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# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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

**SUMMER 2017**

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

### **Online Results Analysis**

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### **Annual Statistical Report**

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

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## **RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

### **General Certificate of Education (New)**

**Summer 2017**

#### **Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**

#### **Unit 1 An Introduction to the Study of Religion – Option A Christianity**

The examination paper did not raise any concerns and appeared to be both fair and accessible. The full range of marks were employed to the responses provided. The following report will more naturally focus on obvious opportunities for improvement and does not negate the excellent responses given by many candidates.

#### **Administrative Rubrics**

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

#### **Student Rubrics**

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

Some Centres will discover that one or more of their students did not follow the new rubric of one question from Section A Q1, Q2 and one question from Section B Q3, Q4 or Q5, but rather answered either Qs1&2 or two from Qs 3, 4, 5. As a consequence only one answer with the best mark can be credited from each Section. Marks were lost as a consequence.

Some students only completed one question. This was not an issue of time management and marks were lost as a consequence.

Candidates should also be reminded that all questions carry equal marks. Many students wrote considerably more in the (b) answer. Candidates also need to remember that Part (a) questions test knowledge and understanding, whereas Part (b) questions test the skills of analysis and evaluation.

Centres should remind candidates of the importance of accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar e.g. God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, resurrection.

## Section A

1. (a) **Examine Augustine's understanding of baptism.** [AO1 15]

Better responses referred to Augustine's understanding of the Fall in Genesis. They also recognised that Augustine did not prohibit adult baptism just because he advocated infant baptism. Equally baptism by immersion is acceptable but for an infant the threefold sprinkling was deemed sufficient for the sacrament to be effective. There was very little acknowledgement let alone understanding that Baptism is a sacrament, indeed a primary sacrament. Due to this lack of understanding – that the symbolic nature of water to the sacrament e.g. cleaning and refreshing, this meant that all too few answers mentioned water at all or the essential formula of being baptised '*In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*' or why Augustine regarded that as necessary.

Weaker responses failed to respond to the question set - which asked solely about Augustine; therefore essentially anything else referred to was irrelevant. Equally a general answer about baptism without any specific reference to Augustine yet containing some of his understanding could at best achieve a Band 2 'limited knowledge'.

1. (b) **'Baptism in itself has no saving power.'**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

The best responses evaluated the salvific nature of baptism and noted the arguments for biblical support and Church teaching about its sacramental nature and necessity for salvation. They also used differing views, like the Protestant reformers and some modern denominations or scholars like Barth to explore the ideas of initiation, being a sign of salvation, ideas about Atonement and Justification by Faith to support the idea that there is no saving power. Again biblical texts were used to support the statement that there is no saving power. The best responses also referred to Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) "*Go baptise...*" indicating its saving power.

Weaker responses gave inaccurate information - Jesus was baptised but that is not a sign of the saving power of baptism given that Jesus had no need to be baptised as he was without sin. The point of Jesus' baptism was to rather identify himself with sinful humanity which he would redeem on the cross. Consequently there was very little understanding that Christians are baptised into the death and resurrection of Jesus which is symbolically shown by immersion and sacramentally shown by the fact that it is water from Jesus' crucified side that illustrates the gift of Holy Baptism as a sacrament, not Jesus' baptism in the Jordan. Weaker responses referred to arguments for and against infant and believers baptism.

With regard to Anabaptists, whilst there was an appreciation they re-baptised, there was seldom any understanding, or expression of understanding, that this meant they saw no saving power in infant baptism, but could see it in adult baptism being accompanied with faith.

2. (a) **Examine two different ways in which Christians understand the Eucharist.** [AO1 15]

Good candidates addressed the question set and recognised that the reference to "two" ways in which the Eucharist was celebrated was a key part of the question to which the Band Descriptors are applied. One brief way of introducing such a response was "*I shall answer this question by considering Transubstantiation and Memorialism...*"

Weaker candidates wrote lengthy introductory paragraphs which failed to address the question. There were hints of 'rote learnt answers' to this question. Such answers replicated and then repeated the above issue of irrelevance. Some candidates wrote about the Eucharistic service i.e. the liturgy and two ways that could be celebrated. This may have provided additional support for the understanding of the two ways of understanding the Eucharist but did not address the question as per the specification. Such information could have been well utilized in (b) but was not salvageable without any evaluative content, that said, more salvage was exercised on this question than any other. Others erroneously referred to "seven stages" or "principles" when actually they appeared to be referring to the seven sacraments.

2. (b) **'In the Eucharist, the bread and the wine are more than just symbols.'** Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

Better candidates selected their best two ways of understanding the Eucharist for Q2 (a) and then utilized the rest in an evaluative way in (b). For example if Transubstantiation and Memorialism were used in (a) then they utilised their knowledge of Transignification, Transfinalization, Consubstantiation and Virtualism to varying degrees of evaluation / discursive text to address this part of the question. This still offered the opportunity for them to set one view with evaluation against another. Even where material was used for (a) the same understanding/s could be referred to again if in an evaluative sense. Such answers were provided.

In weaker responses there was too much simple repetition of (a) without the necessary element of evaluation but rather 'x' believes this and 'y' believes the other – but why? How? It was often the salvage that broke that with liturgical or devotional aspects (as referred to in (a) above) being introduced which helped e.g. within some of the understandings the Sacrament being 'reserved' in a tabernacle thereby illustrating the importance of it. Far more could have been made of this idea utilising extra material of hymns and prayers illustrating the same.

**3. (a) Outline ways in which the resurrection of Jesus has been understood by Bultmann and Wright. [AO1 15]**

This proved to be the least attempted question.

Good candidates knew the material, seemed to rejoice in it and provided some accurate answers with clear knowledge and understanding evident. Use of terminology was often good with clear ideas about the understanding of the resurrection and biblical texts.

With regard to Bultmann there was the understanding of needing to demythologize to get to the truth, but there was often a gap in outlining what Bultmann saw that truth to be. However, whether due to time or less detailed study afforded to Wright the part of the answer referring to him was generally weaker and would benefit from attention.

Weaker candidates muddled up the scholars or simply did not know what the view of each was. Some simply produced narrative accounts of the Resurrection.

**3. (b) 'Bultmann's interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus is more convincing than Wright's interpretation.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Some very good evaluations from students who knew the ideas of each scholar and could assess the strengths and weaknesses of each and reach a conclusion. The best answers tended to weave the two scholars' understandings and whether these were more or less convincing e.g. Bultmann maintaining that the mistaken understanding of the resurrection is based on the C1st world view, while Wright would reply it was that very world view with regard to the veracity of female witnesses that prove accounts of the resurrection are true as written.

Weaker candidates could not evaluate clearly the work of Bultmann and Wright as they did not have secure knowledge of the views to be able to evaluate them. For example, getting views of each mistaken in full or part or stating that the resurrection is scientifically impossible, but not identifying with a scholar or adding an evaluative element to the statement.

**4. (a) Examine issues concerning the use of male language about God.**

**[AO1 15]**

This proved to be the most popular of the Section B questions.

Good candidates recognised that the trigger word used here was ‘examine’ and the term ‘issues’ provided the context within which that examination is to take place with reference to male language about God. They adapted the information they had learnt to address the question. Theoretically one could answer this question without any reference at all to the idea that female language about God would be preferable. The comment that we had never seen God is not correct in a Christian understanding as it is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ that means that we have seen God. See St. John’s Gospel.

Strong responses were able to identify key issues with good biblical references and evidence of theological, cultural or pastoral issues being understood. McFague was used well by some students too when used to address the question set in terms of outlining the issues rather than providing the answers.

However, too many candidates failed to address the question and simply wrote anything and everything they could about whether male language about God should be used or whether female language about God would be better. In reality therefore, there was too much (b) in (a) and again salvage came into operation with the general consequence that (a) marks were attaining lower Bands than (b).

**4. (b) ‘God is best described as mother rather than father.’  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

The strongest responses evaluated well and kept a focus on the statement given. They were able to provide arguments for and against each descriptor in a debating style and reach a conclusion. Biblical texts, tradition and doctrine about the nature of God and Sally McFague’s work were used very well in these answers. Some candidates addressed the questions set with a ‘yes – no – conclusion’ response that often secured Band 4 marks.

Weaker candidates too often answered the question they wanted rather than what was before them. The question was not ‘God is best described as mother’. The comparative and evaluative nature of the answers were too frequently lost or underplayed. There was in some cases salvage from 4(a).

**5. (a) Explain why forgiveness and love of neighbour are important to Christians. [AO1 15]**

Better candidates understood Christian teaching and had biblical texts, doctrine and ideas about the example and teaching of Jesus to support their discussion. They delivered strong responses, separating both key terms from the question and writing about them in a clear and balanced way.

Weaker candidates often jumbled the two key terms together. They also frequently rewrote the whole of the Parable of the Good Samaritan or the Parable of the Prodigal Son and neither is required or beneficial; most particularly when having done so the 'punch line' is missed e.g. answering who is my neighbour when considering the Greatest Commandment to love God and neighbour as self, or forgiveness (and love) as shown in the Prodigal Son. Illustrating the relevance of the parables will go further to answering the question. Another common error was that weaker candidates referred to "love our neighbour" as one of the Ten Commandments, which is erroneous.

**5. (b) 'Love of neighbour is the most important moral principle for Christians.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

There were a number of strong responses that really engaged with the question and delighted in the answers that could be provided. Love could be set out in an evaluative sense contrasted not simply with forgiveness (not actually required by the question although most candidates answered that way) and utilising general criticisms of Situation Ethics or advocating the comparative strength of Natural Law. Within this conscience was occasionally mentioned and appropriately so.

Weaker candidates restricted their answers unnecessarily to 'love or forgiveness', which was not the question. The answers were not wrong, but were self-restricting. The Ten Commandments were again being employed in a mistaken fashion.

Some centres confused actions e.g. going to mass, with the questions 'moral principles'. Possibly Aquinas' Precepts were being considered, but if so it was not explicit enough to be creditable.



## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2017

#### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### Unit 1 An Introduction to the Study of Religion – Option B Islam

This unit was a relatively small entry. The question paper had two sections. In Section A the most popular answer was Q2, but there were also a significant number of answers on Q1. Amongst the optional questions in Section B Q3 and Q4 were the most popular choices amongst candidates.

The standard of answers displayed the full range, but what was noticeable in relation to the Legacy papers was the improved quality of section (b) [AO2] evaluation answers. It is obvious that there had been more preparation in developing critical analysis skills for the new specification to reflect the shift in weighting of assessment objectives.

#### Section A

**1. (a) Explain the importance of the shahadah for Islam. [AO1 15]**

This question was not quite as popular as the Q2.

Most responses were reasonable with all candidates being able to give accurate accounts of the meaning of shahadah. Most candidates discussed how the shahadah is spoken as a declaration of faith and gave examples of when and why: when a child is born, at death, conversion. Good answers explored the idea that it is not about just declaring this once but explained the idea of being constantly aware of it.

Features of good responses:

- details about the significance of tawhid in relation to shahadah
- gave main focus to Allah as One whilst recognising the significance of Muhammad
- highlighted when and why the shahadah was declared
- explored the significance of the shahadah for Muslim living and religious practice

Features of weaker responses:

- The teachings of tawhid were often explored, but the teachings about Muhammad as prophet or 'Seal of Prophets' was not given much detailed attention
- They did not really identify the specifics of shahadah beyond 'a declaration of faith'
- Responses went off focus and referred to the five pillars
- Did not understand what the term 'shahadah' meant
- Were very brief and just stated what shahadah was and that it was the declaration of being Muslim

1. (b) **‘Public declaration of the shahadah is more important than the private faith it represents.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

The most popular consideration was the danger of public demonstration reflecting religious piety rather than true sincerity whereas private faith is more sincere; however, also recognising the significance of public declaration when given with true intent and for uniting the ummah, conversion and promotion of Islam.

Features of good responses:

- a clear balanced argument considering the relative importance of the shahadah in each aspect of public life and private faith whilst recognising potential weaknesses e.g. pride and piety as opposed to true intent and sincerity
- an awareness that maybe the statement misunderstood the idea that one is more important than the other in relation to the shahadah as both are equally important
- an awareness of the inter-twining nature of public life and private faith

Features of weaker responses:

- basic 'for' and 'against' arguments
- lacked supporting explanation or statements so that they were just asserting something rather than arguing and giving clear reasons e.g. 'You have to declare shahadah to be a Muslim therefore ...'
- offering a conclusion that was not clearly linked to what was written earlier in their response

2. (a) **Outline Islamic teachings about angels.** [AO1 15]

This question on the whole was very well answered. Responses were detailed and were in depth or breadth: some focused on the generic nature of angels and their role and significance for Islam; others used specific examples of angels to explain what Islam teaches about their roles. The vast majority of candidates gave detailed and developed responses on angels. Most discussed various angels and their roles as well as their significance within Islam. This answer gave the opportunity to demonstrate a high level of technical religious vocabulary.

Features of good responses:

- details about the specific nature of angels e.g. sexless, made of light etc.
- details of the purpose of angels and related these to specific examples
- specific roles of named angels (most popular were the recording angels)

Features of weaker responses:

- generally were more generic about angels and what they looked like
- went off focus by narrating the revelation to Muhammad by Jibril
- lacked specific examples

2. (b) **‘Belief in angels is not really essential for Muslims today.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

There was opportunity for a wide range of arguments to be presented here. Most arguments centred upon the credibility of angels in an era of scientific understanding of the nature of the universe countered against the fact that Islam recognises the key role that Jibril played in communicating with Muhammad and without that would Islam exist? Some responses argued that Islam includes angels in its teachings they are therefore just as important as any other teaching. Also the recording angels were vital for judgement at the final time (akhirah).

Features of good responses:

- a clear balanced argument considering the relative importance of angels in the context of other teachings in Islam such as the five pillars
- an awareness that maybe the statement was ambiguous as it all depends on what one considers ‘essential’ for a Muslim
- an awareness of the apparent contrast between religion and a contemporary scientific world view

Features of weaker responses:

- basic ‘for’ and ‘against’ argument
- they lacked supporting explanation or statements so that they were just asserting something rather than arguing and giving clear reasons e.g. ‘Angels are part of Islamic belief therefore ...’
- offered a conclusion that was not clearly linked to what was written earlier in their response

### Section B

3. (a) **Explain the significance of the Hijrah for the development of Islam.** [AO1 15]

This question was answered with varying degrees of success. Some candidates chose to give an historical account of the life of Muhammad rather than focusing on the question. Good responses were focused and discussed ideas such as laying the foundations for the ummah, creating the first mosque, zakat and prayer, etc. Very few candidates that attempted the question did not understand the meaning of Hijrah.

Features of good responses:

- details about the significance of specific events e.g. Allah’s role in protecting Muhammad; Muhammad’s qualities as a leader; the establishment of the first mosque and prayers, etc.
- the importance of the Hijrah for the growth of Islam and its popularity
- noted that Madinah was in a strategic position and safe haven from which to introduce and develop Islamic principles

Features of weaker responses:

- gave purely narrative accounts of the Hijrah
- there was very little explanation other than it established Islam as a religion

3. (b) **‘The basic tenets of Islam were first introduced in Madinah.’** [AO2 15]  
**Evaluate this view.**

Again, as with part (a) there were varying degrees of success seen here in (b). The most general response was pitting the significance of the revelations and messages delivered in Makkah against the continued revelations and religious organisation that developed in Madinah. Some argued the five pillars were established in Madinah whilst others reasoned the basis of Islam was established already in Makkah. Others were unsure of what happened in Madinah and were therefore confused. However, most did manage to develop an argument surrounding the development in Madinah as what we see as Islam today and that this laid the foundation for the full development of the faith and the practices that have been passed through the generations.

Features of good responses:

- argument presenting clear evidence of what was actually established in Madinah e.g. practices
- an argument that presented the significance of the message in Makkah for the establishment of Islam

Features of weaker responses:

- were confused about Madinah
- gave a generic argument about Muhammad’s revelation in Makkah being the most important factor

4. (a) **Examine the meaning of various practices associated with Hajj in Islam.** [AO1 15]

This question was generally answered well by the more able candidate, but the main difficulty for everyone was to make sure the focus was on the ‘meaning’ behind the acts performed at Hajj. Most were able to give basic accounts of the Hajj and focused on three or four key events to unpack the significance of these. Most used clothing, the kab’ah, zamzam and safa and marwa as a basis for their explanations. There were many descriptive responses, but the differentiation between candidates was based upon the various attempts made to explain the beliefs associated with the practices.

Features of good responses:

- maintained focus on explaining ‘why’ something was done
- related the acts to broader aspects of Islam e.g. unity, ummah

Features of weaker responses:

- they were purely descriptive with little explanation of ‘why’
- responses digressed to explain the rules for following Hajj

4. (b) **‘Hajj has more meaning for the individual than the community.’  
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

This was well answered as there was plenty of evidence to support either view or an opportunity to indicate the equal significance of both. Most candidates discussed the importance of the Hajj for the full community e.g. uniting people, equality, religious identity, sacrifice etc. Most discussed how, as one of the five pillars, Muslims were required to fulfil the Hajj and was therefore the individual act of obedience could not be underestimated.

Features of good responses:

- a good balanced argument between personal faith and responsibility to the ummah
- reasons were clearly explained in relation to the significance that each aspect had in relation to importance
- recognised that the statement could be considered a bit of a ‘red herring’ and there is no real absolute

Features of weaker responses:

- could not see anything beyond the basic duty of all Muslims and the significance of everybody being equal before God
- often repeated the same point about personal duty

5. (a) **Explain ways in which Ashura is celebrated by Shi’a Muslims.** [AO1 15]

This was the least popular question from Section B, yet it was clear from the vivid depictions in some answers that the various ‘ways’ for celebrating Ashura were well understood. Most candidates were able to give detailed account of the festival/celebration e.g. mourning, black dress, ta’ziah, self-harm in various ways, pilgrimage and prayers etc. Some candidates described how different Muslims celebrate the festival by way of contrast but this was not expected by the question set, although not altogether irrelevant. Generally, all candidates gave descriptions of processions and self-harming rituals.

Features of good responses:

- contained details about specific aspects
- had an awareness of the ambiguity of ‘celebration’
- ordered accounts of the day

Features of weaker responses:

- they just focussed on self-harm

5. (b) **'The emphasis given to suffering at Ashura is too strong.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

There were many good responses to this question with some references being made to contemporary news stories in relation the self-harming element and government decrees. Most discussed how some rituals could be argued to be unnecessary, but as they were part of tradition questioned whether it was appropriate to criticise. Some argued the dramatic impact of the day was a better way to teach children as they would remember details easier. There were no real explorations of the hope of final redemption, forgiveness and salvation that Shi'a aspire to which would have taken the focus away from pure meaningless injustice as most interpreted the 'suffering' as 'self-harm'.

Features of good responses:

- lots of supporting evidence for and against the issue of self-harm as a religious expression
- compared with other religions where the focus on suffering was felt to be acceptable

Features of weaker responses:

- not many of these but responses mainly lacked depth to an argument or just focused on whether it was right or not to harm yourself

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2017

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### Unit 1 An Introduction to the Study of Religion – Option C Judaism

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

The quality of work varied; there was evidence of many scripts of middle and higher standard and a few where there was little indication that candidates had gained from following the course.

There were few rubric infringements where candidates misunderstood the choice element of the examination paper (one question from Section A and one from Section B). It is important to note that a few candidates failed to attempt the two parts of each questions and subsequently lost valuable marks.

Candidates must also be reminded to pay close attention to the specific wording of questions. Failure to answer the demands of the question resulted in some candidates being penalising themselves by simply writing all they appeared to know on a topic.

#### Section A

1. (a) **Explain the significance of the Mosaic covenant at the time of Moses.**  
[AO1 15]

Good candidates avoided writing the historical narrative and there were many detailed responses answering the question effectively. The most successful candidates gave detailed descriptions of the type of covenant that was made, with some reference to the nature of the suzerainty treaty in the ancient Near East.

There was however, a variety of responses to this question. Many candidates responded by telling the story of Moses' life, with a particular focus on an account of the Exodus. A detailed outline of the Passover events was not required in order to successfully answer this question.

1. (b) **'The covenant is simply a means of religious control.'**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

The more sophisticated responses discussed how Reform Jews have adapted to modern times and as a result do not feel that they are controlled. Many responses discussed both viewpoints of this debate and did so effectively. Most discussed how the covenant was an agreement made and how both sides had a role to play. The more sophisticated responses discussed how Reform Jews have adapted with modern times and as a result do not feel that they are controlled. Most candidates discussed the idea that conforming to the covenant was showing both commitment and loyalty to God.

Weaker responses were superficial and lacked any reference to the mitzvot. As a result they were unable to enter into a discussion of how such religious practices might be a practical expression of discipline or social control.

2. (a) **Explain the significance of the Torah received at Mount Sinai.** [AO1 15]

Better responses focused on the demands of the question and gave the account of how the Torah was received on Mount Sinai. Most candidates discussed the importance and significance of the Torah to Orthodox Jews in particular and the status which is afforded to the Torah. Many candidates discussed how the Torah provides guidance on a way of life for all Jews.

Weaker responses to this question included a description of the Torah and how the Torah is treated in the synagogue.

2. (b) **'The Torah has little relevance within Judaism today.'**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

The better responses included explicit reference to the different status given to the Torah within the different Jewish communities and traditions. Most candidates discussed how the Torah is treated within the synagogue which demonstrated its continued relevance for Jews.

Weaker responses to this question failed to evaluate the significance of the Torah for Jews today. A superficial reference to the Torah itself, with little or no reference to the practice of the mitzvot in modern daily life.



## Section B

3. (a) **‘Explain Jewish beliefs about life as a divine gift and the sanctity of life.’  
Evaluate this view.** [AO1 15]

This question was not as well answered as many of the others. Most candidates were able to provide a reasonable response in connection with sanctity of life. Some better candidates did discuss the purpose of humanity as being created by God, although these were rare. Few references were made to the soul as was anticipated and some candidates were not clear about the precept of Pikuach Nefesh.

Weaker responses often included a very general comment about life as a gift from God with no further exposition of this belief.

3. (b) **‘The Shema contains the most important beliefs in Judaism.’  
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

All candidates gave a correct explanation of the Shema and a number quoted it correctly within the context of the answer. The majority of candidates were able to discuss the purpose and content of the Shema and relate their responses to when it is recited. Most were able to discuss how it is the first prayer a Jewish child will learn and how it forges an early sense of Jewish identity. A number of candidates made reference to it being the last thing a Jew hopes to say at the end of life.

Weaker candidates made little reference to the important beliefs in Judaism and offered very general comments without reference to key religious beliefs. There was little unpacking of the beliefs expressed in the Shema.

4. (a) **Explain the structure of the Amidah and its use in daily prayers.** [AO1 15]

This did not prove to be a popular choice of question. The responses that were seen were generally good with almost all elements of the Amidah discussed in varying levels of detail, but most showed clear understanding of the importance of the Amidah in the context of daily prayers.

Weaker responses were superficial, often listing features of the Amidah, with little or no explanation of how the Amidah is used in daily prayers.

4. (b) **‘Tzedakah (charity) is more important than prayer.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

Generally, a good two sided argument was presented by most candidates. Some candidates gave detailed descriptions of tzedakah and what that entailed. Most candidates discussed the general benefit for the community, as well as the individual, and that its effects could be seen by all. Being with others in prayer was discussed and how this strengthened community cohesion, gave hope and was the only practical way a Jew had to communicate with God. More sophisticated responses referred to ideas of justice and righteousness.

Weaker responses gave a description of how Jews pray and made little or no reference to the discussion of which is more important for Jews. A viewpoint on prayer just being important, without any reference to tzedakah, will not achieve the higher level marks.

5. (a) **Explain the significance of the rituals observed during Yom Kippur.**  
[AO1 15]

This question was generally answered well by candidates who were able to include a range of rituals observed during the celebration of Yom Kippur. Most responses gave accurate depictions of a range of rituals observed and there was a good use of terminology. Very few responses failed to include any relevant detail at all. A number of candidates discussed how the festival is celebrated in the home and the synagogue; the majority of candidates explained the rituals observed in the synagogue.

Weaker candidates disadvantaged themselves when their responses were focussed around a list approach of rituals with little explanation. Candidates must provide an explanation when asked to do so in order to access the full range of marks.

5. (b) **‘Yom Kippur is the most important Jewish festival.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

The majority of candidates were able to discuss the importance of other festivals, with the most common focus on Pesach. Candidates generally discussed the importance of repentance, and nearly all responses included the idea that some Jews may not regularly attend the synagogue but may attend during Yom Kippur. Generally good, balanced arguments were provided in response to this question.

Weaker candidates gave a description of how Yom Kippur is celebrated with little discussion of its importance in relation to other festivals. The question does not ask for a list of rituals, but rather an evaluation of which is the most important festival.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2017

#### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### Unit 1 An Introduction to the Study of Religion – Option D Buddhism

In terms of quality there appeared to be a full range of responses. However, it is evident that there has been more preparation in developing critical analysis skills for the new specification to reflect the shift in weighting of the assessment objectives. Also, candidates were, on the whole, able to deploy their knowledge and understanding of the diversity of Buddhism in an effective and analytical way.

There are some general areas in which improvements can be made. Some of these are very simple, but would greatly enhance the quality of presentation. Some candidates did not use capital letters for Buddhism, Buddha, etc. Some candidates confused the terms Buddha, Buddhism and Buddhist. Candidates might take more opportunity to use key terms (and to spell them correctly).

There was significant evidence of candidates running out of time. This usually occurred in cases where candidates wrote long, irrelevant introductions in storytelling mode. Focus is important.

Opportunities were often missed for candidates to show their awareness of sources of wisdom. For example, candidates writing about karma as a significant teaching could easily quote the *Dhammapada*. 'If a person speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows them, as the wheel of the cart follows the foot of the ox that draws it'. If they can't remember the quote, they can indicate they know that the *Dhammapada* is a source of wisdom on karma.

This is a perennial issue, but addressing the command words more directly would result in an improvement of the standard. Still too many candidates describe when they are asked to explain or examine.

Another perennial issue is the failure to engage properly with sources. Often 'quotes' (sometimes rather dubious ones) are 'thrown in' in an almost random way. Candidates could make much better use of the sources with which they engage.

A development this year appears to be the problematic use of the terms of 'extreme' or 'fundamentalist' Buddhists, (Theravada) and 'modern', 'liberal' or 'lenient' Buddhists (Mahayana). This may be as a consequence of such terms being used frequently in modern discourse. However, they are not being deployed correctly by candidates in this context, and in some cases may be potentially offensive. There is an underlying problem here in the assumption that Theravada is 'orthodox' and Mahayana a deviation.

There was also some incorrect comparison with Christianity in some answers. This was especially apparent in the birth stories (with the Buddha's birth being described as a virgin birth). It also appeared in presentations of 'precepts' as 'commandments'. To elide the two is to fail to see the ways in which precepts are training aspirations rather than rules.

Whilst there was some good quality evaluation in evidence, candidates can still improve on this by developing a style which goes beyond 'some people say this' and 'some people say that'. Often they say 'I think' or 'I believe' and then make an unsubstantiated assertion. They need to understand they don't gain marks for merely having an opinion. They gain marks for the quality of their argumentation. Candidates need to consider issues from more perspectives than merely two apparently opposing ones, and to bring out complexity in a more convincing way. They need more lines of reasoning. Candidates might find it helpful to imagine themselves as lawyers, making a case for a certain way of seeing an issue. In this way they must deal effectively with counter arguments and alternative perspectives, but they should also be able to come to a strong conclusion.

## Section A

In this section question 1 was considerably more popular than question 2, but those that did tackle question 2 did so successfully.

**1. (a) Examine the key ideas of the Four Noble Truths. [AO1 15]**

Stronger features: better responses included lots of examples and references to sources of wisdom, and accurate deployment of properly spelled key terms. Some candidates referred effectively to the Dhammacakkapavathana Sutta, and to secondary sources such as Cush, Keown, Snelling, Gethin, etc. Better responses divided their time well across the truths, and avoided the temptation to focus predominantly on dukkha. Some used the physician analogy to good effect. A few exceptional responses considered the diversity of Buddhism.

Weaker features: Weaker responses failed to use sources of wisdom to good effect, or did not even mention them. Dukkha was generally well explained, but some candidates focussed too much on this and spent very little time explaining the remaining truths. Some, therefore, remained only partial answers. A small minority of candidates mixed up the Four Noble Truths with the Four Sights, and some with the Three Lakshanas.

**1. (b) 'The Four Noble Truths are essential for all Buddhists.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Stronger features - this was generally well answered. Better answers included reference to different schools of Buddhism. Some excellent answers included awareness of ideas about 'testing the teachings' and 'being a lamp unto ourselves' as a context for understanding any teachings.

Weaker features - some candidates discussed whether the Four Noble Truths were important rather than essential, thus not fully addressing the question. The lack of explanation in some answers meant that candidates made unsupported statements. Some candidates simplistically argued that the Buddha gave the Four Noble Truths; therefore they were essential and applied to everyone.

**2. (a) Examine the dasa sila (ten precepts). [AO1 15]**

Stronger features - strong responses explained all the precepts and their place within the sangha. These responses gave plenty of examples in their explanations, and showed awareness of the role of novices, and the eight uposatha day and retreat precepts. There was evidence of consideration of the benefits of observing them in some responses.

Weaker features - candidates were often able to write more about five lay precepts and some did not mention the monastic sangha. Some listed precepts in the wrong order using 'first', 'second', etc. Some candidates expressed very negative view of the monastic precepts in a way that was not academic. There was some confusion over the reward for following the precepts being nirvana, which was talked about as if it was a heaven or an afterlife. This may be the result of looking at this via a Christian lens. Weaker candidates simply wrote a list rather than an explanation of the precepts.

**2. (b) 'Rules are essential for Buddhists today.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Stronger features - some candidates showed awareness that precepts are not necessarily best understood as 'rules'. They also showed awareness of the non-dogmatic nature of Buddhism, and the point of precepts being to lead to more wholesome outcomes in life. They also showed awareness of the nature of the sangha as a community of people living closely together and sharing resources, so the need for some regulation. Some excellent responses gave accounts of the problematic nature of modern life, with its many temptations and conflicts, and the need to work with rules or precepts in order to have a spiritual life. Some good responses attempted to draw contrasts between Western and Asian Buddhism.

Weaker features - some candidates did not address the full question in that they failed to apply the rules to 'today'. Some did not address the issue of the rules being relevant to 'Buddhists' and talked about whether they were relevant to people in general. In some responses there was a derogatory tone to accounts of following rules, which was thought to be 'extreme'. Such responses missed several aspects of living with precepts as training aspirations, and entirely missed the point of renunciation in Buddhism being a middle way between asceticism and luxury. Another frequent misconception on behalf of candidates is the misquoting of the quotation from the Buddha of 'be a lamp unto yourself.' Lots of candidates are interpreting this as erroneously 'anything goes'. This would be taken by many Buddhists as the sangha should be a lamp unto itself, in other words it should be regulated.

## Section B

3. (a) **Explain the account of the birth of the historical Buddha.** [AO1 15]

This was a very popular question.

Stronger features - most candidates were able to describe the birth of the historical Buddha fairly accurately. The best responses showed sophisticated awareness of the nature of religious language, and were able to comment maturely on the significance of specific features of the account, drawing on awareness of aspects of attitudes of the time (e.g. ritual purity). Some excellent responses showed awareness of the fragmented appearance of the biography in texts.

Weaker features - many candidates used descriptive, fairy-tale style storytelling in their responses rather than thorough explanation. Opportunities were lost to refer to sources of wisdom. There was confusion about Maya's dream and many wrote about the elephant impregnating Maya and candidates did not discuss the symbolic nature of the dream. There was a lot of confused comparison with biblical accounts of the conception of Jesus. Some candidates told the whole life story of the Buddha rather than focussing on an explanation of his birth, thus rendering much of what they wrote irrelevant. Some candidates realised that the events were symbolic but had difficulty in explaining the specific significance and simply stated that it was because the Buddha was special. Weaker responses offered no explanation at all, or gave accounts of other aspects of the Buddha's life, such as the Four Sights.

3. (b) **'Stories about the Buddha are not meant to be taken literally.'**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

Stronger features - excellent responses showed sophisticated understanding of the nature of hagiography and myth. Paul Williams was a secondary source deployed to good effect in some responses. Some candidates used knowledge of teachings about Buddha-nature and Trikaya to argue that the details of the story of the historical Buddha may not be so important.

Weaker features - some candidates wrote about whether or not the story was historically true and could be proved. If their analysis stopped there they were not able to access the higher levels as they did not consider other ways in which the story is meaningful.

4. (a) **Examine features of the Buddha's awakening under the Bodhi tree.** [AO1 15]

Stronger features - good responses were thorough, accurate and relevant. These included detailed accounts of the Four Watches of the night with analytical links between the stages of enlightenment and the teachings of the Buddha, for example the three lakshanas, karma and rebirth. There were some sophisticated analyses of the temptations by Mara.

Weaker features - poorer responses were those in which candidates merely retold the story in a fairy-tale manner. Some candidates focussed on the whole life of the Buddha rather than just the enlightenment. Very few mentioned the earth-touching mudra. Many candidates showed their lack of awareness that 'Bodhi Tree' is a post-facto devotional title given to the tree e.g. 'Siddhartha sat down under a Bodhi Tree.'

4. (b) **‘The Buddha’s awakening is the most important event in Buddhism.’  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Stronger features - most candidates were well able to analyse Buddhism as a religion centred on the concept of awakening. Better responses included sources of wisdom and discussed the diversity of views about the Buddha within Buddhism. Candidates had good knowledge of other significant events. Some recognised that in some Mahayanist schools there is less emphasis upon the historical Buddha. Some made reference to the Vow of Amida, and some to the teachings of Nagarjuna.

Weaker features - The main argument of some candidates was that ‘teachings’ were more important rather than ‘events.’ Whilst legitimate as an argument in itself, it missed the point of the question which was about events. This rendered some parts of responses irrelevant.

5. (a) **Explain the role and importance of dana (giving) in Buddhism. [AO1 15]**

Stronger features - the best responses showed the importance of intention in relation to dana, and some candidates had quite sophisticated analyses of ways in which giving in a self-interested way is misaligned with teachings about anatta. As such they showed extremely good awareness of the nature of the practice of dana.

Weaker features - weaker responses failed to take account of the difference between ‘role’ and ‘importance’.

5. (b) **‘Punya (merit) depends on dana (giving).’  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Stronger features - good responses were able to consider this question from a variety of viewpoints, and to understand punya in the wider context of karma more generally.

Weaker features - some candidates were able to argue well that punya depends on dana, but were not able to consider what else might result in punya (meditation, puja, sutta-chanting, good deeds, etc.).

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2017

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### Unit 1 An Introduction to the Study of Religion – Option E Hinduism

It was pleasing to see that centres have risen to the challenges of the new specification. The excellent standard of some responses showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate, extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms. However, it is imperative that centres focus on the detail of the specification content.

The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the range of bands. It also seems that some weaknesses have been transferred from the old to the new specification. Candidates need to focus on the question set and answer the demands of that question. Some failed to do this and answered on a related concept or teaching e.g. on question karma some gave a full explanation of varnashramadharm rather than focusing on the teaching about karma itself. Others did not read the question carefully enough especially in part (b) and therefore did not address the issues raised by that question. However generally the evaluative questions were well structured and moved away from the traditional for and against method of answering. This allowed a more complete evaluation of the issues raised.

On an administrative note some centres were giving candidates a four page booklet to begin with, then another four page booklet and then a sixteen page booklet of which only a page or two was used. This not only creates inconvenience for the examiner but is a complete waste of paper. Some candidates do not fill in the box at the top right of the candidate booklet used for noting the questions attempted which adds considerably to the time taken on the administration of the scripts.

Some candidates were also answering parts (a) of the two questions chosen and then parts (b). There appears to be little logic in this approach as both parts of the question are worth the same amount of marks.



## Section A

1. (a) **Examine the concept of karma in Hinduism.** [AO1 15]

This was a very popular question.

Stronger responses addressed the question directly with sound knowledge and understanding. There was some impressive use of scriptural and scholarly quotes to exemplify points made. They were able to distinguish between punya and papa and to explain the three types of karma noted in the specification.

However there was a wide range in the standard of answers given. As noted above the focus of this question was karma although some candidates took it as a chance to write all they knew about varnashramadharma. Whilst varnashramadharma is relevant in the context of generating good karma this was not the focus of the question. There were also some very general and superficial answers to this question. It was surprising to see a number of answers which did not explain what karma is before examining its influence on different aspects of Hinduism whilst others had very little knowledge and repeated the few basic points made.

1. (b) **'Belief in karma is the most important influence on a Hindu's life.'**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

This was generally a well answered question with most candidates able to present reasoned arguments. The better answers were well developed focusing entirely on the issue raised by the question, were well supported, challenged and evaluated. There were some good use of quotes and scholars to support arguments.

Weaker answers lacked challenge and evaluation of the issue and contained a number of repetitions of the same point. They also included reference to anything and everything within Hinduism having a more important influence on a Hindu's life.

2. (a) **Outline different beliefs about the relationship between Brahman and atman.** [AO1 15]

There was a wide range in the standard of answers given to this question. Stronger answers contained knowledge of monism, monotheism, dualism, and non-dualism, Advaita, Dvaita, Shankara and Madhva. Impressive responses identified the variety of beliefs between Brahman and atman and many included the 'salt' analogy.

Weaker answers showed very limited knowledge of the topic and did not address the question set; they focused more on Brahman and atman rather than the relationship between them. Many digressed into wider areas and described the Trimurti in detail which was barely relevant to the question.

2. (b) **‘It is impossible to worship an impersonal God.’**  
**Evaluate this view with reference to Hinduism.** [AO2 15]

There were some excellent responses from candidates providing strong, well developed and clearly supported arguments which they evaluated. There was extensive use of Brahman Nirguna and Brahman Saguna and also the thinking of Shankara and Madhva. Candidates argued for a personal God as exemplified by the multiple aspects of Brahman such as the Trimurti. There were also some good references to Shaivism and Vaishnavism.

Weaker candidates repeated content from part (a) without presenting critical argument. They merely gave the meaning of Brahman and the meaning of atman without any attempt to link them to the problems or lack of problems of worshipping an impersonal God. This exemplifies a weakness across all questions – the inability of some candidates to use their knowledge and understanding to create relevant arguments or evaluative comments.

3. (a) **Outline the views of Gandhi and Ambedkar on varna and untouchability.**  
[AO1 15]

The focus of the question was knowledge and understanding of Gandhi and Ambedkar’s views on varna and untouchability. There were many excellent responses making clear the differences between the two. Answers referred to Gandhi’s promotion of varna, and his reasons for this, his calls to absorb Dalits into the shudra varna and his use of ‘Harijans’. Candidates were able to distinguish this from Ambedkar’s first-hand experience of Dalithood, his calls for the complete eradication of the varna system, his drive for political mobilisation of Dalits and his conversion to Buddhism. There were also some excellent use of quotes to exemplify. Some candidates were stronger in their knowledge and understanding of the one than the other, delivering an unbalanced and limited response.

The weakest candidates failed to answer the question directly, rather drifting into relating all they knew about Gandhi. This was also not a question requiring an explanation of the varna system in Hinduism which is what a number of candidates wrote as an answer. Others completely confused the two distinct views having Ambedkar as a supporter of the varna system.

3. (b) **‘Varna creates a just society.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

Most candidates were able to present some valid arguments to this question. However, the best answers presented strong arguments to support the view that varna enables a just society. They were able to give examples of the positive impact of caste whilst giving excellent consideration to the inherent discrimination it entails. These responses contained thoughtful argument and a clear conclusion.

Weaker responses tended to be one sided and focused on the varna system as being divisive, unjust and oppressive. Whilst there is evidence to support this view others would refute it completely. A complete evaluative answer needs to consider more than one view on the issue being considered.

**4. (a) Explain the ethical teachings found in the Ramayana. [AO1 15]**

A popular but somewhat disappointing question in terms of the responses it generated.

There were a small number of excellent responses which identified clearly the ethical teachings of the text and exemplified these within the story. Candidates focused on dharma, obedience, loyalty, faithfulness, courage, bravery, purity and devotion.

Many of the responses were weak, struggling at times to attain even a GCSE level response. A number of candidates did not answer the question set and instead provided a detailed retelling of the Ramayana. A significant number of responses contained very little ethical teachings identified and those that were limited, with 'loyalty' being repeated.

**4. (b) 'Hindu texts are not relevant in the world today.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Some better answers provided good argument and supported them with examples of and from specific shruti and smirti literature. They referred to the Vedas and their philosophical and scientific content. They also referred to the Hindu epics and their morality, the values they teach and their relevance in modern society.

In many of the weaker responses the focus of the question was lost. Arguments drifted into more generic areas such as are Hindu texts believable today. Some candidates evaluated whether the Hindu gods are relevant today, even discussing if Hinduism itself is relevant. Although some aspects were relevant to the question it was not focused enough to gain the higher bands.

**5. (a) Examine the spiritual significance of the festival of Holi. [AO1 15]**

Overall, a disappointing question in terms of the responses given.

Some better responses showed good understanding of Holi's spiritual significance, highlighting a number of aspects such as the theme of good over evil, rewards of loyalty to God, the benevolence of the gods, removal of social barriers, renewal of friendships and spiritual blessings by Agni.

Candidates must realise that at AS level more is expected than merely describing the background to a festival and what takes place. Many weaker answers provided generic descriptions of Holi celebrations, rather than focusing on the set question - its spiritual significance. Generic descriptions relied upon knowledge of coloured powder fights and bonfires. At best, the theme of good over evil was briefly mentioned. Many quoted Owen Cole 'Holi is the most riotous and notorious festival ...' without linking it to the question.

5. (b) **‘Celebrating mythical events is meaningless in the world today.’  
Evaluate this view with reference to Hinduism. [AO2 15]**

A few very good responses answered the question directly and considered the implication of celebrating mythical events in the 21st Century e.g. whether they are fabrications and can be relied upon; whether they are able to convey any ethical teachings today, etc. Good responses exemplified arguments with reference to mythical events and texts. A few strong, well developed and evaluated arguments were offered.

However for many, this was a clear example of not answering the question set. Most candidates reworded the question to suit what they knew. The focus on ‘mythical events being meaningless’ became ‘festivals are meaningless’. As such, the vast majority of responses failed to address the question and simply provided arguments for continuing to hold festival celebrations today.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2017

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### Unit 1 An Introduction to the Study of Religion – Option F Sikhism

It was pleasing to see that centres have risen to the challenges of the new specification. The excellence of some answers showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate and extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms. However it is imperative that centres focus on the detail of the specification content. The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the range of bands.

However, it also seems that some weaknesses have been transferred from the old to the new specification. Candidates need to focus on the question set and answer the demands of that question. Some failed to do this and answered on a write all you know basis e.g. Q1. (a) on the role of the gurdwara in expressing Sikh identity, some gave a full explanation of every aspect of the gurdwara rather than focusing on those aspects that express identity. Others did not read the question carefully enough especially in part (b) and therefore did not address the issues raised by that question.

However generally the evaluative questions were well structured and moved away from the traditional for and against method of answering. This allowed a more complete and critical evaluation of the issues raised.

On an administrative note some centres were giving candidates a four page booklet to begin with, then another four page booklet and then a sixteen page booklet of which only a page or two was used. This not only creates inconvenience for the examiner but is a complete waste of paper. Some candidates do not fill in the box at the top right of the candidate booklet used for noting the questions attempted which adds considerably to the time taken on the administration of the scripts.

## Section A

1. (a) **Examine the role of the gurdwara in expressing Sikh identity.** [AO1 15]

This was a very popular question. However there was a wide range in the standard of answers given.

Stronger responses addressed the question directly with sound knowledge and understanding. The features and practices of the gurdwara were specifically linked to the issue of identity e.g. the gurdwara being a place for private and individual worship allows Sikhs to express their faith and devotion which is such an important part of their religious identity. There were also numerous references to the langar as an expression of sewa which again is an important part of Sikh identity.

Features of weak responses - as noted above the focus of this question was the role of the gurdwara in expressing Sikh identity although some candidates took it as a chance to write all they knew about the gurdwara. Whilst some aspects of these answers could be credited this was not the focus of the question. It also led to some very general and superficial answers to this question.

1. (b) **‘Sewa is the most important practice in the gurdwara.’  
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

This was generally a well answered question with most candidates able to present reasoned arguments.

Feature of good responses- answers were well developed focusing entirely on the issue raised by the question, were well supported, challenged and evaluated. There were some good use of quotes and scholars to support arguments.

Weaker responses features - answers lacked challenge and evaluation of the issue and contained a number of repetitions of the same point. They also included reference to anything and everything within the gurdwara being more important than sewa, e.g. the Guru Granth Sahib being more important. However the issue in the question focused on practice.

2. (a) **Explain how the festival of Diwali expresses Sikh beliefs.** [AO1 15]

A popular, but rather disappointing question in terms of the responses it generated. Feature of good responses- there were a small number of excellent responses which identified clearly Sikh beliefs and exemplified these with references to the story of Guru Hargobind and the practices of Diwali. Candidates focused on bravery and courage, duty to protect the religion and beliefs, importance of spiritual and temporal values and the importance of devotion to God.

Weaker responses features – some answers struggled at times to attain even a GCSE level response. A number of candidates did not answer the question set and instead provided a detailed retelling of the story of Hargobind. A significant number of responses contained very little Sikh beliefs identified and those that did were limited, with ‘bravery’ being repeated.

2. (b) **'Sikh identity can be best expressed through festivals.'** [AO2 15]  
**Evaluate this view.**

One of the weaker questions in terms of responses given overall. Feature of good responses– some answers focused on the issue of identity and its expression through festivals and provided good arguments and supported them with specific examples from different Sikh festivals. There were many references to Vaisakhi and the celebration of founding of the khalsa which gives Sikhs their unique identity. There were also references to Diwali and the celebration of the story of Guru Hargobind which expresses the Sikh belief in devotion to God which is an integral part of Sikh identity.

Weaker response features – the focus of the question was lost and arguments presented seemed to be discussing the importance of festivals in a generic way with arguments focusing on importance or lack of importance to the community without any reference to identity. It is good practice to link the arguments to the statement given in the question.

3. (a) **Examine the concept of Sant Sipahi (saint-soldier) in Sikhism.** [AO1 15]

This was not a popular question and there was a wide range in the standard of answers given.

Features of good responses- strong answers contained knowledge of the literal meaning of the words 'sant sipahi' and of the background to the concept. They also contained an understanding of the influence of the concept on Sikh lifestyle and the relationship between it and other beliefs and concepts in Sikhism such as Dharam Yudh.

Features of weak responses - weaker answers showed very limited knowledge of the topic and digressed into wider areas such as the founding of the Khalsa and the wearing of the 5ks.

3. (b) **'The Sant tradition is irrelevant to Sikhs today.'** [AO2 15]  
**Evaluate this view.**

Most candidates who attempted the question were able to present some valid arguments to this question.

Features of good responses– best answers presented strong arguments to support the view that the sant tradition is relevant today by referring to the interpretation of warrior in a spiritual sense. They also evaluated its irrelevance in the context of its development in a time of persecution and aggression. The responses contained thoughtful argument and a clear conclusion.

Weaker response features – answers were very superficial in terms of knowledge and understanding of the topic and as such the evaluation was very basic and the arguments presented very weak and lacking evidence in support. Some candidates merely reiterated that it was developed in the time of Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh without using that information to create an argument that it is a concept rooted in persecution and oppression.

**4. (a) Explain the contribution of Guru Gobind Singh to the development of Sikhism. [AO1 15]**

This was a very popular question. However the responses presented varied in standard.

Good responses displayed a thorough knowledge and understanding of the importance of Guru Gobind Singh's contribution to the development of Sikhism. They were not only able to refer to the founding of the Khalsa and the introduction of wearing the 5ks but also to other contributions such as the compilation of the Dasam Granth and the concept of the Guru Panth. There was some impressive use of scriptural and scholarly quotes to exemplify points made and the focus was on how he developed Sikhism.

Weaker response answers tended to be limited in scope and concentrated entirely on his contribution in founding the Khalsa. Although creditable such answers could not attain the higher bands.

**4. (b) 'Sikhism is identified more with Guru Gobind Singh than Guru Nanak.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

There were some excellent responses and in fact most candidates were able to present some valid arguments to this question.

Good responses were well developed and clearly supported arguments which they evaluated. They had very good knowledge and understanding of the contribution of both Gurus to the development of Sikhism and were able to compare and evaluate in a critical and mature way. They were also able to identify the development made by Guru Gobind Singh to the foundations laid by Guru Nanak. The conclusions given were thoughtful and reasonable.

Weaker responses merely listed some of the contributions of Guru Nanak and some of the contributions of Guru Gobind Singh with little or no comparison between them and with little or no reference to the question.

**5. (a) Examine Sikh teaching on the nature of the soul. [AO1 15]**

Rather a disappointing question in terms of the responses given.

Good responses showed thorough knowledge and understanding of Sikh teaching and referred with confidence to the soul as divine spark. They also discussed Mukti and the stage of Saram Khand and were also able to discuss karma and rebirth in the context of the soul. They referred to some of the things that can stop the soul from reaching mukti – such as pride and greed.

Weak responses – answers were very limited in knowledge with many unable to go further than simply stating that every person has a divine spark which is reborn. Other answers focused more on God than the soul.



5. (b) **‘Sikhism has a monist view of the relationship between God and the soul.’**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

The responses here were generally very disappointing.

Stronger features: there were very few good answers. They showed knowledge and understanding of the monist view of the relationship between God and the soul and were able to relate it to Sikh teaching. They could also refer to differences between monism and monotheism. This allowed a thoughtful and meaningful evaluation of the issue in the question.

Features of weak responses – it is difficult to understand why some candidates would choose this question when evidently they had no understanding of what monism is. Without this basic knowledge and understanding they could not evaluate the issue in the question. Answers therefore were very basic or completely irrelevant.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2017

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### Unit 2 Section A An Introduction to Religion and Ethics

Most candidates seemed well prepared for the new specification and did not seem to have any difficulties in understanding the questions set. Many candidates responded well to the trigger 'compare' and structured their answers in a way that clearly demonstrated similarities and differences. Some responses limited the comparison to a short section at the end of the essay, having written everything they knew about the required theories.

It was clear that centres had recognised the increased AO2 demand of the new specification and some strong answers were seen. Very few answers did not exhibit at least some evaluation and analysis, and many candidates were able to construct an argument leading to a reasoned conclusion. Very few answers simply listed strengths and weaknesses. It was, however, obvious that some candidates had struggled to retain the knowledge required in this paper and a higher number of candidates than usual wrote very brief responses showing a very limited grasp of the theories.

1. (a) **Compare how Bentham and Mill attempted to achieved the 'greatest happiness for the greatest number.'** [AO1 30]

Q1 was the most popular of the two questions.

Features of good responses - good answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the similarities and differences between the two versions of Utilitarianism. A wide range of features were discussed including the principle of utility, the Hedonic Calculus, strong and weak Rule Utilitarianism, higher and lower pleasures and the 'harm principle'. Good candidates made effective use of quotations from the named scholars and from other sources in order to develop their explanations. Some good answers made effective use of ethical terminology such as relative, absolute, deontological, etc. to draw out the differences between the two approaches with consistent understanding of the terminology in Welsh scripts. Others gave good examples of the differences using animal testing or nuclear war to illustrate this.

In terms of Bentham's version, candidates were usually able to identify the quantitative approach and the importance of consequences. Most candidates could list most criteria of the hedonic calculus but fewer could explain these accurately. Many candidates pointed out the weaknesses of Act Utilitarianism that Mill's version aimed to address, with gang rape being a common example used to highlight the issues. Candidates should be advised to be careful in how this example is used as some appeared to suggest that Bentham regarded such acts as moral. Mill's focus on the quality of pleasure was explained well, with most candidates able to offer accurate examples of higher and lower pleasures. Candidates could usually associate Mill with Rule Utilitarianism, with some candidates referring to the idea of universality within their explanations,

Features of weaker responses - some aspects of Mill's thought were definitely less well understood across the majority of answers. Whilst weaker candidates recognised that Mill's focus was on pleasure, few candidates were then able to relate this to the idea of 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number.' Also very few understood that Mill did not use the term Rule Utilitarianism himself nor that he is seen by many scholars as a 'weak' Rule Utilitarian. Candidates struggled to make explicit how Mill suggested the use of past experience to establish rules that would create greatest happiness. Of those who did identify the 'harm principle' few could explain accurately how this could be linked to Utilitarianism. Some candidates appeared to get very mixed up with whether Utilitarianism related to the individual or to wider society, with some arguing that Act Utilitarianism only creates happiness for individuals whereas Rule creates happiness for societies, and other arguing the complete opposite.

Also, very weak responses showed confusion between Utilitarianism and other theories studied such as Natural Law and Situation Ethics.

Some weaker candidates had clearly prepared an answer applying the theory to these issues and simply wrote that with little attempt to address the specific question. Some candidates simply explained Bentham's Act Utilitarianism and Mill's version of Utilitarianism without comparing the two explicitly. Such responses often contained lengthy examples which did not really relate to the question. Weaker responses showed insecure knowledge of which aspects of the theory could be attributed to which scholar, and sometimes described Utilitarianism as a religious theory.

1. (b) **'Mill's version of Utilitarianism gives clearer guidance than Bentham's when making moral decisions.'**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 30]

Features of good responses - candidates were able to construct a purposeful analysis of the issues raised, showing a clear line of argument throughout the essay, drawing on effective evidence and examples to support their points. There was some crossover from the AO1 question in terms of examples and quotations, but if these were used in a different way to evaluate the key issues then they could be credited. Those candidates who performed well on the AO1 question were well set up to produce a good AO2 response comparing the relative merits of quantity versus quality, the clarity of guidance offered by rules compared with the Hedonic calculus, the impact of the harm principle in addressing the treatment of minorities, and the benefits of flexibility compared with practicality and ease of use. Some very sophisticated responses argued that clarity and ease do not necessarily lead to the most moral decisions, and some compared the two forms of Rule Utilitarianism, concluding that the 'weak' rule approach that Mill seemed to take formed the best compromise to tackle the criticisms of both Act and Rule.

Features of weaker responses - weaker AO1 responses tended to lead to weak AO2 responses as candidates were unclear about the different aspects of the theory and therefore could not assess the guidance offered by either Bentham or Mill. Many candidates argued that the Hedonic Calculus justifies highly immoral acts if performed by a majority, rather than recognising that the calculus is open to abuse through individual interpretation. Weaker responses also tended to include examples without relating these to any analysis or evaluation. Candidates tended to assert points rather than explain or analyse these, for example, stating that Mill's distinction between higher and lower pleasures was 'clearer' without explaining why. Some candidates simply listed strengths and weaknesses of Utilitarianism in general with little reference to the question.

**2. (a) Compare how the Divine Command Theory and Ethical Egoism define what makes an action moral. [AO1 30]**

Although this was not the most popular question, a considerable number of candidates did choose to answer and were able to show good knowledge and understanding of both theories. Good responses made use of scholars such as Adams and Stirner to discuss modified Divine Command Theory and Ethical Egoism. Key terms such as relativist, absolute, subjective and objective were used to compare the two theories. Candidates tended to have a stronger grasp of Divine Command Theory, making reference to the nature of God and the role of God as divine law-giver. Clear examples of divine commands in different religions were seen, although the Ten Commandments were the most common example. Adams' modification of DCT based on God's omnipotence was explained well. Ethical egoism was not always explained in as much depth; however, very good responses were able to clearly explain the difference between psychological and ethical egoism, with clear understanding of aspects of Stirner's work such as the union of egoists, oneness (eigenheit) and uniqueness.

Weaker responses tended to give lengthy and unnecessary explanations of the Euthyphro dilemma and the problems of arbitrariness and pluralism, before repeating the same explanations in part (b). Also, many answers were quite brief, with candidates demonstrating a sound general grasp of the basic ideas, but showing no depth to their understanding. Some students wrongly stated that DCT is identical to Natural Law theory, and proceeded to explain Natural Law. Others confused Ethical Egoism with Virtue Theory or Utilitarianism. Stirner was sometimes wrongly represented as the 'founder' of egoism and his terminology was often poorly understood.

2. (b) **‘Morality is whatever God commands.’**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

Feature of good responses – there were some excellent answers were seen using different approaches to evaluate the statement. Most candidates identified from the outset that this statement would be supported by Divine Command Theory and some candidates focused entirely on an evaluation of Divine Command Theory. Others compared a divine command approach with other ethical theories including Utilitarianism and Situation Ethics, which showed a good breadth of understanding across the specification. Some of the best responses seen evaluated Divine Command Theory against Natural Law, arguing that use of reason is better than blindly following the law. Good responses showed highly accurate use of specialist terminology and a range of evidence and examples to support their line of argument. The ‘horns’ of the Euthyphro dilemma were unpacked and analysed very effectively by some candidates, with good discussions of the issues of arbitrariness and the omnipotence of God. Candidates also engaged with the issues of arbitrariness and religious pluralism, with some excellent responses using modified Divine Command Theory to address the first problem (although few then went on to challenge Adams’ approach).

Weaker responses tended to simply repeat explanations of the Euthyphro dilemma and the problems of arbitrariness and pluralism which they had already outlined in part a with very little analysis or evaluation. Some candidates were clearly confused about which issues are raised by the Euthyphro dilemma. Some candidates evaluated Ethical Egoism as part of their answer without relating this in any way to the question. Again, some very basic and simple responses were seen.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2017

#### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

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

Both questions came from well-established areas of the historical WJEC A Level suite and this showed the in depth and occasional excellence of the responses to the questions. Key areas of underperformance were most commonly linked to a misreading of the rubric of the questions that led a significant number to include irrelevant material in questions at the cost of providing a balanced set of responses across the paper. One feature of several responses in the AO2 sections was the development of arguments, some quite sophisticated in both style and content, which was pleasing to see. Although this was also the area that often saw significant amounts of material that bore no relevance to the question asked.

**3. (a) Explain Aquinas' cosmological arguments for the existence of God.**  
**[AO1 30]**

Q3 was the most popular of the two questions.

Features of good responses - most answers gave a paragraph of introduction that included reference to inductive proof (although there was confusion evident between the terms 'a priori' and 'a posteriori') and the Greek background to the argument. Centres should note that background information is only useful when it provides relevant context to the material being requested in the question. The use of the 'marble' example was fine if it led to an understanding of actuality, potentiality, efficient cause and how this related to the universe. Similarly good responses showed understanding of Aquinas' use of fire and wood and how this related to the universe. The best answers were able to give highly accurate explanations and exemplification to each of the Aquinas' three ways.

Features of weaker responses – provided too much detail on Aristotle or even biographical information on Aquinas (several candidates referred to the relationship between Aquinas and his parents – an entirely erroneous use of their time). They also failed to make the link between the 'marble' example and how it led to an understanding of actuality, potentiality, efficient cause and how this related to the universe. Similarly weaker responses failed to show an understanding of Aquinas' use of fire and wood and how this related to the universe. A significant number of candidates included irrelevant reference to Aquinas 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> ways, along with detail on both Leibniz and the Kalam cosmological argument.

Another key area of underperformance was the confusion between the examples for each of the ways. Centres should encourage candidates to both know and understand the purpose of these illustrative examples so that future confusion is avoided.

**3. (b) 'Cosmological arguments for God's existence are not persuasive.'**  
**Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

Features of good responses - there were a number of excellent responses from candidates clearly well versed in writing effective evaluations that both accurately referenced and exemplified the work of relevant scholars and schools of thought in relation to this specific theistic argument. Leibniz and the Kalam argument were generally used with relevance, usually to argue that these arguments added to the persuasiveness of Aquinas' cosmological argument.

Features of weaker responses - a regurgitation of AO1 information on Leibniz and the Kalam argument is not creditworthy here. Russell and Hume were often prevalent within responses, but their ideas were rarely explained in a fully coherent fashion. References to Hume often included his criticisms of the teleological argument, demonstrating that candidates did not have a fully developed sense of how Hume's arguments could be used as effective counters to the cosmological argument. How inductive arguments could only lead to possibility or probability was used as was a comparison with the persuasiveness of deductive arguments although this often led a significant number of less focused candidates to write everything they knew about the ontological argument and to critique that. Keeping to the issue of persuasiveness also presented a challenge for some candidates who did not therefore reach the higher bands for their marks.

**4. (a) Explain what is meant by the problem of evil. [AO1 30]**

Features of good responses - the most successful candidates were able to produce a particular formula in responding to this question – clearly demonstrating the effective teaching that is going on in many centres in relation to this specific topic area of the specification. When referring to Mackie's triad it was pleasing that many suggested that the issue was one that presented itself to believers in the God of Classical Theism. Animal, innocent and immense suffering still presented themselves as separate entities (perhaps demonstrating that some centres are focusing on the requirements of the old specification for this topic area?). However, reference to Rowe and Paul demonstrated that most understood what was required in exemplifying the problem of evil for religious believers. Most candidates generally better represented Rowe.

Features of weaker responses - many answers referred to moral and natural evil, but generally these lacked exemplification and in those responses where the higher band of marks were not accessed. Centres should note that many of these responses would have been able to gain more credit if they had said why the existence of these types of evil is an issue for believers

The one significant shortcoming in this part of the question was the references to either the Augustinian or Irenaean theodicies (or indeed, both). Candidates should be reminded that the theodicies are responses to the problem of evil not the problem itself (which is what the question was asking for).

There was also occasional confusion between Rowe's particular example of the fawn and the fawn in a certain well-known animated feature.

4. (b) **‘Augustinian type theodicies solve the problem of evil.’  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

Features of good responses - there were examples of excellent responses to this question – evaluating the statement with accuracy and a maturity that, again, points to what must clearly be excellent pedagogical experiences in the centres preparing for this examination. For example, many referred to the existence of hell, the biological impossibility of being seminally present in Adam and the unfairness of being punished for an ancient sin as being weaknesses of such theodicies.

Features of weaker responses - as this was an AO2 question, extensive rewrites of the actual theodicy types were often irrelevant, as the presented material was not evaluated. Indeed, depending on how it was presented determined if it gained any credit at all. The aspects of the theodicy that could be considered as strengths were generally less well done. Many referred to its compatibility with Biblical tradition, but there wasn't much other than that that came through strongly. Some wrote as if they knew nothing at all about Augustine's theodicy, but just put his name in occasionally. Some candidates wrote mainly about the Free Will Defence, without actually addressing the actual question. There was also some confusion between the Augustinian type and Irenaean type theodicies.





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