses which showed that candidates had engaged fully with the topics which had been taught. This resulted in responses which were well-articulated, and which drew upon an extensive range of scholarly views and schools of thought. This was especially apparent in the higher band AO2 responses where candidates argued their points fluently, supported by extensive, detailed reason. And even within responses from lower bands, many candidates were able to demonstrate the diversity of Jewish belief and practice.

It was noticeable unfortunately, in many responses, that candidates had not addressed the specific requirements of some of the questions. This was particularly evident in answer to Q1 where a significant number of candidates failed to address the focus of the question correctly and examined the origins of *Political* Zionism rather than *Religious* Zionism. The fact that many candidates displayed accurate and relevant knowledge of the origins of Political Zionism showed that they were not without ability; however, they did not answer the question set and therefore, although there may have been some creditworthy material in their answers, they were not able to achieve marks from the higher band range. The origins of Religious Zionism stands as a distinct section within the specification.

Likewise, many responses to Q6 were also lacking in focus with candidates failing to address the 'ethical teachings' part of the question. This resulted in responses which did not address the issue which had been presented in the question. Consequently, many candidates were not able to achieve marks from the higher band range. Candidates should therefore continue to be reminded to pay close attention to the specific wording of each question.

Where answers were weaker in response to AO2 questions, candidates had either not addressed the statement with accuracy; had offered no more than a basic justification for the views given; or relied instead on using phrases such as 'this is a weak point' or 'this is a strong point' but without any accompanying analysis or evaluation of the issue.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 Examine the origins of Religious Zionism.

[AO1 30]

Many candidates failed to address the focus of the question correctly and examined the origins of *Political* Zionism rather than *Religious* Zionism.

Features of stronger responses:

- the covenant made with Abraham (Genesis 17:7-8) served as a starting point.
- specialist language and vocabulary such as 'Eretz Yisrael' and 'Eretz Hakodesh' was used effectively.
- 'Zion theology' was discussed.
- made relevant references to the prophecies of Isaiah, Amos and Jeremiah were indicative of responses that achieved higher marks.
- used liturgical references, from the Amidah for instance, served to draw a connection between the Jews and their return to the Holy Land.
- referred to the custom at Pesach of looking forward with the words 'Next year may we be in Jerusalem' was cited and discussed.
- mentioned Rabbi Isaac Reines, who formed the Mizrahi party, the religious wing of the Zionist movement, to secure the future of the Jewish people through study of the Torah and observance of the mitzvot was also used successfully in some responses.

Features of weaker responses:

- made very little, or no reference at all to Religious Zionism.
- gave detailed discussions of the origins of Political Zionism in which nothing could be found that was relevant to the question set.
- a detailed biography of Theodor Herzl including an account of the Dreyfus affair was offered, but with no connections made with the origins of Religious Zionism.

Q.2 Examine the role of the home as foundational for Jewish principles.

[AO1 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- demonstrated an understanding of the Jewish home as a mikdash me'at, a small sanctuary, served as a sound starting point, with consecration and dedication of the home through the ceremony of chanukat habayit in accordance with Deuteronomy 6:4-9 being discussed.
- used a discussion of the home taking on greater significance after the destruction of the Temple and the Babylonian exile as a means by which to focus on the question and show how it was the home which then became the only place where the values and practices of the Jewish faith could be handed down to the younger generation.
- used relevant examples from Jewish family life were used in order to show that the home is permeated with sanctity when the family lives in accordance with God's commands.

- used a variety of examples from Jewish festivals and rites of passage and demonstrated depth and breadth in relation to this question.

Features of weaker responses:

- some candidates presented an answer which was restricted to that of the role of the mother and father within the family; this was creditworthy, but the question was about the home, and so the opportunity to gain higher marks was limited.
- some responses digressed from the focus of the question and in some cases became nothing more than a list of the roles of men and women in Judaism in general.
- a small minority of candidates lost the thread of their answer and digressed into an AO2-type discussion about the synagogue being more important than the home as foundational for Jewish principles.

Section B

Q.3 Evaluate the view that the Mishnah is the most important element of the Talmud. [AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- the relationship between the Mishnah and the Gemara was very well understood and served as a strong foundation in order to support the arguments being made.
- strong lines of argument based upon the fact that the Mishnah stands as the first authoritative compilation of the Oral Torah was accompanied by key references to the 'Ethics of the Fathers' and scholarly views.
- examples of content from the Mishnah and Gemara were used skilfully as part of the debate.

Features of weaker responses:

- some candidates confused Mishnah with Midrash and, as a consequence, gave a wholly inaccurate response.
- it was evident that a small minority of candidates were uncertain about what the Talmud is.
- some responses went off on a tangent thus losing the focus of the question completely, with some digressing into a comparison of the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds.

Q.4 'Judaism is not compatible with science.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- wide-ranging use of evidence from Torah, Talmud and Maimonides in order to support the views offered.
- purposeful connections made with current debates within Judaism regarding embryo research and genetic engineering in order to improve health/save life.
- views from a wide range of Jewish standpoints were identified and thoroughly addressed.

Features of weaker responses:

- the relationship between religion and science was discussed in general, but with very little or no acknowledgment of specific Jewish viewpoints.
- some candidates wrote at length about Darwin's theory of evolution and the traditional Jewish belief that God is the creator of the Universe, but without offering any significant analysis and evaluation.

Q.5. 'The Pittsburgh Platform has been effective in relation to the plight of the poor.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- the distinctive stance of Reform Judaism in relation to the plight of the poor was addressed confidently in relation to the relevant sections of both the Pittsburgh Platforms of 1885 and 1999.
- reference was also made to the particular connection between Reform Judaism and the prophets who expressed concern for the poor. The passage from Amos 5:21-24 was used effectively in many cases to underline the fact that the Pittsburgh Platform emphasised the importance of working towards a better and redeemed world.
- the concept of Tikkun Olam was used skilfully to argue both for, and against, the proposal.
- Reform Judaism's involvement in interfaith alliance was also a valid means of arguing in support of the contention.
- examples of social action from other groups within Judaism were an effective addition to the debate, as was the view of more traditional, historical Jewish attitudes and actions connected with tzedakah.

Features of weaker responses:

- a small number of candidates offered nothing more than a list of the terms of the Pittsburgh Platform.
- some candidates lost the focus of the question and digressed into a discussion about how successful the Pittsburgh Platform had been in enabling Reform Jews to assimilate successfully into secular society.

Q.6 Jewish ethical teachings are not effective as a guide for living for Jews today.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Many candidates failed to address the 'ethical teachings' part of this question.

Features of stronger responses:

- included a discussion concerning the veracity of the halakhic process.
- referred to the concepts of Pikuach Nefesh and Tikkun Olam were clearly understood in relation to this issue and were used to good effect.
- used scholarly viewpoints, such as the differences of opinion between Bleich and Tendler were offered as part of the debate.
- made reference to contemporary dilemmas in order to argue that Jewish ethical teaching is effective as a guide for living for Jews today.

Features of weaker responses:

- focused on the 'guide for living for Jews today' and embarked upon a discussion of the merits/demerits of such things as keeping the kosher food laws; dress code; the rules concerning keeping Shabbat as a day of rest.
- referred to prejudice, antisemitism and the ability/inability to assimilate into society became the focus of some answers, but without any accompanying ethical comment or debate.

Summary of key points

- candidates need to pay close attention to the specific wording of each question so that opportunities are not lost to achieve higher marks.
- some candidates require a better understanding of the trigger words that preface each question in Section A to ensure that the points made are developed rather than just listed.
- In Section B responses, the use of phrases such as 'this is a weak point' or 'this is a strong point' without supporting reason and/or evidence restricts access to the higher bands.
- accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary is a characteristic feature of stronger responses.
- the inclusion of accurate reference to scholarly views, sacred texts and/or sources of wisdom where relevant is a significant feature of stronger responses.
- an ability to reflect the diversity which is to be found within Judaism is to be encouraged, and this can be especially useful in AO2 responses.
- it is evident that candidates who have kept up to date with contemporary Jewish thought and views have been able to achieve marks within the higher bands.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2022
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 3D: A STUDY OF BUDDHISM

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q2 (attempt% 67.3%). The most popular question in Section B was Q4 (attempt% 83.0%). Q1 had the highest mean score in Section A (mean=17.5). Q4 had the highest mean score in Section B (mean=17.3).

There were no major issues with the examination paper with all questions being accessible to the vast majority of candidates. Many candidates gave a rough plan before writing their answers which was good to see and certainly helped them to focus on the question set. Candidates are to be commended for providing good introductory and contextual information, outlining key arguments with supporting examples.

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q1 (attempt% 84.3%). The most popular question in Section B was Q4 (attempt% 46.4%). Q1 was the question with the highest mean score in Section A (mean=10.9 for (a) and (b) combined), Q4 & Q5 were the questions with the highest mean score in Section B (mean=8.0 for (a) and (b) combined). Apart from Q3b, the mean score for the part (a) AO1 questions was higher than those of the part (b) AO2 questions.

The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the range of bands with the full range of marks used. There were some excellent responses which clearly showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate, extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms. It was apparent that a number of questions in Section B (Q4 & Q5) were answered better than those in Section A. Many candidates genuinely attempted to summarise their AO2 arguments within their conclusion, and this could be further developed with the use of key words.

Issues for consideration by centres:

- The quality of candidates' handwriting is a very important issue. Some were very difficult if not impossible to understand and if the examiner cannot credit a response they cannot read. It is imperative for the sake of candidates that centres evaluate the legibility of a candidates' handwriting and if there is any doubt to encourage the use of a word-processor.
- Centres should remind candidates to follow the instructions on the exam paper and to number their questions. For example, some candidates did not write question numbers at all in their booklets, and some even wrote the wrong question number next to their response, which was clearly focussed on a different question.

- It is imperative that candidates read the question carefully and make a brief plan before beginning to write their answer.
- There were some issues with the AO2 responses. The narrative in some answers was more suited to AO1 than AO2. There were several unnecessary introductions to AO2 responses and there were many examples of static 'evaluation questions – some agree, others disagree, therefore, I think. However, candidates need to focus on using evaluative verbs, 'demonstrate, prove, justify' and other analytical tools to compare and contrast scholarly viewpoints to reach a committed conclusion.
- Candidates also need to be supported and challenged to engage with an extensive range of background reading within the widest possible context (articles, books, documentaries, video clips etc.)
- There was more evidence of candidates understanding the need to support their answers with relevant evidence and examples. Candidates should be guided to select examples carefully and discuss them purposefully. Too many candidates were stating facts/knowledge without demonstrating understanding in Section or supporting their arguments with examples in Section B.
- To further develop their writing skills candidates can be encouraged to conclude their AO2 Section B responses in a more structured manner with the use of key words e.g. Finally, To sum up; As previously stated; All things considered; In light of this information/analysis, etc.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 Examine the concept of skilful means in the Lotus Sutra. (AO1 30)

This was the least popular choice of the two questions in Section B. Generally, this *question was well answered with the majority of candidates showing satisfactory to good knowledge and understanding of skillful means in the Lotus Sutra.

Features of stronger responses:

- Answers supported with good examples e.g., the parable of the burning house, the rain cloud, the phantom city.
- Clear definition and understanding of the concept of upaya and how it is portrayed in the Lotus Sutra.
- Links made across areas of study.
- Focused on the question set.

Features of weaker responses:

- Lacking detail, e.g., defining skilful means.
- Confused the Heart Sutra with the Lotus Sutra with some even claiming that it is a Theravada text.

- Lacked examples beyond the parable of the burning house such as the parable of the doctor, parable of the phantom city, etc.
- the understanding that the parables are a journey from enlightenment to awakening
- Discussed all the themes in the Lotus Sutra and therefore failed to grasp the focus of the question.

Q.2 Examine Thich Nhat Hanh's contribution to modern Buddhism. (AO1 30)

This was the most popular question of the two in Section A. There was a range of responses varying in quality.

Features of stronger responses:

- Addressed both the background and work of Thich Nhat Hanh.
- Demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of his contributions to modern Buddhism.
- Referred to the importance of simplicity in his contribution.
- Referred to his contribution in the field of mindfulness and Socially Engaged Buddhism and exploring his work in Plum Village and beyond.

Features of weaker responses:

- not focusing on the question set and largely ignoring 'modern Buddhism'.
- giving a descriptive account of the life of Thich Nat Hanh.
- Confusing Thich Nat Hanh with the Dalai Lama.
- lack of clarity concerning his achievements and contributions to modern Buddhism.

Section B

Q.3 'Heritage Buddhism is a more legitimate form of Buddhism than 'convert'.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

Although this was an accessible question some candidates found it challenging. The answers given varied in standard.

Features of stronger responses:

- Provided a definition of the terms in the statement – Heritage, Convert and legitimate, showing good understanding.
- Identified the link to the Mahayana belief in skilful means and therefore not all paths to enlightenment are the same.
- Highlighted that convert Buddhists have varied styles of engagement within Buddhism.
- Noted that some 'convert' Buddhists i.e., Zen try to replicate Japanese practices.
- Evaluated that some 'convert' Buddhists' engagement with Buddhism is focused only on some aspects like meditation. This was done particularly well, making use of examples of mindfulness in Buddhism and referring to the Buddha's own journey.
- Reference to plurality within Buddhism.

Features of weaker responses:

- Assumed that 'Converts' are only Westerners.
- No real understanding of the meaning of 'Heritage' and 'Convert'.
- No real understanding of the term 'legitimate.' This led to many candidates interpreting the word 'legitimate' as 'popular'. Thus, the evaluation focused on which form of Buddhism is the most popular, rather than the most legitimate.
- Mistakenly implied Theravada is orthodox.
- Made no reference in their conclusion to the fact that ultimately, within Buddhism there is no authority which states either form is more 'legitimate' than another.

Q.4 'Buddhism and science are incompatible.' Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

This was a very popular question and clearly accessible to the vast majority of candidates. There were some excellent responses.

Features of stronger responses:

- Discussed the contrast between Buddhism and Monotheistic religions, with the former being more rational and inclusive.
- Completely focused on the question set with relevant examples and relevant scholarly references.
- Referred to the views of the Dalai Lama and the Kalama Sutta as well as quotes from Einstein.
- Referred to the teachings on evolution and ecology, the notion of existence, adaptation and change.
- Gave some thought to the idea that Westerners could believe it is compatible due to a Western understanding of Buddhism.

Features of weaker responses:

- Appeared to have prepared to answer a different question as their responses were focussed more towards evaluating whether Buddhism is a religion or a science.
- Made little or no mention of Buddhism's diverse teachings on cosmologies and the supernatural elements.
- Failed to link the issue of attachment to scientific ideals about the universe and the notion of Buddhist attachment.
- Made little reference to scholarly viewpoints.

**Q.5 'Mindfulness is of little use as an antidote to suffering.
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

The standard of the responses to this question were inconsistent.

Features of stronger responses:

- Made clear links to Buddhist teaching on suffering such as the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path and the elimination of the Three Poisons.
- Provided accurate distinctions between mindfulness within Buddhism and its practice within secular/ modern communities.
- Referred to the development and use of mindfulness in different areas - CBT, Anxiety, Education, Rehabilitation; Many candidates managed to see the relevance of mindfulness as an antidote to suffering within a worldwide context (wellbeing, cognitive base therapies, 'uses' by Google, Facebook, etc.).
- Analysed and evaluated how the practice defined by Kabat Zinn and others is effective.
- Referred to capitalist/commercialisation of the practice in the West, evaluating that it contributes to suffering rather than reducing it.

Features of weaker responses:

- An inability to make the link between the Buddhist understanding of suffering and mindfulness.
- Made no reference to Jon Kabat Zinn's influence on its use.
- Featured lengthy personal opinions without any specific evidence to support their views.
- Missed the opportunity to conclude that while it provides users with coping strategies it doesn't really function as an antidote.

**Q.6 'Vajrayana Buddhism bears little resemblance to other forms of Buddhism'
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

The least popular of the Section B questions. Responses to this question were once again inconsistent.

Features of stronger responses:

- Acknowledged that all schools within Mahayana employ the use of esoteric/ tantric paths to enlightenment.
- Explored practices of visualisations, rituals and the practice of mudra, mantra and mandala and how these are different/similar to other forms of Buddhism.
- Explored links between Bon and Tibetan Buddhism.
- Referred to the idea that Japanese Buddhism was influenced by Shinto and Western is influenced by secularism and atheism.

Features of weaker responses:

- Lacked the knowledge and understanding of Vajrayana Buddhism required to make an AO2 argument.
- Ignored the key word 'resemblance'.
- Tended in their arguments and counter arguments to fall into a Vajrayana vs other forms of Buddhism evaluation, i.e. which one is the best/most popular form of Buddhism.
- Made no links made to Tibetan Buddhism

Summary of key points

- Handwriting was very unclear and difficult to decipher in a lot of cases. This should be raised and investigated by student support teams in centres well ahead of examinations and provision made for those who need help.
- Candidates need to take time to read the questions carefully and plan their answers to ensure they are answering the question set.
- Candidates should not be satisfied with the 'firstly, secondly and finally' approach to AO1 questions, but to take the opportunity to demonstrate their engagement with the specification and highlight their knowledge and understanding.
- Candidates need to avoid giving descriptive responses in AO2 questions and should use evaluative vocabulary.
- Examples, scholarly views and quotations should be used where appropriate to underpin lines of argument and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the question.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2022
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 3E: A STUDY OF HINDUISM

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q2 (attempt% 59.7%). The most popular question in Section B was Q5 (attempt% 56.6%). Q2 had the highest mean score in Section A (mean=15.1). Q3 had the highest mean score in Section B (mean=17.6). Based on the question 'mean' candidates scored higher in Section B (AO2) than in Section A (AO1).

There were no major issues with the examination paper, and it was evident from the overall standard of the responses that the questions were accessible to the majority of candidates. Excellent use was made of a broad range of scholarly views. Many candidates are learning a large number of quotations, and most are using them appropriately, particularly in their AO2 answers.

Issues for consideration by centres:

- The quality of candidates' handwriting is a very important issue. Some were very difficult if not impossible to understand and if the examiner cannot credit a response they cannot read. It is imperative for the sake of candidates that centres evaluate the legibility of a candidates' handwriting and if there is any doubt to encourage the use of a word-processor.
- A number of candidates for some reason did not number the questions they were answering. In some cases, this made it difficult to recognise which question they were answering and also where one answer ended and another began. As the marking is completed online it is vital that students identify their question at the beginning of the answer and in the box provided.
- Candidates need to take greater care when choosing which questions, they answer to ensure they fully understand the demands of the question set - some candidates misread them and therefore failed to address the actual question and did not attain the higher bands.
- Some candidates seem to think that it is the length of the answer that matters. Responses were so long in part (b) that the candidate had long lost their train of thought and reasoning. It is quality of content that determines the band awarded.
- It is a concern that some AO2 answers are becoming too formulaic. Candidates are frequently summarising each paragraph by saying whether the argument is a strong or a weak one, without actually adding anything of substance to the answer.
- Unfortunately, we continue to see essays with no paragraphing which is a major concern when grammar is built into the Band descriptors.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 Explain the importance of Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna mission in the development of Hinduism. [AO1 30]

Some excellent responses were given to this question with candidates clearly having been well prepared on this part of the specification.

Features of stronger responses:

- Knowledge of Vivekananda's life and beliefs prior to meeting Ramakrishna were outlined, as well as his continuation of Ramakrishna's work.
- Higher band responses wrote concisely and were able to illustrate how his work and that of the Ramakrishna Mission had helped to develop Hinduism on the world stage.
- Both parts of the question were addressed in a balanced way.
- Referred to the work of the Ramakrishna mission promoting the welfare of humanity and the harmony of all religions.

Weaker responses:

- Lacked knowledge and understanding of the work of Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Mission.
- Placed far too much focus on Ramakrishna, with Vivekananda added almost as an afterthought.
- Made very little reference to the work of the Ramakrishna Mission.

Q.2 Examine Hindu views on IVF. [AO1 30]

This was the more popular of the Section A questions and many candidates wrote detailed answers covering a wide range of issues relating to IVF.

Features of stronger responses:

- Effective references made to Cromwell Crawford and Swasti Bhattacharaya's work as well as scriptural references which appear to allow the use of IVF.
- Good knowledge and understanding of the processes involved in IVF
- Detailed discussions about the misuse or waste of embryos and the issue of ahimsa and whether life begins at conception or not.
- Reference to the importance of family life in Hinduism and the dharma of the Grihastha ashrama.

Features of weaker responses:

- Lacked specific key terms related to the issue such as ahimsa or karmic debt and no reference to scripture or scholarly views.
- Tended to simply write about the importance of having children and then to digress into a discussion on the issues of infanticide and foeticide.
- Simply wrote about abortion with no mention of IVF.

Section B

Q.3 'Hinduism is clearly an inclusivist tradition.' Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The majority of candidates who answered this question included a wide range of arguments. Candidates were also able to draw from a number of areas of the AS/A level specification and therefore showing synopticity.

Features of stronger responses:

- Defined the meaning of the term 'inclusivist' and were then able to demonstrate it effectively covering a number of areas emphasising the diverse nature of Hinduism.
- Some referred back to the inclusivist nature of the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda as well as Gandhi and Bhave.
- Referred to the concept of 'ishdateva'.
- Referred to interfaith dialogue.
- Made good use of examples, aspects of Hinduism that show a lack of inclusivity were included, ranging from the treatment of women to the Dalits, as well as the nationalist Hindutva movements.

Features of weaker responses:

- Tended to concentrate on the lack of inclusivity and only discussed the poor treatment of women which only partially addressed the question set
- No real understanding of the concepts of pluralism and diversity
- Lacked specific examples to support the arguments presented.

Q.4. 'Gandhi's successes far outweigh his failures.' Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

This was a very popular choice of question. Candidates were clearly familiar with Gandhi's life story and work, but some struggled to apply this knowledge to the question set. Indeed, many answers were written in the style of an AO1 answer without any real evaluation of the statement.

Features of stronger responses:

- Addressed the issue of whether his successes outweighed his failures and were able to confidently demonstrate their views using a wide range of evidence in support.
- Referred to his successes in reinterpreting Hindu teaching, Hindu values such as ahimsa, the ashramas and his development of satyagraha
- Referred to his attempt and perceived failure to change attitudes towards the Dalits and the caste system.
- Raised the issue of whether there is a difference in the Indian and Western perspective concerning the achievements and failures of Gandhi

Features of weaker responses:

- Made many inaccurate statements such as Gandhi abolished the varna system and that he was a follower of ISKCON.
- Quotes from Ramakrishna were attributed to Gandhi.
- Gandhi's failure to secure better treatment of women was on several occasions used to explore (in far too much detail) the issues affecting women today with reference to infanticide and the Delhi rape case.
- Answers that simply gave a life story without any reference to the question set, focussing on his work in South Africa and then his main protests.
- Lacked understanding that there can be partial success.

Q.5 'Prabhupada was not important in the development and growth of ISKCON.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

This was a popular choice of question but disappointingly was often poorly answered. There was a lot of confusion in the weaker answers. There were a number of references to Prabhupada and Situation Ethics which appeared to be a forced use of synoptic links.

Features of stronger responses:

- Included a wide range of arguments on the work of Prabhupada in establishing ISKCON and the later development of the movement following his death.
- References to the movement started by Chaitanya that influenced Prabhupada.
- Arguments showing the effectiveness of George Harrison and Prabhupada's use of the English language in his publications were also highlighted.
- Demonstrated good knowledge of ISKCON in Wales and its work in promoting the movement today.
- Referred to Prabhupada's work and influence in America and the initiation of thousands of followers.
- Referred to his books on the wisdom of the Vedas in modern English.

Features of weaker responses:

- Seemed to think that Prabhupada and A. C. Bhaktivedanta were two different people, consequently writing answers that were contradictory when they stated that it was A. C. Bhaktivedanta who was important and not Prabhupada.
- Prabhupada was sometimes confused with both Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave.
- Made limited arguments in support of the statement.

Q6. 'Assimilation into a secular society is impossible for Hindus in Britain.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

This was the least popular of the Section B questions, possibly because a number of candidates didn't appear to understand the meaning of the term assimilation. Many wrote about the challenges of being a Hindu in Britain, rather than focussing on the problems of assimilation. Several candidates also chose to ignore the word 'secular.'

Features of stronger responses:

- Discussed the meaning of assimilation and were able to confidently show how Hindus have settled well into society, particularly later generations, with references being made to success in education and business.
- Discussed the difference between assimilation and integration
- Made effective use of the report by The Runnymede Trust in 2006.
- Examined the cultural issues affecting assimilation.
- Provided evidence of research into the more recent Equality law in the UK.
- Referred to the issue of identity.
- Referred to the rise in fundamentalism.

Features of weaker responses:

- Wrote about all the problems Hindus have faced settling in Britain, such as a lack of open-air crematoria, racism, and being confused with Muslims.
- Were unable to identify areas where assimilation has taken place and so the essays tended to be rather negative.
- Included too much detail on how immigration had taken place from India and Africa during the twentieth century, again, without really addressing the question.
- Generally misunderstood the term 'assimilation'.

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to read the questions carefully to ensure they fully understand the demands of the questions set.
- Handwriting was very unclear and difficult to decipher in a lot of cases. This should be raised and investigated by student support teams in centres well ahead of examinations and provision made for those who need help.
- Examples, scholarly views and quotations should be used where appropriate to underpin lines of argument and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the question.
- Candidates need to avoid giving descriptive responses in AO2 questions and should use evaluative vocabulary.
- The importance of paragraphing and good grammar in candidates' responses needs to be highlighted.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2022

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 3F: A STUDY OF SIKHISM

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q1 (attempt% 75.5%). The most popular question in Section B was Q4 (attempt % 89.8%). Q1 had the highest mean score in Section A (mean=15.1). Q4 had the highest mean score in Section B (mean=18.7). Based on the question 'mean' candidates scored higher in Section B (AO2) than in Section A (AO1), apart from in Q6.

There were no major issues with the examination paper, and it was evident from the overall standard of the responses that the questions were accessible to the majority of candidates.

Excellent use was made of a broad range of scholarly views. Many candidates are learning a large number of quotations, and most are using them appropriately, particularly in their AO2 answers.

Issues for consideration by centres:

- The quality of candidates' handwriting is a very important issue. Some were very difficult if not impossible to understand and if the examiner cannot credit a response they cannot read. It is imperative for the sake of candidates that centres evaluate the legibility of a candidates' handwriting and if there is any doubt to encourage the use of a word-processor.
- A number of candidates for some reason did not number the questions they were answering. In some cases, this made it difficult to recognise which question they were answering and also where one answer ended and another began. As the marking is completed online it is vital that students identify their question at the beginning of the answer and in the box provided.
- Candidates need to take greater care when choosing which questions, they answer to ensure they fully understand the demands of the question set - some candidates misread them and therefore failed to address the actual question and did not attain the higher bands.
- Some candidates seem to think that it is the length of the answer that matters. Responses were so long in part (b) that the candidate had long lost their train of thought and reasoning. It is quality of content that determines the band awarded.

- It is a concern that some AO2 answers are becoming too formulaic. Candidates are frequently summarising each paragraph by saying whether the argument is a strong or a weak one, without actually adding anything of substance to the answer.
- Candidates should be guided to select examples carefully and discuss them purposefully. Too many candidates were stating facts/knowledge without developing and supporting their points or arguments with examples. This is true of both Section A (AO1) and Section B (AO2) questions.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 Examine how Guru Arjan developed Sikhism.

[AO1 30]

There were some excellent responses to this question, with candidates clearly being very familiar with the life and achievements of Guru Arjan. This was the most popular of the Section A questions.

Features of stronger responses:

- Thorough and accurate knowledge of Guru Arjan's achievements and how they influenced the development of Sikhism
- Referred to the completion of the Harmandir, compilation of the Adi Granth, increasing of the Panth, authorship of the Sukhamni and his martyrdom.
- Referred to scholarly opinion and views.

Features of weaker responses:

- Demonstrated a lack of knowledge and understanding of the contributions of Guru Arjan.
- Simply described the life story of Guru Arjan, with very little reference to his significance in the development of Sikhism.

Q.2 Examine Sikh beliefs about the nature of God.

[AO1 30]

This was not a popular question and overall was not well answered.

Features of stronger responses:

- Effectively discussed a range of Sikh beliefs about God.
- Displayed thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding.
- Referred to scholarly views and opinions.
- Focused on specific Sikh beliefs about God such as 'Ik Onkar', Sat Nam and Akal Purakh.
- Referred in detail to the Mul Mantra.

Features of weaker responses:

- Lacked specific key terms related to the issue such as 'Ik Onkar' and no reference to scripture or scholarly views.
- Dealt with beliefs in a superficial and general way and not really focusing on the core Sikh beliefs about the nature of God.
- Lost focus on the question set and began discussing other aspects rather than the nature of God e.g., the Guru Granth Sahib.

Section B

Q.3 'Assimilation into a secular society is impossible for Sikhs in Britain.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The majority of candidates who answered this question included a wide range of arguments which were generally well supported with evidence and examples

Features of stronger responses:

- Defined the meaning of the term 'assimilation' and some were able to differentiate between assimilation and integration.
- Referred to examples of how Sikhs have successfully assimilated into British society.
- Referred to the nature of Sikhism allowing it to adapt to the challenges presented by British society
- Referred to the challenges of racism, prejudice and discrimination
- Raised the issue of Sikhism as a non-missionary religion making assimilation easier.

Features of weaker responses:

- Generally lacked understanding of the term 'assimilation.'
- Were unable to identify areas where assimilation has taken place and so their responses tended to be rather negative.
- Included too much detail on how immigration had taken place during the twentieth century without really linking it to the demands of the question set.
- Lacked specific examples to support the arguments presented.

Q.4 'Sikhism supports feminism.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

This was a very popular choice of question. However, the responses varied in standard.

Features of stronger responses:

- Clearly defined the term 'feminism.'
- Referred to feminism as a modern concept and therefore the difficulty in relating it to Sikhism.
- Referred to the teachings and example of the Gurus on equality and the treatment of women and a discussion on whether it equates to feminism or not.

- Made effective use of quotations from the Guru Granth Sahib and scholarly views and opinions
- Made good counterarguments and presented with evidence and examples referring to the status of women within Sikhism today

Features of weaker responses:

- No real understanding of feminism as a concept.
- Superficial arguments not supported by specific evidence and examples.
- Lacked scholarly views and opinions.
- Lost focus on feminism and discussed equality in general.
- Described the teaching of some of the Gurus on equality without any attempt to form an argument and without any link to the question set.

Q.5 'The Rahit Maryada is the most effective expression of Sikh identity.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

Although this was a popular choice of question a number of the responses were disappointing. The main reason was the lack of knowledge amongst candidates of the content of the Rahit Maryada.

Features of stronger responses:

- Made arguments grounded in a thorough understanding of the content of the Rahit Maryada .
- Produced well-balanced responses.
- Showed awareness of the difference in importance of the Rahit Maryada to Khalsa and non-Khalsa Sikhs.
- Referred to scholarly opinion and views.
- Referred to other aspects being better expressions of Sikh identity e.g., Sikh beliefs.
- Made specific reference to the rules in the Rahit Maryada.

Features of weaker responses:

- Lacked the understanding of the significance and content of the Rahit Maryada. This meant that there was a lack of specific support for the arguments presented.
- Incorrectly attributed some beliefs and practices to the Rahit Maryada e.g. the foundation of the langar.
- Limited arguments presented in relation to the statement in the question set
- Made some valid arguments but they were not developed.

Q6. 'Sikh attitudes towards the poor and oppressed are not practical in today's world.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

Several candidates attempted this question and the responses varied in standard. Some candidates chose to ignore the word 'practical' and therefore their evaluation focused more on relevance rather than practicality which is a slightly different question.

Another issue was that some candidates chose to discuss the equality of women and those oppressed because of their gender. It is a valid consideration, but unfortunately some candidates either focused entirely on this issue and ignored 'the poor' or dealt entirely with the teaching on equality and whether it was relevant today or not. No reference was made to its practicality.

Features of stronger responses:

- Focused on the question set and presented arguments which dealt with the practicality of Sikh views towards the poor and oppressed.
- Made effective use of quotations and scholarly views and opinions.
- Referred to the importance of actions in Sikhism e.g., the langar.
- Referred to Dasvandh.
- Reference to Sikh commitment to social justice and the practical implications and difficulties e.g., the distribution of wealth.
- Made effective counter arguments that Sikh attitudes towards the poor and oppressed are impractical in a secular world

Features of weaker responses:

- Focused on a slightly different question – relevance rather than practicality
- Demonstrated superficial understanding of Sikh attitudes, leading to arguments presented with very little support in terms of evidence and examples.
- Lacked scholarly views and opinion and quotations from Sikh scripture.

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to read the questions carefully to ensure they fully understand the demands of the questions set.
- Provision for poor and illegible handwriting is an issue that needs to be addressed by centres before candidates sit an examination.
- Examples, scholarly views and quotations should be used where appropriate to underpin lines of argument and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the question.
- Students need to avoid giving descriptive responses in Section B AO2 questions and should use evaluative vocabulary.
- The importance of paragraphing and good grammar in candidates' responses needs to be highlighted.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2022
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 4: A STUDY OF RELIGION AND ETHICS

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q1 (attempt% 80.4%). The most popular question in Section B was Q3 (attempt% 62.8%). Q1 had the highest mean score in Section A (mean=15.0). Q3 had the highest mean score in Section B (mean=17.1). Based on the question 'mean' candidates generally scored higher in Section B (AO2) than in Section A (AO1).

Overall candidates were able to access the questions on the paper and responses were seen across the full range of assessment bands. It is clear that centres are making use of a wide range of resources with good responses drawing on the work of scholars in a highly effective way. It is encouraging to see candidates making links across the specification and drawing on material studied at AS, however this must not be used at the expense of answering the questions set.

Handwriting is an issue that needs addressing by centres. Some candidates' handwriting was very difficult if not impossible to read and if an examiner and the Principal Examiner cannot read what has been written then it will not be credited. It would therefore be beneficial for centres to assess candidates' handwriting to see whether they should be typing their answers in examinations.

There was also an increase in responses which did not address the specific demands of AO1 and AO2 questions respectively, with some writing evaluative answers to Section A questions and a significant number providing knowledge and understanding only in Section B with very few points of argument raised and discussed.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 Examine the implications of predestination for God's omnipotence and omnibenevolence. [AO1 30]

Many candidates were well prepared for the demands of this question, although some treated it as an evaluation answer rather than as an AO1 response. Where this occurred, candidates were credited for relevant explanations.

Features of stronger responses:

- Clearly understood the Implications for omnipotence, with accurate reference to both Augustine and Calvin's views about predestination being required to maintain the sovereignty of God.
- Demonstrated a sound understanding and explanation of how predestination could both allow for and question God's benevolence, with some very good responses showing an understanding of Augustine's conception of God as wholly good
- Made effective use of biblical quotations to demonstrate both belief in predestination and the implications for God's nature, for example, Ephesians 2:8; 1 Timothy 2:3-4 and John 15:16.

Features of weaker responses:

- Were able to define omnipotence and omnibenevolence but had very little grasp of predestination **or** explained concepts of predestination with no mention of the implications for God's nature.
- Wrote about the problem of evil without linking this in any way to the question.
- Answered the question from a hard determinist perspective and did not understand predestination as a religious concept.
- Did not really understand how predestination could be compatible with omnipotence or omnibenevolence.

Q.2 Explain the implications of libertarianism for moral responsibility. [AO1 30]

Fewer candidates chose to answer this question but those who did seemed to find it accessible, although a significant number did not recognise that the question required knowledge of concepts of libertarianism rather than religious concepts of free will.

Features of stronger responses:

- Generally had a strong grasp of the libertarian perspective and could link this with moral responsibility and the value of normative ethics.
- Effectively used the views of a variety of libertarian thinkers to illustrate the implications for moral responsibility. These were drawn from philosophical, scientific and psychological approaches to libertarianism. It was pleasing to see an increase in the range of scholars used here with some reference to Murphy and Kane.
- Made clear links to the legal system in the UK to illustrate the expectation that humans are capable of moral responsibility. These links were often illustrated with contemporary examples.

Features of weaker responses:

- Gave superficial or confused accounts of the views of libertarian thinkers such as Sartre or Rogers without linking these to moral responsibility.
- Demonstrated a very weak understanding of the conclusion that could be drawn from the work of Sirigu.
- Explained religious views about free will rather than focusing on libertarianism.
- Did not fully understand the concept of 'moral responsibility' and so struggled to address this aspect

Section B

Q.3 'Using Finnis' Natural Law is a very effective way to make moral decisions.' **Evaluate this view.** [AO2 30]

Many responses demonstrated a sound understanding of Finnis' Natural Law which underpinned evaluative comments. It is pleasing to see that knowledge and understanding of this area of the specification is much improved and some excellent answers were seen.

Features of stronger responses:

- Used the application issues of capital punishment or immigration to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the theory.
- Exemplified the lack of clarity in the basic goods and requirements of practical reason that could lead to difficulties in application.
- Discussed effectively the differences between Finnis' and Aquinas' versions of Natural Law were to evaluate Finnis' version.
- Evaluated the possibility of using this theory effectively in a secular society, focusing on the basic good of religion, but also on Finnis' application to the issue of same sex marriage, recognising the influence of Roman Catholic moral thinking.

Features of weaker responses:

- Confused Finnis' Natural Law with Aquinas' version.
- Were confused about the status of the basic goods and requirements of practical reason and did not understand how these related to moral decision making.
- Simply applied the theory to immigration, capital punishment or both and did not answer the question. Candidates struggled to adapt pre-prepared AO1 responses to the demands of the AO2 question.
- Included very little material about Finnis' Natural Law and instead chose to evaluate a different ethical theory instead.

Q.4 'Proportionalism promotes immorality.' **Evaluate this view.** [AO2 30]

Overall, there was an improved understanding of proportionalism among many candidates and candidates were able to respond with some accuracy to this question.

Features of stronger responses:

- Had a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of proportionalism, including the view that the theory could be seen as offering both clarity and flexibility and the alternative view that it removes the clarity of Natural Law.
- Demonstrated clear knowledge of Aquinas' use of proportionality and links to Natural Law to argue against the statement.
Considered the difference between 'permitting' and 'promoting' immorality and used this distinction to give a very purposeful analysis of the issues raised.
- Used examples, often drawn from medical ethics, very effectively to illustrate the points raised.

Features of weaker responses:

- Gave examples which indicated a lack of understanding of the Proportionalist debate including some inaccurate claims about capital punishment and genocide.
- Did not understand some of the technical language relating to Proportionalism and became very confused about different types of goods and evils.
- Did not understand that the theory developed from Aquinas' Natural Law or saw proportionalism as identical to the Principle of Double Effect (which was widely misunderstood or badly explained in these cases.)

Q.5 'The concept of hard determinism clearly illustrates that humanity has no free will.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Most candidates were able to identify concepts of hard determinism, but some responded to this as an AO1 answer and did not evaluate the statement.

Features of stronger responses:

- Often started with a brief, but accurate definition of hard determinism and an identification of the scholars associated with different approaches to determinism.
- Some excellent responses used religious views of free will to create strong counterarguments. Libertarian views were also used effectively.
- Good responses often showed awareness of soft determinism and compatibilist views and were able to use these approaches to interrogate the concept of free will.
- The views of scholars associated with hard determinism were used effectively in support of the view, with accurate understanding of the various forms of hard determinism underpinning sound arguments.

Features of weaker responses:

- Weaker responses often confused hard determinism with religious views of predestination
- Long explanations of hard determinist views with very little analysis or evaluation of the issues relating to free will were fairly common and, where analysis was present, it was often one sided.
- Some were not able to relate Pavlov's experiments with dogs to the later experiments relating human behaviour and consequently could not draw any real evaluative points from this.
- Understanding of scientific determinism and contrasting views about free will were sometimes very confused.

Q.6 'Religious beliefs about free will are convincing.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Fewer candidates appeared to answer this question, and a number of answers were awarded marks towards the lower end of the mark scheme, however some good responses were seen. As with other questions drawn from this theme, candidates sometimes struggled to focus on religious beliefs and focused the bulk of their answer on more secular approaches.

Features of stronger responses:

- Excellent reference to scriptural evidence on both sides of the debate, leading to clear evaluation of the value of citing scripture to support one side over another.
- Good understanding of the historical context of this debate with reference to the Synod of Dort and the influence of Arminius' views on the development of different denominations.
- Some good arguments used the implications of belief in free will for the nature of God as a starting point to evaluate the statement.

Features of weaker responses:

- Tended to be very general with little reference to specific religious beliefs or teachings.
- Mixed up different scholars and could not identify which scholars presented views about free will.
- Wrote mainly about libertarian views and included very little, if anything, about religious beliefs.
- Used the names of many scholars with no real grasp of what any of them argued.

Summary of key points

- Candidates should be advised to avoid very lengthy knowledge-based introductions in Section B and encouraged to engage with the issues after a **brief** paragraph of introductory material if they wish to set the arguments in context.
- In Themes 3 and 4 there is a clear difference between the sections which deal with religious beliefs about predestination and free will, and the sections which cover concepts of determinism and libertarianism. This distinction should be emphasised with candidates so that they are able to select appropriate material to answer the questions set.
- While making synoptic links is to be encouraged where relevant, responses should focus on the question set and the bulk of an answer should be devoted to the topic of the question and not to alternative theories or approaches.
- Candidates should aim to move beyond simple comparisons or application of the theories in AO2 responses and should identify and engage with the issues raised by the question.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2022
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 5: A STUDY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

General Comments

The most popular question in Section A was Q2 (attempt% 51.4%). The most popular question in Section B was Q6 (attempt% 77.8%). Q1 had the highest mean score in Section A (mean=15.0). Q5 had the highest mean score in Section B (mean=17.7). Based on the question 'mean' candidates generally scored higher in Section B (AO2) than in Section A (AO1).

In general, there is evidence of continuity and progression from this area at AS. The use of AS material to enhance understanding and answers at A level was a delight to read. Natural synoptic links are always a good sign of excellent use of the Specification. There is evidence of some excellent teaching and considerable use is being made of the revision materials available.

However, candidates should remember that they are revision materials only and the brevity of some of the materials available should not translate to brevity in responses. Most recognised the difference between the demands of AO1 and AO2, yet at AO2 there is still unnecessary stating of AO1 material. This resulted in some candidates running out of time, on occasion where it was very obvious that they knew far more than they had given themselves the time to write about.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 Examine inherent problems of religious language. [AO1 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- Followed the helpful pointers given in the Specification which gave candidates a structure for an answer. They did this effectively as a means to a sound scaffolding as opposed to being straight-jacketed.
- Included reference to the Logical Positivists as one area of problems for religious language but did not focus solely on this.
- Gave detailed exemplification of the problems by suggesting a complexity of issues involved with the use of certain words, phrases and longer discourse in religious language.

Features of weaker responses:

- Did not use the pointers in the Specification at all, resulting in a brief ramble through some problems of religious language which almost merged in their explanation.
- Failed to take advantage of the work studied on Logical Positivism in order to present its challenge to religious language.
- May have used some words or phrases that may be problematic, but with no depth of explanation as to why the use of such words may present a problem. This resulted in a 'staccato' series of short sentences.
- Contained nothing specific regarding religious language but rather, suggested that religion 'is not real' as we cannot empirically prove God.

Q.2 Examine challenges to Jung's views on religion.**[AO1 30]****Features of stronger responses:**

- Used the Specification to provide 'pegs' on which to hang the information regarding challenges. This also served as an aide memoire.
- Realised that there is far more to write about than the afore-mentioned points and were able to perceptively draw out inadequacies seen in Jung's views on religion.
- Referred to the concepts used in Jung's work which lack empirical evidence. If these concepts fail to persuade us as being objective entities, then so may his views which rest on them.
- May refer to a challenge as being the fact that he was too positive in his approach to religion. This invariably often led to mention of Freud, but stronger responses continued to remember what the question was.

Features of weaker responses:

- Described Jung's views on religion only, making no mention of 'challenges.'
- Consequently, spent little or no time on challenges to his views almost as if thus part of the Specification had been given little attention.
- Made this into a question either about Freud's views on religion or a question which compared the views of the two men.
- Did not have the ability to use revised material on Jung's views on religion in order to suggest what parts of it may be challenged.

Section B

Q.3 'Religious communities are entirely dependent on religious experience.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- Made good use of material with examples which showed a strong point particularly regarding religious communities being dependent on religious experiences.
- Recognised that religious communities may depend on a religious experience for its very existence.
- Continued with the idea that cohesion within a religious community today can be strengthened with reference to a religious experience from the past or indeed continued religious experiences.
- Discussed the fact that the many individuals who comprise a religious community have never had a religious experience and so communities are not dependent on religious experiences.
- Questioned the historicity of certain claimed religious experience and the dependence (or not) of the community on these experiences was in direct correlation to their historicity.
- Used appropriate exemplification.

Features of weaker responses:

- Tended to make this into a question solely about whether religious experiences are authentic.
- Failed to recognise this as a valid question that they ought to have considered and struggled to suggest any sort of link between religious communities or religious experiences.
- Did not refer to the useful pointers contained within the Specification thus having no point of reference to their answers.
- Simply regurgitated some remembered AS material on religious experience without relating it to the question.
- Gave no exemplification.
- Responded to it as if it were an AO1 essay on 'miracles.'

Q.4 'Swinburne's responses to Hume's arguments about miracles are valid.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- Had a working knowledge of the views of both men and applied this knowledge in such a way as to analyse Swinburne's responses to Hume as opposed to just relating their views separately.
- Realised that this is not simply a question which needs a basic overview of their views but one that benefits from looking at source material such as Swinburne's 'On the possibility of miracles.'
- Were able to evaluate Swinburne's responses to Hume's views on miracles in a particular fashion, dividing his views into specific arguments.
- Used terminology and/or quotations pertinent to the views of both men.

Features of weaker responses:

- Answered this as if it were an AO1 question asking for the views of both men on miracles. This meant that it never appeared that the candidate was evaluating Swinburne's responses to Hume's views.
- Rarely, if ever, put Swinburne's responses side by side with the views of Hume that he was addressing. Consequently, no evaluation took place.
- Relied solely on revision summaries and had a superficial working knowledge of their views. This meant that no in-depth analysis could take place.

Q.5 'Religious responses have overcome the challenges of New Atheism.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- Knew specific challenges from named New Atheists and analysed these.
- Were able to cite quotes from New Atheists which drew out the true nature of their challenge.
- Used material that is pertinent to New Atheists, rather than general atheistic arguments against the existence of God.
- Matched up the specific religious responses to the challenge of the New Atheist and were able to name and use the work of scholars.
- Did not simply describe the views of New Atheists and/or religious responses. Rather the two sets of views were evaluated for their relative adequacies.

Features of weaker responses:

- Produced AO1 material throughout with little or no analysis or evaluation.
- Gave general atheistic arguments against the existence of God and also general religious responses to atheism.
- Had no awareness of scholarly debate.
- Lacked structure. For example, a New Atheist challenge might be presented to be followed by a religious response to a different challenge. This made for an essay which was lacking in coherence.

**Q.6 'Freud is wrong in stating that religion is a neurosis.'
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- Dealt with this question as set.
- Stated the particular views of Freud but did this in a brief fashion simply as a way into an evaluation of the adequacy of this view.
- Used the pointers in the Specification regarding AO1 material on 'challenges' to Freud's view in order to have ready material for a number of lines of argument in this question.
- Concentrated most of their time on 'neurosis' rather than wider views on religion.
- Realised the many positive benefits of religion and validly referred to the views of Jung without losing sight of the question.

Features of weaker responses:

- Either made this entirely into a question about Freud's views on religion or spent time unnecessarily stating what his views on religion were.
- Ignored the positive aspects of religion therefore missing many valid lines of thought. This skewed their response.
- Failed completely to use any of the 'challenges' found in the AO1 material. This resulted in candidates seemingly having to 'find' all of their own ideas as they were writing. Whilst individual innovation is a valuable skill, candidates need to know what is in the Specification to help them.
- Had a brief and basic understanding of most of the component parts of Freud's views and therefore their ability to evaluate these views was compromised.
- Attempted to make it into a question solely about the contrary views of Jung.

Summary of key points

- Look at source material where possible. Revision summaries are just that and candidates need to prepare in such a way that material can be tailored to questions. Depth is required for A Level study.
- Carefully distinguish between the skills required for Sections A and B and do not waste time purely stating AO1 material in Section B.
- It is important to cover all areas of the Specification, particularly noting the AO2 issues. Many candidates do seem to be unprepared for some of these issues.
- Remember that AO2 questions can also be asked on issues arising from AO1 material.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2022
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 6: TEXTUAL STUDIES (NEW TESTAMENT)

General Comments

Section A:

The most popular question in Section A was Q1 (attempt % 91.5%). The most popular question in Section B was Q3 (attempt % 89.4%). Q1 was the question with the highest mean score in Section A (mean=17.8). Q6 was the question with the highest mean score in Section B (mean=18.4).

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

Candidates are reminded of the need to use capital letters for some religious terms e.g., God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Easter, Christmas, Greek and to spell other terms correctly, e.g., resurrection, and Psalms.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 Examine the authorship of 1 Peter. [AO1 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- Good and accurate use of the views of Grudem and Horrell, as scholars who examining this question.
- Made wide use of other associated arguments as to whether Peter was or not the author, or part author, in writing or in verbal presentation of 1 Peter.

Features of weaker responses:

- Presented this as an AO2 response rather than an AO1 response.
- Were confused about Peter's witnessing Christ's suffering. Certainly, around the arrest and trial period, the servant girl suggesting three times Peter was with Jesus and his denials. He was not, as suggested, at the cross (that was John).

Peter and John together were first to witness the empty tomb and hence resurrection of Jesus from those sufferings.

- Often described Peter as 'uneducated', but without any supporting evidence as to how that assertion made or assumption presented. It would be a rare Jew who could not read so as to take his place in synagogue.
- Veered away from addressing the question of authorship to content and assessment of that in today's world e.g., slavery, while others presented the letter as if it was a gospel recounting Jesus' life and ministry.

Q.2 Examine the set text of Revelation 21.

[AO1 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- This question was chosen by far fewer candidates for their Section A answer and was generally a clear second choice rather than preferred question. That responses were provided made them stronger than those candidates who answered nothing for Section A.
- Featured aspects of Revelation 21.

Features of weaker responses:

- Provided anything and everything to do with the Book of Revelation, which sometimes answered an aspect of the question set and therefore was credited.

Section B

Q.3 'The parables of Jesus are more concerned with belief and hope than moral behaviour'.

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- Focused on the set parables and entered into discussion about each one and whether it was concerned with belief, hope or moral behaviour, and whether these aspects were dependent on each other.
- Introduced additional parables e.g., the Good Samaritan and Sheep and Goats to emphasise clear moral behaviour parables.
- Did not simply retell the parables. Focused on the skills of analysis and evaluation.

Features of weaker responses:

- Used the Parable of Prodigal Son exclusively to focus on forgiveness, rarely anything on its precursor of repentance itself leading to hope of forgiveness.
- Retold parables or confused the parables with miracles e.g., feeding of 5,000 or healing miracles.
- Attempted to answer a question on Crossan's classification of parables and as a result rarely used their material to answer the question set.

- Q.4** 'All the characteristics of Jesus' miracles can be found in the healing of the centurion's servant.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- Were able to identify the characteristics generally associated with Jesus' miracles.
- Used these characteristics in an evaluative way to the healing of the centurion's servant, rather than descriptively.
- Introduced other miracles to exemplify characteristics missing in the healing of the centurion's servant story or to support those that these were general characteristics.

Features of weaker responses:

- Re-wrote the actual account of the healing of the Centurion's servant
- Did not have a clear grasp of the text and were unable to therefore address the question with any real degree of success.

- Q.5** 'The main theme of 1 Peter is suffering'.
Evaluate this view [AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- Focussed on the question set and therefore suffering being core in determining whether it is the main theme of 1 Peter compared to e.g., submission of wives, of slaves, of all to state, of faithful Christian living, with analysis and evaluation ongoing and throughout the answer.
- Questioned whether it was impossible for present day readers divorced from the situation to understand the main theme or the nuances that may be at play.
- Questioned whether the 'submission' theme within is seen as a means to avoid suffering.

Features of weaker responses:

- Were essentially wanting to answer a question about submission rather than suffering. This could be useful material, but not when only focused on submission and the troublesome issues that causes contemporary readers, unless compared to readers of the time which aided some responses.

Q.6 'The Book of Revelation is best understood as a revenge fantasy.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Features of stronger responses:

- Clearly enjoyed this question and took the theme of revenge fantasy and explored ways this could be considered, including a subversive critique of socio, economic, political structures that were opposing the Christian faith.
- Referred to alternative themes of warning and encouragement, which were weaved into these considerations.
- Echoes of the Old Testament were identified and so continuing a tradition of writing.
- Introduced the problem of evil and that God seems to win by violence not by conversation.

Features of weaker responses:

- Wrote generally about the Book of Revelation.
- Used the information in an AO1 way which was inappropriate for an AO2 question.

Summary of key points

- With a move to online marking and segmentation of questions, it is crucial that candidates place their Question number and part clearly in the margin of the paper. Should they add something later, again, another clear repetition of the Question number and part in the margin will ensure its attachment to the rest of their answer.
- A number of candidates only completed one Section of the paper with no attempt made at all at the other. 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 in both sections carry equal marks. Many students wrote considerably more in their Section B responses.



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