



# GCE Examiners' Report

Religious Studies

Summer 2024

## Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.<sup>1</sup>

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

## Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	<a href="https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/">https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/</a>
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.  For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: <a href="#">Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)</a>

<sup>1</sup> Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a>
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	<a href="https://resources.wjec.co.uk/">https://resources.wjec.co.uk/</a>
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	<a href="#">Become an Examiner   WJEC</a>

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## Executive Summary

### WJEC AS level

The total entry for 2024 has risen slightly. Age 17 accounts for 86.0% of entries, an increase of 8.6% compared to 2019. The majority of candidates were females at 77.9% and 83.0% sat through the medium of English. There was an increase in the number of candidates from Wales from 97.1% to 97.9% in 2024. Centre type shows variation in candidates entering at Secondary schools decreased from 84.9% to 78.5%.

Outcomes are down slightly at grade A (-2.5%) in comparison to 2023, but up slightly at grades B-E. The outcomes in 2024 are above those awarded in 2019 at all grade points.

#### Positive aspects of candidates' examination responses this year:

- **use of sources of wisdom and authority / understanding of named scholars:** Higher-scoring candidates demonstrated a strong grasp of the named scholarly perspectives and also utilised accurate and relevance references to sources of wisdom and authority
- an **awareness of diversity:** successful candidates effectively showcased the diversity within the religion they have studied
- candidates **used relevant scriptural passages and modern theories or scholars to support their AO2 lines of reasoning.**

#### Issues for centres to consider:

- **poor handwriting was a serious concern** noted by many senior examiners this year. This highlights the need for appropriate access arrangements to be made by centres. Centres need to be aware of the state of their candidates' handwriting for (i) an extended period (the length of the exam) (ii) under exam conditions. Some responses given by candidates this year were simply unreadable and credit can be awarded in these cases (see Areas for Improvement 1: classroom resources)
- **not focusing on the question set:** a recurring issue was the failure of some candidates to fully address the questions set, often focusing on one part of the question or diverging into tangential issues. This highlights a need for better comprehension of the command words and key phrases in questions (see Areas for Improvement 2: classroom resources)
- **not providing balanced analysis and evaluation:** There was a general lack of balanced analysis and evaluation, with many responses lacking alternative viewpoints or critical engagement. Develop skills in critical analysis and evaluation, ensuring that candidates provide balanced arguments with supporting evidence (see Areas for Improvement 3: developing AO2 skills)

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
<b>1. Access arrangements for candidates</b> with poor handwriting.	<a href="http://wjec.co.uk">Special Requirements (wjec.co.uk)</a>	Information on the support available and the procedures required.
<b>2. Identifying key command words and phrases within each question</b> – to select key information to address the question	<a href="#">Guidance For Teaching Document</a>  <a href="#">Exam Walkthroughs</a>	Useful resources and a list of the question command words and their meaning.  Shows how to break down each question, plan and select relevant information to address the question.
<b>3. Developing AO2 skills</b> - in critical analysis and evaluation, ensuring that candidates provide balanced arguments with supporting evidence	<a href="#">DEVELOPING AO1 AND AO2 SKILLS (PL 2023)</a>	Some tips on how to structure/improve AO1 and AO2 responses including key phrases.

## Executive Summary

### WJEC A level

The total entry for 2024 is 704 compared to 1,263 in 2019. Age 18s remain the majority group, accounting for 93.6% of entries. For age 18s, gender, country and language medium remained stable between 2019 and 2024. Females accounted for 80.3% of entries with the overall majority entries situated in Wales at 98.6%. 16.1% of entries were under a Welsh medium. Centre type experienced a shift - secondaries account for 79.5% in 2024 down from 85.1% in 2019.

Outcomes this year whilst lower than 2023 are slightly higher at all grade points than 2019.

#### Positive aspects of candidates' examination responses this year:

- **appropriate use of the correct Assessment Objective specific skills for the question set** – good candidates displayed a clear understanding of the AO1 and AO2 assessment objectives and use the appropriate skills to address the question
- **a clear writing structure** – good candidates structured their responses using paragraphs which led to a clear logical structure and also provided a conclusion for their AO2 responses
- **use of evidence and scholarly references/quotations** – good candidates included well-chosen examples which helped in showcasing a deeper understanding of the topics and also helped to substantiate their AO2 arguments. They also provided accurate and relevant use of scholarly references, particularly in discussing complex religious concepts.

#### Issues for centres to consider:

- **poor handwriting was a serious concern** noted by many senior examiners this year. This highlights the need for appropriate access arrangements to be made by centres. Centres need to be aware of the state of their candidates' handwriting for (i) an extended period (the length of the exam) (ii) under exam conditions. Some responses given by candidates this year were simply unreadable and credit can be awarded in these cases (see Areas for Improvement 1: classroom resources)
- **not focusing on the question set** – a recurring issue was the failure of some candidates to fully address the questions set, often focusing on one part of the question or diverging into tangential issues. This highlights a need for better comprehension of the command words and key phrases in questions (see Areas for Improvement 2: classroom resources)
- **for weaker candidates, the necessity of clear structure and logical paragraphing was highlighted**, yet some candidates failed to organize their responses adequately, which impacted the clarity and persuasiveness of their arguments (see Areas for Improvement 3: classroom resources)
- **weak understanding of key terms and concepts** – weaker candidates struggled with understanding key terms and concepts and this lack of clarity often led to irrelevant or superficial responses (see Areas for Improvement 4: classroom resources).

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
<b>1. Access arrangements for candidates with poor handwriting.</b>	<a href="http://wjec.co.uk">Special Requirements (wjec.co.uk)</a>	Information on the support available and the procedures required.
<b>2. Identifying key command words and phrases within each question</b> – to select key information to address the question	<a href="#">Guidance For Teaching Document</a>  <a href="#">Exam Walkthroughs</a>	Useful resources and a list of the question command words and their meaning.  Shows how to break down each question, plan and select relevant information to address the question.
<b>3. Developing AO1 and AO2 skills</b> – writing in a clear and logical way for AO1 and AO2.	<a href="#">DEVELOPING AO1 AND AO2 SKILLS (PL 2023)</a>	Some tips on how to structure/improve AO1 and AO2 responses including key AO1 and AO2 phrases and link-words
<b>4. Understanding of key terms and concepts</b>	<a href="#">WJEC A2 glossary of terms</a>	A key terms glossary for Unit 3 to 6.



# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 1A: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Part (a)** of each question tests candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Part (b)** of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

Q1 – Theme 3b: Religious Life – the community of believers

Q2 – Theme 3c: Religious Life – key moral principles

Q3 – Theme 1b: Religious figures and sacred texts – Jesus – his resurrection.

Q4 – Theme 4a: Religious practices that shape religious identity – religious identity through in baptism

Q5 – Theme 4c: Religious practices that shape religious identity – religious identity through diversity in festivals.

#### Contextual information

- the total entry for 2024 is 275 compared with 311 entries in 2019
- the majority of candidates were females at 75.4% and 99.1% sat through the medium of English
- there was a decrease in the number of candidates from Wales from 94.0% to 93.0% in 2024
- centre type shows variation in candidates entering at Secondary schools decreased from 69.5% to 60.1% in 2024 with other increasing to 5.7% from 0.8%
- The mean mark is very stable, up 1.1 since June 2019 and up 0.8 since 2023 for the aged 17 candidates.

#### Positive features of responses:

- higher scoring candidates had a sound grasp of the scholars tested in the examination e.g. Bultmann and Wright (Q3) and Zwingli (Q4)
- good candidates used relevant and accurate scriptural passages as well as modern theories to support their AO2 arguments e.g. Situation Ethics (Q2a)
- higher scoring candidates were able to demonstrate the diversity that exists within Christianity (e.g. Q5a)

### Issues for centres to consider:

- candidates need to focus on the question set and select relevant information and not just write all they know about a topic. They need to identify and highlight key phrases and focus attention on these issues
- if a question is referring to two specific areas then candidates need to ensure they refer to both areas in their response
- when attempting AO2 part (b) questions candidates need to carefully select arguments to demonstrate analysis and evaluation skills (AO2) rather than providing just a list of under-developed arguments (AO1).
- candidates should aim to provide balanced analysis and evaluation in their AO2 responses by offering alternative views or critiques of statements, rather than just one-sided perspectives.
- handwriting remains a concern for a number of scripts and centres need to be aware of their candidate's handwriting style and ability *under exam conditions* and, if necessary, make appropriate arrangements so that their work can be accessed by WJEC examiners. It is not possible to award material that cannot be read.

### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### Section A

**Q.1** This was slightly more popular than Q2 in this section and also achieved the highest mean scores overall in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- read and understood the question in terms of the 'role of churches' and made specific reference to their two chosen two areas
- provided clear and succinct detail about each of their chosen areas, e.g., sacraments – the importance of baptism in terms of affirming a Christian belief or religious teaching – the importance of the sermon in delivering God's message to the congregation.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- follow the rubric of the question and write about 2 areas not all 3
- read the question carefully, highlighting key phrased and select relevant information about the areas that they have chosen - not just write generally about churches.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- understood what was meant by 'religious teaching' is and so could accurately address the question
- many referred to Jesus' last commandment which was – 'to go and make disciples and baptise them'.
- argued that other aspects of Christian life were more important such as demonstrating agapeic love, helping the poor, etc.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- select arguments carefully in order to demonstrate their AO2 skills (of analysis and evaluation). Do not provide only AO1 type information – a list of possible arguments.
- need to read the question carefully and identify key phrases within it, such as ‘main role’ and ‘religious teaching’ and focus their attention on these issues.

**Q.2** This was slightly less popular than Q1 in this section and also achieved the lowest mean scores overall in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- read the whole question and referred to both ‘forgiveness and love of neighbour’ as well as explaining ‘why they are important to Christians’.
- referred to or quoted scriptural passages in support.
- developed the ideas of forgiveness into modern day examples and love of neighbour through the use of Situation Ethics and agape

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- follow the rubric of the question carefully, and if it refers to two Christian principles refer to two in the response. Make sure it is clear in the response that they are distinctly different principles.
- Gain a clear knowledge and understanding of scriptural references and do not just insert them almost randomly into a response without explaining the reasoning behind using them.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- referred to relevant examples of ‘God’s negative behaviour’ in their analysis and evaluation, including: the Ten Plagues, the Red Sea killing the Egyptians, and other orders to kill in / post battle.
- developed an Old vs New Testament analysis and evaluation. For example, Jesus as the incarnate Son of God showed that what happened in the Old Testament would not be found in the New Testament. God’s behaviour had changed / matured? References included breaking Sabbath day laws to assist the sick, befriending Mary Magdalene, preventing the stoning of woman caught in adultery.
- were aware that this change could cause other issues e.g. could God’s behaviour change again?

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- gain a secure knowledge and understanding of the possible subject content with regards to this issue, e.g. Christians may claim that according to the Bible, humans are created in God’s image and so it is inevitable that God’s behaviour is the basis for Christian morality or that others argue against following God’s laws in certain circumstances e.g. use of the death penalty for adultery.
- eliminate erroneous material such as the assertion that God forgave Adam and Eve’s eating of the apple or that Jesus forgave Judas without any supporting evidence.

## Section B

**Q.3** This was the most popular question in this section and also achieved the highest mean scores overall in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- knew Bultmann's views and were able to confidently write about his views on Jesus' resurrection.
- included ideas such as Bultmann introducing a discontinuity between the pre-Easter and post-Easter Jesus and that he argues for the need to demythologize the account of Jesus' resurrection in order to understand it
- stated that in demythologising Jesus' resurrection Bultmann seeks to retain its meaning which he sees as a story designed to maintain faith.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- accurately use and define key specialist terminology such as 'demythologise'
- gain a secure knowledge and understanding of Bultmann's views and not to confuse his views with those of N.T. Wright
- avoid a comparison of the view of Bultmann and Wright as this is not the question set and results in much irrelevant material.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- knew the differing views about bodily resurrection and could assess the strengths and weaknesses of each argument presented and reach a conclusion
- made good use of Bultmann and N.T. Wright to support their analysis and evaluation by cross referencing their understandings
- made relevant and accurate scriptural referencing e.g. good use made of Lazarus being resuscitated compared to Jesus resurrected

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to secure a clear knowledge and understanding of the differing views of Jesus' resurrection (including Bultmann and N.T. Wright and be able to evaluate them.
- focus on the bodily resurrection as per the question and avoid drifting into broad discussion about the crucifixion or the historicity of biblical accounts generally.
- provide more than a one-sided views that there were no eye witnesses to the resurrection without addressing the issues of their appearing to be multiple scriptural references to eye witnesses' testimonies of Jesus' resurrection.

**Q.4** This was the second most popular question in this section but achieved the lowest mean scores overall in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- addressed the question set and dealt with the key words in the question. Recognising that the command word used required demonstration of a depth of knowledge and understanding, and that the focus in the question was also on Zwingli, not just baptism in general.
- referred to the key views of Zwingli such as the idea that he rejected the idea that baptism was regenerative, that it is a covenant sign which indicates that those who receive it are willing to amend their lives to follow Jesus and believe he was Christ.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- recognise that Zwingli was not against baptism
- gain a secure knowledge and understanding of Zwingli's view on baptism and not confuse his ideas with those of Augustine and Barth.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- considered the act of baptism and unwrapped it in terms of doctrinal / different churches' views of what it is and is not, and whether it does or not does not save in and of itself.
- considered what else might save, if baptism does not and so went into discussions on: faith and/or good works.
- made scriptural references including the repentant thief of the cross with Jesus who is promised paradise but was not baptised.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- secure an accurate knowledge and understanding of what theologians or denominations believed specifically about baptism and its saving power.
- focus on whether baptism, whenever received, saves or not, and avoid giving generalised answers about the arguments for and against infant and believers' baptism

**Q.5** This was the least popular question in this section with the second highest mean scores overall in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- demonstrated a clear knowledge and understanding, either by going through one tradition and then the other, or those who took a thematic approach e.g. date of Easter, nature of Lent, Holy Week and Easter itself accurately relating and so comparing the different ways of celebrating.
- provided accurate detail and appropriate examples e.g. concerning dates used or the variety in liturgical practices between the different churches.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- secure an accurate knowledge and understanding of the two traditions in the question
- do not simply describe general Christian Easter traditions without being able to attribute them to either of the Christian traditions listed in the question.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- engaged with the statement and were able to offer supported and balanced analysis and evaluation about the importance of Easter compared to Christmas.
- provided some perceptive discussion about the relative importance of each festival for Christianity and were clearly linked to doctrines and traditions connected to each festival. A clear conclusion was drawn.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- provide more than a one-sided evaluation supporting the statement and offer alternative views to or a critique of the statement.
- focus on the question set and don't drift into a discussion of the commercialisation of Christmas and/or Easter.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 1B: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF ISLAM

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Part (a)** of each question tests candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Part (b)** of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

Q1 – Theme 1a: The significance on the development of Islam of both the life and teachings of Muhammad in Makkah following the Night of Power

Q2 – Theme 2a: The Qur'an as a source of wisdom and authority – its use and treatment in Islam

Q3 – Theme 3b: Hajj (pilgrimage)

Q4 – Theme 2c: Akhirah (the Day of Final Judgement)

Q5 – Theme 4a: The role of the masjid (mosque) in Islam

#### Contextual information

- the total entry for 2024 is 116 compared with 176 entries in 2019
- the majority of candidates were females at 70.9% down from 77.9% in 2019. 82.7% of entries sat through the medium of English, down 8.7%
- there was an increase in the number of candidates from Wales from 84.0% to 96.4% in 2024. centre type remains stable with candidates entering at Secondary schools decreased from 97.5% to 93.6% in 2024 with independent or state selective centres increasing to 6.4% from 2.5%
- The mean mark is up 2.4 since June 2019 and up 1.3 marks since June 2023.

#### Positive features of responses:

- overall candidates achieved higher average marks than in other Unit 1 options.
- candidates' part (a) AO1 responses were on the average (apart from Q3a) stronger than their AO2 responses.

#### Issues for centres to consider:

- try to promote a deeper understanding of the different views that exist within Islam on various topics, and scholarly interpretations of these issues.
- encourage candidates to make accurate and relevant use of quotations from Islamic teachings.
- whilst candidates part (a) responses are on average good their AO2 responses are slightly weaker. A greater appreciation of the type of issues they can expect in examinations (as outlined in the specification) and to develop the necessary AO2 skills needed to address these – clear lines of reasoning with a logical conclusion.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### Section A

**Q.1** This was the least popular question in this section with the lowest overall mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- detailed and accurate time frame of events
- considered various aspects, such as the challenge to pagan beliefs and implications in the persecution
- recognised the command word used and addressed accordingly.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- focus responses on the ‘development’ of Islam in Makkah and the stages of Muhammad’s mission.
- provide greater detail about the challenge the Night of Power to Pagan beliefs

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- explored definitions of what it might mean to be a ‘complete leader’ and used the definition as a yardstick.
- gave some consideration of this and if this concept was dependent on the place and time he lived in, or was a general quality he had
- included a concluding judgement, drawing together the response

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- remain focussed on the references to ‘complete leader’ in ‘Medinah’ the question and leave out any irrelevant information
- refer to Muhammad’s life both in Madinah and Makkah, do not just write generally about all of Muhammad’s life
- consider the many different aspects of leadership, rather than one or two.

**Q.2** This was the most popular question in this section but with the lowest overall mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the Qur’an as a source of wisdom specifically, rather than other aspects of the Qur’an.
- considered wisdom in terms of a source of Islamic law and explained how interpretations are made from it
- also considered wisdom as inspiration for personal guidance; in prayer and in a wide range of other ways
- others approached this from the point of view of guidance to worship, practice or moral guidance in Islam.



**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- explain how sources are used in Islam – show how Qur’anic instructions are explained by the Hadith
- take care not to describe the use of the Qur’an alone, without showing its use as a source
- be specific about how the Qur’an is used as a source, rather than writing generally about all sources of wisdom in Islam.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- defined the Qur’an as an Arabic work, from which all translations are regarded as interpretations and creating a question mark over accuracy
- considered how far translated words could be accurate
- considered how translations might have accuracy when linked to the translator as a scholar or Imam
- pointed out the need for translations to understand Islam, creating more accurate understanding than reading untranslated text
- were able to sustain a line of argument giving detailed reasoning about issues over translation.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- show understanding of the issue of risk of change to the message, which previous revelations suffered from
- show understanding of the importance of Arabic terms in the ritual and teaching of Islam
- move on from alternating for and against points to build up a logical, consistent discussion and conclusion

**Section B**

**Q.3** This was the least popular question in this section with the lowest overall mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- referred to the ‘significance of Hajj’ in every paragraph, which helped to focus writing to address the question
- considered significance broadly, considering a range of different areas - to complete the Five Pillars, gain entry into Jannah in the afterlife and make a fresh start after the forgiveness of Arafat
- provided many explanatory comments, not just descriptive ones.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- directly refer to the significance of the stages of Hajj
- include comments about the significance of completing this Pillar overall as a Muslim – this was often missed out
- consider the ‘significance of Hajj’ for different individual Muslims in their personal journey of faith
- presented confident and coherent arguments with a clear overall conclusion.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- provided a clear summary of possible gains in a short opening paragraph.
- focused the response on this to keep sight of the individual/community dynamic throughout.
- considered 'gains' broadly, including possible reward in the afterlife, motivation to practice, community strengthening and so on.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- link paragraphs with logical connectives: words which fit and move the argument on, rather than seeing each paragraph as an independent one.
- the breadth of the arguments used could be developed not just a focus on entry into Paradise in the afterlife
- give greater consideration to community gains, especially possible benefits in sharing experiences back in the home context.

**Q.4** This was the most popular question in this section with the highest overall mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- recognised the command word in the question and selected information appropriately.
- used appropriate terminology to summarise aspects of the Day of Judgement
- gave direct or indirect quotations of traditions regarding the Day of Judgement, showing detailed knowledge and understanding.
- considered Islamic teachings about the Day of Judgement – this could include how they relate to a Muslim's practice.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- considered why Muslims might fear Akhirah and explained this in terms of judgement, related back to daily practice.
- referred to different scholarly approaches, such as Sufism and inner understandings of fear related to faith.
- considered fear and hope in terms of a Muslim's relationship or response to Allah – for example the expectation of reward for obeying Allah's commands. Whilst others made the point that it depended more on a relationship with Allah because the all-compassionate God has the power to forgive or not, irrespective of actions.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to link the idea of 'fear' to the concept of the afterlife.
- should engage in greater discussion about what makes a 'good Muslim' and if fear was necessarily part of this.
- should include a clear judgement in their response, consistent with the line of argument made.

**Q.5** This was the second most popular question in this section with the second highest overall mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- covered a wide breadth of different roles of the masjid
- referred to it as a place of prayer in terms of leadership of congregations, different prayers including Jummah, giving the precise timing of, and teaching the ritual to Muslim – covering several roles of the masjid
- referred to other functions including teaching, ceremonies, social, celebration, welfare and political issues, even a military role for the first mosque
- added perceptive comments about the role of modern mosques in mixed societies providing a source of strength and identity for minorities.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- should refer to a place of prayer – as it is one of the main roles of a mosque
- don't only refer to the issue of prayer – refer to other social and educational roles
- provide greater about each role, including specialist terms, relating roles to Islamic practices.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- gave a clear definition of the words in the statement - 'simple' and 'and' questioned if they needed to be applied to the masjid.
- provided confident arguments challenging the statement and coming to a clear, overall conclusion.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- focus on the keywords in the question - 'ideal' and 'simple' in relation to
- link prayer to the role of the masjid.
- use a clear structure - a definition of 'simple' and 'central', logical paragraphs and conclusion would help to organise a response.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 1C: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF JUDAISM

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Part (a)** of each question tests candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Part (b)** of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

Q1 – Theme 1c: The Torah as a source of wisdom and authority

Q2 – Theme 1b: Moses and the establishment of the covenant of law

Q3 – Theme 3b: Jewish teachings about tefillah (prayer) with reference to the Amidah and teachings about tzedakah (charity)

Q4 – Theme 4b: The role of festivals in shaping religious identity – Pesach

Q5 – Theme 3c: Beliefs about judgement - the Messiah and the afterlife:

#### Contextual information

- the total entry for 2024 is 90 compared with 158 entries in 2019. Age 17 accounts for 95.6% of entries, an increase of 0.7% compared to 2019
- the majority of candidates were females at 82.6% up from 76.0% in 2019. 72.1% of entries sat through the medium of English, down 17.9%. Wales remains the only country accounting for all entries for this unit
- centre type remains stable with candidates entering at Secondary schools increasing from 94.7% to 97.7% in 2024 with other decreasing to 2.3% from 5.3%
- the mean mark is up 5.0 marks from 2019 and up 1.5 from 2023.

#### Positive features of responses:

- It was pleasing to see numerous candidates employ an accurate and sophisticated use of subject specific terminology and/or Hebrew vocabulary. Occasionally this included relevant terminology / Hebrew vocabulary extending beyond the specification, which is a credit to the breadth and depth of teaching undertaken by centres, as well as candidates own independent study.
- numerous candidates included accurate quotations, or paraphrases, from relevant scholars or the Tenakh. These quotations provided useful supporting evidence for candidates to support their point (AO1) or justify their evaluation (AO2).
- the strongest responses focused on the target of the question and did not deviate from this. This is a credit to centres that have explicitly taught candidates to identify, and engage with, the question that has been set.

### Issues for centres to consider:

- avoid the repetition of AO1 content in part (b) AO2 responses. Whilst candidates may repeat some AO1 content (for example, to provide brief context or explanation) it must be emphasised that the focus of the part (b) questions are the skills of analysis and evaluation. Therefore, any repeated AO1 content should be brief and explicitly used for the purpose of aiding analysis and evaluation.
- candidates need to pay careful attention to all parts of the question / statement, particularly for questions that have a dual (e.g., use **and** treatment) or comparative target (e.g., privilege **or** responsibility) target.

### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### Section A

**Q.1** This was the most popular question in this section with the highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on both aspects of the question – use and treatment
- explained how the Torah was used / treated alongside why the Torah was used / treated that way. This ensured greater depth in such responses.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- do not only focus on one aspect of the question; for example, writing only about the use of the Torah, or writing only about the treatment of the Torah.
- focus on explaining how the Torah is used / treated rather than just listing a series of facts.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- the best answers evaluated the authority of the Torah comparatively, alongside other sources of wisdom and authority in Judaism. They considered whether the Torah is the 'main' authority for Jews today.
- this approach enabled candidates to reach a clear judgment on the extent to which the Torah was the main authority in Judaism.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- don't simply repeat AO1 information used in part (a) of the question without clearly linking the information on the use / treatment of the torah to the idea of its' authority.
- consider different viewpoints within Judaism, e.g., Orthodox and Reform in response to the authority of the Torah.

**Q.2** This was the least popular question in this section with the lowest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the significance of the Mosaic covenant, rather than describing the story of Moses
- explained why the Mosaic covenant is still relevant today, often by comparing the current modern age to the time of Moses.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- do not simply describe the story of Moses, without making any connection to the Mosaic covenant
- refer to the importance of its relevance for Jews today, not just at the time of Moses.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- evaluated both concepts of privilege and responsibility, with some candidates questioning whether responsibility is a form of privilege
- compared the Mosaic and Abrahamic covenants, evaluating which covenant entailed the most privilege / responsibility.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- do not only focus on one aspect of the statement (for example, responsibility over privilege and vice versa) but aim to address both.
- should not just duplicate part (a) AO1 content and describe the Mosaic covenant, but instead analyse and evaluate the responsibilities / privileges that the covenant entailed.

## **Section B**

**Q.3** This was by far the least popular question in this section and the question with the lowest means scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- provided detailed, specific and accurate information about the diversity of practice of prayer that exists within Judaism.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- gain a secure knowledge of understanding of the different types of prayer that exist within Judaism – be able to name particular prayers and discuss the different prayer services that Jews may attend; name the Jewish prayer book (Siddur) and not confuse the Siddur for the Torah scrolls.
- gain a secure knowledge of understanding of the differences that exist within different forms of Judaism with regards to prayer and avoid inaccuracies such as, Reform Jews do not pray, and Reform Jews only pray and home and never in the synagogue.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were specific and accurate in their analysis and evaluation of the Amidah.
- were able to use quotes and accurate paraphrases of the Amidah.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- secure accurate knowledge and understanding about the Amidah
- be able to make accurate quotes from the Amidah.
- ensure a balanced response is given, do not spend more time discussing other sources which may be seen as summaries of Jewish beliefs and teachings (such as the Shema, or the mitzvot) as a way to avoid talking about the Amidah.

**Q.4** This was the second popular question in this section and the question with the second highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- connected their discussion of Pesach to Jewish identity
- explained Pesach, rather than describing just what happens at the Pesach seder.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- do not simply describe the story of Pesach and/or described the Pesach seder, but rather ensure that a connection is clearly made to the concept of Jewish identity.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- analysed and evaluated the relevance of the concept of redemption by explaining how the celebration of Pesach foregrounds the importance of redemptions for Jews
- analysed and evaluated the concept of redemption alongside other important concepts (such as repentance and atonement), reaching a conclusion as to which was concept is most relevant for Jews today.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- focusing on the relevance of redemption for Jews rather than simply repeating AO1 information from part (a) and describe Pesach.

**Q.5** This was the popular question in this section and the question with the highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- explored the range of Jewish beliefs about the Messiah, such as the Messiah as the 'Anointed One' and 'Judge', descendant of King David, whilst also acknowledging both Orthodox (including Hasidic) and Reform perspectives.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to focus on the role of the Messiah rather than focusing too heavily on the Messianic Age
- gain a secure knowledge and understanding of the concept of Messiah in Judaism and avoid making factual inaccuracies such as stating that Reform Jews believed Jesus was the Messiah.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the statement and evaluated different beliefs about the Messiah for both Reform and Orthodox Jews
- interrogated what it meant to be a 'serious' religious belief, arguing that beliefs that may be immediately enacted in the present (for example, charity) could be deemed more 'serious' than beliefs about judgement and the afterlife.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to focus on the seriousness of the concept of the Messiah for Jews today and not just repeat AO1 content from part (a)
- gain a secure knowledge and understanding of the about Jewish beliefs about the Messiah in order to avoid making inaccurate statements.
- focus on the concept of Messiah and do not focus almost entirely on the Messianic Age.



# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 1D: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF BUDDHISM

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Part (a)** of each question tests candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Part (b)** of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q1 – Theme 3b: The Eightfold Path – key moral principles
- Q2 – Theme 3c: The dasa sila (ten precepts) – key moral principles
- Q3 – Theme 2a: The nature of ultimate reality - The three lakshanas
- Q4 – Theme 2c: Arhat and bodhisattva - Theravada and Mahayana teachings
- Q5 – Theme 4c: The role and importance of dana (giving) and punya (merit)

#### Contextual information

- the total entry for 2024 is 394 compared with 737 entries in 2019. Age 17 accounts for 87.1% of entries, an increase of 6.5% compared to 2019
- The majority of candidates were females at 79.3% down from 81.0% in 2019. 68.5% of entries sat through the medium of English, up 0.8%. Wales remains the only country accounting for all entries for this unit
- centre type varies with candidates entering at Secondary schools decreasing from 83.8% to 73.8% in 2024 with FE establishments increasing to 23.3% from 14.8%
- the mean mark is quite stable, +1.2 compared to 2019 and +0.7 compared to 2023.

#### Positive features of responses:

- most candidates showed knowledge and understanding of Buddhism as a religion and an awareness of the diversity of views within and across traditions
- many candidates referred to sources of wisdom within their answers with many correctly quoting from the teachings themselves
- appropriate use of religious terminology and language was also evident.

#### Issues for centres to consider:

- candidates should be encouraged to explain the quotes used rather than just include them without any thought. For example, “Be a lamp unto yourself” was often used throughout the paper but this was rarely explained
- some candidates in their AO2 responses need to go beyond merely listing arguments and rather engage fully with the issues and show clear analysis and evaluation
- candidates should also make clear judgements within their responses which should then lead to a logical conclusion.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### Section A

**Q.1** This was the most popular question in this section but was also the question with the lowest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were able to clearly identify and explain the ‘morality’ training within the Eightfold Path. They were also able to identify and correctly exemplify the sections of right speech, action and livelihood found within ‘sila’
- were able to locate the Eightfold Path within the wider context of the Buddha’s dharma and successfully link it to other forms of morality such as the dasa sila, Patimokkha and the Parajikas.
- explored how morality was found within the other trainings of ‘wisdom’ and ‘morality’. By doing so, they showed depth of knowledge and understanding of the Eightfold Path as a means of following a ‘middle way’ and achieving enlightenment.
- made good use of religious language and terminology
- interpreted the path to Awakening as being magga – the Eightfold Path, other candidates identified it as being an individual’s spiritual journey to enlightenment. Both interpretations of the statement were credited.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- must take notice of the trigger word at the beginning of the question
- must engage with the question and keep focus on the question set. For example, some candidates gave a general list / outline of the Eightfold Path without referring specifically to the significance morality.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were able to offer an effective analysis and evaluation and address the issues raised by the question. Candidates were able to give detailed reasoning and counter argue their responses
- identified the diversity within Buddhism and were able to explain how other aspects of the trainings were more important than morality for some Buddhist traditions. For example, Zen Buddhists’ emphasis on mediation.
- acknowledged the importance of morality within the wider context of the Buddha’s dharma. For example, the importance of meditation, good karma and rebirth on the path to Awakening
- were able to reach a final judgement and offer a conclusion
- made good use of religious language and terminology
- some candidates interpreted the path to Awakening as being magga – the Eightfold Path, other candidates identified it as being an individual’s spiritual journey to enlightenment. Both interpretations of the statement were credited.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- try to avoid lengthy introductions which do not offer any analysis or evaluation of the statement given
- must engage with the question and keep focus on the question set. For example, some candidates listed reasons for and against the statement rather than analysing the most important part of the path to awakening.
- must offer examples to support their reasoning.

**Q.2** This was the least popular question in this section but was also the question with the highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were able to show a clear understanding of the dasa sila and how they are use differently by members of the sangha
- were able to correctly identify and exemplify their different uses within and across Buddhist traditions either as guidelines for moral conduct or training aspirations for the monastic sangha
- recognised the context of dasa sila within the Buddha’s dharma
- referred to the diversity within Buddhist traditions to exemplify the differences whilst other referred only to Theravada Buddhism. Both interpretations of the question were credited
- made good use of religious language and terminology.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- must engage with the question and keep focus on the question set. For example, not just correctly listing aspects of the dasa sila but failing to address how they are used differently by the lay and monastic sanghas.
- must develop responses with evidence and offer examples to demonstrate deeper knowledge and understanding.
- should avoid confusing the dasa sila with other forms of rules / guidance such as the parajikas.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were able to identify and explain the relevance of the precepts for Buddhists today. They were able to support their views with reasoning and evidence
- identified the diversity within Buddhism and were able to explain how some traditions do not consider the precepts relevant for today. For example, some Mahayana traditions, Western Buddhists, Secular Buddhists
- were able to counter argue the issues raised by referring to and identifying aspects of life that would make following the precepts difficult. For example, secular law
- identified a person’s commitment was mainly responsible for the relevance of the precepts for a person today
- limited their answers to the dasa sila whilst other considered the relevance of the Patimokkha precepts and other examples such as the parajikas. Both interpretations of the question were credited.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- should try to avoid lengthy introductions which do not offer an evaluation of the statement given. Also, candidates should avoid repeating AO1 information that doesn't contribute to analysis and evaluation.
- must engage with the question and keep focus on the question set. For example, develop the ideas provided fully and offer examples to support reasoning rather than just listing argument for and against the statement.
- should try to engage with the question set and focus on the relevance of the precepts for Buddhists today.

**Section B**

**Q.3** This was the most popular question in this section and also the question with the highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- identified the teaching of anatta as 'no fixed or permanent self' and were also able to place anatta within the context of the Buddha's teachings. Provided an explanation on how anatta was developed by the Buddha in response to his beliefs about the atman
- successfully referred to the Chariot Passage of King Milinda and went beyond the narrative and offered an explanation of the teachings
- made good use of religious language and terminology. For example, atman, lakshanas, skandhas.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- must develop responses with more evidence and offer examples to demonstrate deeper knowledge and understanding.
- need to secure a clear understanding of key concepts such as anicca and anatta so that they do not confuse the two
- must keep focus on the question set and refer to the relevance of the Chariot Passage to the teaching of anatta.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were able to present clear arguments and support them with reasoning or evidence.
- were able to identify anatta as the most important teaching within the lakshanas and counter argue against anicca and dukkha.
- were able to counter argue by drawing from a variety of other teachings such as the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, karma and rebirth.
- identified the diversity within Buddhism and were able to justify their argument with how some traditions do not consider the teaching of anatta. For example, Zen and Pure Land Buddhists
- concluded by recognising how all the Buddha's teachings can be considered important and of equal value.
- limited the 'most important teachings' to the lakshanas, others made reference to other teachings in the dharma. Both interpretations of the statement were credited.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- must take notice of the trigger word at the beginning of the question.
- must engage with the question and offer alternative views rather than repeating AO1 information from part (a) that doesn't contribute to analysis or evaluation.

**Q.4** This was the second most popular question in this section and also the question with the second highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were able to successfully explain the nature of the bodhisattva as an 'Enlightened Being'; a concept put forward within the Mahayana tradition.
- were able to correctly identify and exemplify the perfections – paramitas as well as the bodhisattva's progression through the 10 stages – bhumis.
- made good use of religious language and terminology. For example, bodhicitta, compassion – karuna, wisdom – prajna, trikaya and Buddhahood.
- identified the sacrificial nature of the bodhisattva in delaying nirvana for the sake of all beings.
- were able to use analogies to explain the concept of bodhisattva. For example, the spiritual hero.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- must keep focus on the question set. For example, some candidates should avoid confusing the bodhisattva path with the arhat path
- should avoid listing the paramitas / bhumis without linking them back to the question.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were able to present clear arguments and support them with reasoning or evidence
- could identify the bodhisattva path as the best way to achieve Enlightenment and counter argue against the arhat
- could counter argue by drawing from a variety of other ways of achieving Enlightenment such as meditation, morality, wisdom, following the middle way
- were able to draw on sacred texts to support their views.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- gain a secure knowledge and understanding of Buddhist traditions - some candidates referred to Mahayana Buddhism as a more modern and more lenient tradition than Theravada Buddhism which is a reoccurring misconception
- engage with the question and focus on the best way to achieve Enlightenment rather than list the strengths and weaknesses of the bodhisattva.
- must develop ideas fully when attempting to justify a view.

**Q.5** This was the least popular question in this section and also the question with the lowest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- identified the concept of dana and were able to offer a variety of examples to show how dana supports Buddhist communities. For example, material support given by the lay community and spiritual support / guidance given by the monastic sangha.
- recognised the interdependent relationship between dana and punya and made reference to key teachings such as the paramitas and the bodhisattva path.
- recognised the importance of dana as a means of eliminating attachment and gaining good karma.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- should avoid listing examples of giving without linking them to the Buddhist teaching of dana or offering an explanation.
- must keep focus on the question set. For example, some candidates should avoid confusing dana with other Buddhist practices or simply charity.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 1E: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF HINDUISM

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Part (a)** of each question tests candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Part (b)** of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

Q1 – Theme 4c: Durga Puja

Q2 – Theme 4a: Puja in the home and the mandir:

Q3 – Theme 3a: Key moral principles of Varnashramadharma

Q4 – Theme 2a: Brahman and atman

Q5 – Theme 1a: Sources of authority – the origins of Hinduism

#### Contextual information:

- the total entry for 2024 is 137 compared with 260 entries in 2019. Age 17 accounts for 92.0% of entries, an increase of 6.2% compared to 2019
- the majority of candidates were females at 85.7% up from 73.1% in 2019. 94.4% of entries sat through the medium of English, down 3.8%. Wales remains the only country accounting for all entries for this unit
- centre type varies with candidates entering at Secondary schools increasing from 91.0% to 95.2% in 2024 with FE establishments decreasing to 4.8% from 9.0%
- the mean mark is broadly similar, down 1.2 from 2019 and up 0.7 since 2023.

#### Positive features of responses:

- There were some excellent responses showing thorough knowledge and understanding at AO1 and perceptive evaluation at AO2.

#### Issues for centres to consider:

- Some candidates do not read the question carefully enough to understand what the thrust of the question is, and simply see a subject or issue and proceed to write all they know about it without any reference to the question set.
- AO2 part (b) questions focus on the skills of analysis and evaluation and require candidates to do more than simply state AO1 information

- when answering AO2 part (b) questions arguments are sometimes presented and statements made without any or very little evidence in support. Stating ‘this is a strong argument’ or ‘this is a ‘weak argument’ does not make this true unless supported by detailed reasoning or evidence.
- conclusions should be logical a summary based on the arguments presented and not new as yet unrepresented arguments.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### Section A

**Q.1** This was the least popular question in this section and also the question with the lowest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- referred concisely to what takes place during the festival and the significance of these events for Hindus
- focused on the spiritual, religious and social significance of those events.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- provide less narrative on the story of Durga and more focus on the demands of the question set in terms of explaining significance of specific events and traditions.

**(b) What worked well –characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the demands of the question set and balanced in their analysis and evaluation on the relationship between the social and religious aspects and their importance and prominence within festivals
- were able to refer to a number of Hindu festivals as examples or evidence for the arguments presented.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to focus on the specific demand of the question festivals being just community occasions
- arguments need to be supported by reasoning and/or evidence, with examples from different Hindu festivals.

**Q.2** This was by far the most popular question in this section and also the question with the highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- clearly identified a number of features of puja in the mandir
- referred to the significance and value of the features explained for both the individual and for the Hindu community.



**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to provide less description information and focus more on the nature of puja in the mandir

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- provided arguments that were based on secure knowledge and understanding of what happens in the home and mandir
- compared and contrasted the strengths and weaknesses of both places before coming to a balanced conclusion
- referred to specific practices referred to as evidence and examples.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to provide arguments based upon accurate knowledge and understanding, and be supported by specific examples

**Section B**

**Q.3** This was the least popular question in this section but also the question with the highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – of successful responses:**

- presented thorough knowledge and understanding of the responsibilities associated with the four ashramas
- exemplified the responsibilities within each ashrama with specific and accurate references
- explained the importance of the four ashramas within the context of varnashramadharma and Hinduism as a whole.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need a secure knowledge and understanding of the four ashramas in order not to confuse them with the four varnas
- need to provide more detail on the responsibilities within each ashrama
- should reference to the importance of the ashramas as a whole within Hinduism.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- discussed the relevance of the ashramas on a personal and community level and also their religious relevance in Hinduism as a whole.
- supported arguments through the use of specific evidence and examples

**(b) The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to be specific in their reference either to the concept as a whole or to individual stages within the ashramas
- need to focus on the phrase “for Hindus” within the question.

**Q.4** This was the second most popular question in this section and also the question with the second highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- demonstrated a breadth of knowledge and understanding of the beliefs about atman
- referred to more than the relationship with Brahman and discussed karma, reincarnation and moksha

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- do not only focus on the relationship between Brahman and atman, with reference to Advaita Vedanta and Dvaita Vedanta, broaden the scope of the response.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- had a clear understanding of the difference between the monotheistic view and the monist view
- were able to refer to Advaita Vedanta and Dvaita Vedanta confidently and with specific examples in support.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to have clear knowledge and understanding of concepts such as monotheism and monism, dualistic and non-dualistic and Saguna and Nirguna Brahman.

**Q.5** This was the most popular question in this section but the question with the lowest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- identified a range of different features about the Indus Valley Civilisation
- examined their significance at the time and to the origins of Hinduism
- exemplified the features in detail.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- features need to be exemplified in detail and their significance in the context of Hinduism need to be examined.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were able to refer to the two main theories about the origins of Hinduism confidently and in detail
- supported arguments by reasoning and specific examples

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- the significance of the historic features need to be linked closely to different aspects of modern Hinduism.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 1F: AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF SIKHISM

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Part (a)** of each question tests candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Part (b)** of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

Q1 – Theme 2c: The soul

Q2 – Theme 2b: Karma, rebirth and mukti

Q3 – Theme 4c: Vaisakhi

Q4 – Theme 3C: The concepts of Sant Sipahi (saint-soldier)/Dharam Yudh (Just War)

Q5 – Theme 1A: The life and teachings of Guru Nanak

#### Contextual information:

- the total entry for 2024 is 51 compared with 61 entries in 2019. Age 17 accounts for 96.1% of entries, an increase of 9.2% compared to 2019
- the majority of candidates were females at 67.3% down from 86.8% in 2019. Wales remains the only country accounting for all entries for this unit
- centre type varies with candidates entering at Secondary schools increasing from 77.4% to 85.7% in 2024 with FE establishments decreasing to 14.3% from 22.6%
- The mean mark is up 1.3 on 2019 and down -0.6 compared to 2023.

#### Positive features of responses:

- there were some excellent responses showing thorough knowledge and understanding at AO1 and perceptive evaluation at AO2.

#### Issues for centres to consider:

- some candidates do not read the question carefully enough to understand what the thrust of the question is, and simply see a subject or issue and proceed to write all they know about it without any reference to the question set.
- some candidates continue to answer AO1 part (a) questions as if they were AO2 part (b) questions
- AO2 part (b) questions focus on the skills of analysis and evaluation and require candidates to do more than simply state AO1 information

- when answering AO2 part (b) questions arguments are sometimes presented and statements made without any or very little evidence in support. Stating 'this is a strong argument' or 'this is a 'weak argument' does not make this true unless supported by detailed reasoning or evidence.
- conclusions should be logical a summary based on the arguments presented and not new as yet unrepresented argument

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### Section A

**Q.1** This was by far the least popular question in this section, with the lowest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were able to refer in detail to a wide range of Sikh beliefs about the soul – divine spark, relationship with Waheguru, transmigration and karma
- made excellent use of Sikh terminology.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- responses needed to be wider in focus and more detailed in content.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- had a clear understanding of monotheism and monism in the context of the question set
- were able to refer to Sikh teachings supporting both concepts of God and the soul.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to secure a clear understanding of the concepts and specific examples from Sikh teaching to support them.

**Q.2** This was by far the most popular question in this section, with the highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- fully understood both concepts karma and rebirth as individual concepts and in the context of their relationship with each other and within Sikhism as a whole.
- provided balanced responses which dealt with both concepts in similar detail.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to address both concepts - karma and rebirth in a response
- needed to support the information provided with reference to specific Sikh teachings

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the wording of the question set and whether karma was the 'most important concept'
- limited their answers to other concepts within Sikhism in terms of importance showing excellent understanding of the influence of those concepts within Sikhism

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- a greater focus on the demands of the question set and on the words 'most important concept'
- should analyse and evaluate the different concepts within Sikhism and not of aspects such as festivals.

**Q.3** This was the second most popular question in this section, with the highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- avoided being descriptive material and explained the spiritual values expressed within the festival of Vaisakhi
- successfully linked the practices of in the festival to spiritual matters.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- avoid simply giving narrative or being descriptive without explaining the significance of the festival in terms of spiritual matters

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the question set and were able to argue their importance not only as community occasions but also as religious celebrations
- supported all arguments by relevant evidence and examples.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- read the question carefully and do not ignore the words 'more than just' and argue simply that festivals were community occasions without reference to their religious value.
- provide specific examples and evidence in support of any arguments presented.

**Q.4** This was the least popular question in this section, with the lowest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- provided concise background on why the concept of Sant Sipahi (saint-soldier). was introduced
- demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of the context of the concept and its significance to Sikhs.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- provide less narrative on the life of Guru Hargobind and give a more detailed and specific explanation of the concept of Sant Sipahi (saint-soldier).

**(b) What worked well –characteristics of successful responses:**

- provided arguments based on thorough knowledge and understanding of the concept of Sant Sipahi
- had an awareness of the historical relevance of the context and how it is interpreted today and its contemporary relevance.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to provide a greater focus needed on the relevance of the concept Sant Sipahi for Sikhs today.

**Q.5** This was by far the most popular question in this section, with the second highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- the specific teachings of Guru Nanak were clearly identified and outlined with examples and evidence.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to provide less narrative about Guru Nanak's life events and more focus on his specific teachings.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 2A: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND ETHICS

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Part (a)** of each question tests candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Part (b)** of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q1 – Theme 4a: Classical Utilitarianism &  
Theme 4b: John Stuart Mill's development of Utilitarianism
- Q2 – Theme 1a: Divine Command Theory

#### Contextual information for all of Unit 2:

- the total entry for 2024 is 1,095 compared with 1,850 entries in 2019. Age 17 accounts for 86.0% of entries, an increase of 8.6% compared to 2019
- the majority of candidates were females at 77.9% and 83.0% sat through the medium of English.
- there was an increase in the number of candidates from Wales from 97.1% to 97.9% in 2024.
- centre type shows variation in candidates entering at Secondary schools decreased from 84.9% to 78.5%
- the mean is up 4.9 from 2019 but quite stable with 2023.

#### Positive features of responses:

- good candidates focussed on the specific requirements of the question set and had a secure knowledge and understanding of the theories being assessed in this Unit.
- made effective use of specialist language, relevant quotations and appropriate examples/reasoning to support the points they raised
- provided clear and well-supported arguments alongside a logical conclusion.

#### Issues for centres to consider:

- some candidates fail to focus the specific requirements of the question as set. For example Q1b where some referred to theories that were not relevant to the question set
- some candidates did not have a secure knowledge and understanding of the ethical theories assessed. For example Rule Utilitarianism (Q2) was often misunderstood. As a result they often gave inaccurate information and were unable to analyse and evaluate these theories successfully.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### Section A

**Q.1** This was the least popular question in this section and also the question with the lowest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the precise question asked and were able to explain Adams' modification clearly with reference to appropriate examples from scripture
- set Adams' modification in context using the Euthyphro dilemma to illustrate issues with Divine Command theory
- made effective and accurate use of specialist language.
- often demonstrated either depth or breadth, with some focusing very clearly on the precise question asked and limiting their responses to Adams' modification only while others set his modification in the context of Divine Command Theory as a whole. Both approaches were seen as creditworthy

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- secure an accurate knowledge and understanding of Adams' modification of Divine Command Theory. For example, Adams was not associated with benevolence
- gain a clear understanding of how Adams' modification addressed the issues raised by the Euthyphro dilemma – some incorrectly thought that the Euthyphro dilemma was written by Adams.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- demonstrated strong knowledge and understanding of both theories with clear reference to scholars such as Adams and Stirner enabled successful critical evaluation
- used challenges to Ethical Egoism effectively and counter-arguments to these challenges were presented clearly
- focused on the concept of one being 'clearly' superior and often commented that it would depend on the beliefs of the person using the theory.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- spend time dealing with the two theories required in the question and not waste time on theories that were not asked for.
- provide specific details of either theory and analyse and evaluate them.
- secure a clear understanding of Ethical Egoism as several inaccurate claims about the theory were made by some.

**Q.2** This was by far the most popular question in this section and also the question with the highest mean scores in this section.



**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- key vocabulary such as Act and Rule Utilitarianism, the Hedonic Calculus and the Harm Principle was used accurately and effectively to set up clear explanations of the differences
- focused on pleasure and were able to explain how and why Bentham took a quantitative approach and Mill a qualitative one
- used quotations from Bentham and Mill with clear explanations of how these related to the differences in measuring pleasure.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- gain a secure knowledge and understanding of Rule Utilitarianism – this was explained badly with no grasp of how rules were created or linked to utility. The harm principle was mentioned, but rarely explained or linked to pleasure. Some thought the two concepts were interchangeable
- be able to give some brief accurate examples of how both theories can be applied
- gain a secure knowledge and understanding of the approaches of Bentham and Mill – they were often mixed up.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- identified Utilitarianism as a secular ethic and thus suitable for non-believers while also addressing the 'practical' element of the question
- discussed relevant issues with both forms of Utilitarianism, sometimes reaching a conclusion that one form was more practical than the other
- made use of a range of contemporary examples to illustrate their points, particularly surrounding the issue of Act Utilitarianism permitting immoral actions if they benefitted the majority.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- gain a secure knowledge and understanding of Utilitarianism as it was sometimes described erroneously as a religious theory and therefore not suitable for non-believers
- do not ignore the phrase 'non-believers' in the question and just give general answers about the practicality of Utilitarianism and just refer to the generic strengths and weaknesses of the theory. This is not addressing the question that was set.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 2B: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Part (a)** of each question tests candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Part (b)** of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

Q3 – Theme 1c: Challenges to inductive arguments

Q4 – Theme 3a: The problem of evil:

#### Positive features of responses:

- good candidates were able to use and apply examples accurately to illustrate the points being made such as Hume's ship builder analogy and Mackie's Inconsistent Triad.
- good candidates were able to explain the views of scholars such as Hume, Epicurus and Mackie clearly and with accuracy. Key terms were often used effectively to aid the explanation of points.
- good candidates were able to select a number of appropriate arguments to analyse and evaluate the AO2 statements effectively. Successful counter-arguments were also seen to aid the evaluations further.

#### Issues for centres to consider:

- responses need to be fully focused on the questions/statements set. A number of responses strayed from the question which resulted in candidates writing answers to totally different questions than the ones set.
- when explaining the views of scholars, it is important that the context is understood. Being aware of the time period scholars were writing in will allow accurate points to be made and misconceptions avoided. For example, David Hume predates William Paley and the ideas of evolution. Hume did not support these ideas.
- Too much AO1 material was often seen in part (b) responses where the demand is to analyse and evaluate(AO2) rather than explain/examine/outline. Some candidates approached these questions by writing 'all they know' about a key concept mentioned in the statement rather than analysing and evaluating the statement itself.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### Section B

**Q.3** This was the least popular question in this section and also the question with the lowest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were able to identify the various challenges given by David Hume against teleological arguments such as bad analogies, plurality of gods and the possibility of an apprentice God etc.
- could use examples to support the challenges given by Hume such as the concept of a house/shipbuilder needing many designers to complete the project.
- included a range of challenges without repeating the same point throughout the response.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to focus on the question set and not produce a pre-meditated response to a more general question. Many gave information on general challenges to the teleological argument and included superficial detail on David Hume.
- do not include irrelevant information on Aquinas, Paley and Tennant views.
- avoid making inaccurate statements – some candidates explained that David Hume challenged Paley’s Watchmaker analogy, but Hume predates Paley and was not aware of Paley’s argument.
- do not just outline the challenges given by Hume without explaining them further or adding Hume’s example to support the criticism.
- gain a secure knowledge and understanding of Hume’s arguments without getting his ideas confused with other scholars such as William Lane Craig or writing about the teleological argument in general without mentioning Hume’s criticisms.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the ‘inductive’ concept present in the question successfully
- were able to use the cosmological and teleological arguments as examples of inductive arguments to support the lines of reasoning given. Accurate views of different scholars were often given to strengthen the points made
- compared inductive arguments to deductive ones to show how inductive arguments could be more/less persuasive.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- focus on the question set, whether inductive arguments are persuasive nor not. Some candidates often gave strengths and weaknesses of the cosmological and teleological arguments in general
- do not simply provide AO1 information on the cosmological/teleological arguments with very little analysis or evaluation.

**Q.4** This was by far the most popular question in this section and also the question with The highest mean scores in this section.

**(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were able explain Epicurus' views on the problem of evil with clarity by bringing into question the characteristics of The God of Classical Theism
- explained J.L. Mackie's Inconsistent Triad well with many candidates explaining how the triad could potentially be solved
- made connections to J.L. Mackie's Paradox of Omnipotence alongside Mackie's contention that as humans we don't have God's perspective of the world.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to explain the views of both Epicurus or Mackie and not just one or the other
- need to link information about the concept of 'evil' in general to the points made by Epicurus or Mackie.
- focus on the question and do not include irrelevant and superficial details on Epicurus and Mackie.

**(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- made clear evaluation points throughout the answer and made use of evaluative phrases and links to the statement
- referred to both the Augustinian and Irenaean Theodicies effectively to show that the problem of evil is not a problem for religious believers.
- used scholars such as Rowe and Paul to clearly demonstrate that evil in the world is a problem for religious believers. Appropriate examples from both scholars were demonstrated effectively.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- don't list AO1 type information, but rather use this information to develop clear lines of reasoning
- don't just provide a limited number of arguments connected to the statement. Basic points on 'original sin' were often seen to a limited effect without really analysing and evaluating the concept and how it could be connected to the statement.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 3A: A STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Section A** questions test candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Section B** questions test candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

Q1 - Theme 2c: Challenges from pluralism and diversity within a tradition

Q2 - Theme 4c: Religious identity through responses to poverty and injustice

Q3 - Theme 1a: The Bible as a source of wisdom and authority

Q4 - Theme 2a: Challenges from secularisation

Q5 - Theme 3c: Feminist theology and the changing role of men and women.

Q6 - Theme 4b: Religious identity through religious experience

#### Contextual information:

- the total entry for 2024 is 111 compared with 137 entries in 2019. Age 18 accounts for 84.7% of entries, an decrease of 2.2% compared to 2019.
- most profiles are showing little variation. The majority of candidates were females at 78.7%. There was a decrease in the number of candidates from Wales from 94.1% to 93.6% in 2024.

#### Positive features of responses:

- candidates who wrote in appropriate AO1 or AO2 style for the question set.
- did not waste time when addressing AO1 questions unnecessarily long introductions or conclusions.
- carefully read and understood the AO2 question set and selected relevant material in their analysis and evaluation, which flowed logically.

#### Issues for centres to consider:

- conclusions are unnecessary for Section A questions.
- some candidates need to secure greater understanding of the topic areas being assessed in order to achieve a higher level of success.
- candidates should be reminded of the need for capital letters for key terminology, e.g., **God, Jesus, Christian, Easter, England and Wales.**

- handwriting remains a concern for a number of scripts and centres need to be aware of their candidate's handwriting style and ability under exam conditions and, if necessary, make appropriate access arrangements so that their work can be accessed by WJEC examiners. It is not possible to award work that cannot be read.

## **Comments on individual questions/sections**

### **Section A**

- Q.1** This was the slightly less popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

#### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- expressed an understanding of inclusivism by providing a brief yet accurate comparison to pluralism and exclusivism and then focused accurately on Rahner.
- could fully or to varying but accurate degrees relate Rahner's four theses.
- provided evidence as to the impact of Rahner's thinking on the Second Vatican Council and the Roman Catholic Church since and, indeed, through that to worldwide Christian approach to other faiths.

#### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to secure a clear understanding of the term inclusivism - and not refer to irrelevant material in their response
- need to develop a deeper understanding of Rahner's idea of 'anonymous Christians'.

- Q.2** This was the slightly more popular question in this section with the highest mean score in this section.

#### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- considered both the religious and political basis of South American liberation theology either as separate parts to their answer or for some woven together
- in their political response correctly identified the historical basis for the political rise of Liberation Theology and could use this as a platform for Gutierrez, Boff and Oscar Romero
- in their religious response correctly identified biblical themes both Old and New Testament as a platform for Orthopraxis and to the political response.

#### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to address both aspect of the question – political and religious not just one
- avoid entering into an AO2 style of writing and so particularly offering criticisms of either the religious or political basis or both.

## Section B

**Q.3** This was the third most popular question in this section with the lowest mean scores in this section.

### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- answered the question set and focused on the inspiration behind the biblical canonical orders rather than the writings that made up the canon which is a different question.
- consideration of the latter was used to address the question as to whether anything was inspired and / or if the content is inspired surely the canonical order must be.

### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to read the question carefully and focus on the question set – some attempted to answer a different question concerning biblical inspiration per se rather than the inspiration of the biblical canonical orders
- need to address structural issues that could be analysed e.g. different Christian denominations have different views of the Apocrypha raising the evaluation of whether the canon / whose canon (?) can then be inspired.

**Q.4** This was the joint most popular question in this section with the joint highest mean score in this section.

### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- considered the Christian response to secularism with several ideas utilised e.g. cultural, political and religious pre-dominance of Christianity, the analysis from the last two census illustrating a drop in Christian identity, Sunday opening.
- referred to the ideas of Rahner and argued that the UK has moved to an anonymous Christian model with consideration of mission work by churches filling many societal gaps and reverse mission work, the rise of science and multi faith society.

### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to secure a clear understanding of the issues in relation to the question set and not make broad unsubstantiated claims e.g. that Christian faith schools illustrating a response to the challenge of secularism. Whereas in the majority of cases these schools pre-date state education.
- do not make erroneous claims such as faith schools teach creationism, or do not teach about abortion or will teach that homosexuality is wrong / sinful.
- Use the more recent census data (2021) alongside previous data to support arguments made
- do not just list valid points such as the cultural inheritance of bishops in House of Lords, the King, role of church in her Late Majesty's funeral and the Coronation of the King and Queen but instead analyse and evaluate each point as required.
- do not solely focus on a scientific viewpoint.

**Q.5** This was the joint most popular question in this section with the joint highest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- referred to the question of women being ordained went beyond a purely feminist answer involving Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether's arguments – credit to the minority who recognised that Daly would not actually support women's ordination as she rather believes all women should leave.
- included analysis and evaluation from biblical sources and ecumenical comparisons concerning women's ordination achieved higher bands.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to identify what ordination is as well as the threefold orders involved and the question of a woman's place in each order
- gain a secure knowledge and understanding of the area and do not provide inaccurate assertions such as that in the Church in Wales / Church of England women get paid less than men and do not have maternity leave.

**Q.6** This was the least popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- understood what was meant by charismatic experiences and could detail various experiences and so analyse them and evaluate them with regard to also understanding what natural explanations could appropriately include.
- referred to scholars such as Ayer, Swinbourne and Freud.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to utilise James' categorisation of religious experiences (ineffable, transitory, noetic and passivity) as this would provide a basis for analysis and evaluation
- develop the references made to Near Death Experience and link analysis and evaluation of this issue to the question set.



**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**GCE**  
**Summer 2024**  
**UNIT 3B: A STUDY OF ISLAM**

**Overview of the Unit**

**Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?**

**Section A** questions test candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Section B** questions test candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

**Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?**

Q1 – Theme 1a: Sources of shari'a (the way): Qur'an; sunna (clear trodden path) and hadith (report); qiyas (analogy); ijma (consensus)

Q2 – Theme 2a: The concept of a state governed according to Islamic principles and the political and social influence of religious institutions as a challenge to secularisation.

Q3 – Theme 2c: The extent to which the media influences Western perceptions of Islam

Q4 – Theme 3c: The effectiveness of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Q5 – Theme 3b: The extent to which the Muslim family is central to the Islamic religion

Q6 – Theme 4c: The effectiveness of Islamic ethical teachings as a guide for living for Muslims today.

**Contextual information**

- the total entry for 2024 is 84 compared with 135 entries in 2019. Age 18 accounts for 95.2% of entries, an increase of 1.1% compared to 2019.
- most profiles are showing little variation. The majority of candidates were females at 72.5% down from 78.7% with 81.2% entries under an English language medium down by 7.8% from 2019. There was an increase in the number of candidates from Wales from 92.9% to 96.2% in 2024.
- Centre type shows variation in candidates entering at Secondary schools decreased from 99.2% to 86.2% with FE Establishments going from 0.0% entries in 2019 to now accounting for 11.2%.

**Positive features of responses:**

- had a clear understanding of Islamic terms and concepts.
- were able to explore the complexities of Islamic teachings and their applications in modern society

### Issues for centres to consider:

- there are many candidates who still write around the topic rather than addressing the question directly or follow a pattern they have practiced for a previous question or formula, which does not always work with the specific question set.
- some candidates still need to structure their responses in paragraphs, as well as providing clear definitions of relevant terms.
- other responses lacked a clear structure and focused arguments when addressing AO2 questions. For example, in Q5 some responses did not clearly define terms like "central" in discussions about the role of family in Islam, leading to confusion and lack of coherence in arguments.

### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### Section A

**Q.1** This was by far the most popular question in this section with the highest mean score in this section.

#### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- clearly defined what sources of shari'a were and listed several.
- provided the correct technical terms and showed understanding of them.
- differentiated Hadith from sunna, explaining that the Hadith were a source for the sunna, a text showing the actions and sayings of Muhammad which are the actual source of authority
- mentioned other sources of authority such as Imams, consensus, reasoning and tradition
- demonstrated how different sources were used and needed, such as the Qur'an as the primary revelation and the reasoning of scholars as a secondary source to apply rulings to new issues today.

#### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- mention secondary sources of shari'a, especially ijma and qiyas, which were omitted by many.
- focus on different sources, even if not all are covered, a range should be included.
- focus on shari'a, which is a specific term, rather than general guidance for Muslims.

**Q.2** This was by far the least popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

#### **What worked well –characteristics of successful responses:**

- clearly focused answers on the theme of religious vs secular, sources of authority and aspects of belief
- mentioned numerous aspects of life as a Muslim and how it could be difficult to practice Islam in a non-Islamic secular state. Getting time off the pray Jumma prayers or celebrate Id festivals were mentioned by many; issues of fasting during Ramadan and so on
- used terms precisely, such as the names of the five ethical categories

- mentioned a broad range of issues, such as religious law, social aspects – marriage, divorce and so on, as well as commonly mentioned themes like halal food.
- worked through issues of whether to follow secular or Islamic courts for divorce, and what issues lay behind that in terms of secular human rights and interpretation of revealed 'law'.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- focus on the challenge: many drifted in to the topic rather than opening by directly addressing the word 'challenge'.
- mention a broader range of issues, moving on from common issues like prayer times during the working day.

**Section B**

**Q.3** This was the most popular question in this section with the second highest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- noticed the word 'entirely'; defined it and considered other sources which might have influence by comparison.
- challenged the statement by considering the attitudes of individuals regardless of media, or how the media was formed by people taking on questions from society, rather than creating them, thereby turning the discussion around.
- ensured paragraphs were consistent with a conclusion, clearly making a judgement about the statement.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to focus on the question set – and the word 'entirely' and not just write that the media influenced people.
- develop answers further to consider a broader range of material, such as many different sources / types of media.
- develop a style with focused paragraphs which lead on logically and fit together as a whole.

**Q.4** This was the least popular question in this section with the highest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- clearly defined the role of the Muslim Council of Britain and its representatives
- referred to issues such as the difficulty dealing with government.
- referred to issues it has been involved with, such as Islamophobia and the 'tell mamma' campaign to report cases
- considered how a diverse, large section of the population in the form of Muslims might be represented and whether that diversity was reflected or voiced by the body
- some mentioned that the continuation of many issues of concern for Muslims, such as Islamophobia and lack of opportunity, meant the MCB was ineffective; others that recognised that there are many other factors to consider.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to more to clearly define the Muslim Council of Britain's aims, role and purpose rather than writing generally about the organisation
- need to focus on a key word in the question 'effective' and ensuring a comment in every paragraph specifically relates to its effectiveness
- need to draw together the arguments made with a clear judgement at the end.

**Q.5** This was the second most popular question in this section with the second lowest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- considered a broad range of religious and social areas in which the family was a source of support and adherence to Islamic values. This included tradition, festivals, learning how to pray, reading the Qur'an, living as an extended unit, looking after the young and old, agreeing assisted marriages, etc.
- referred to Muhammad and his family, his wives, children and grandsons Hasan and Hussain, as an inspiration and how his social leadership stressed the importance of family.
- considered possible conflicts, such as tradition against Islamic rights in terms of arranged marriages and related this to the central or otherwise role of the family.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- do not make points and label them as 'strong' or 'weak' arguments, without any supporting reasoning or evidence
- focus clearly on the question and read it carefully, do not confuse 'central' with 'having any role at all'
- avoid simply comparing the family v Pillars as 'central' to Islam as this was not the question set.

**Q.6** This was the second least popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- considered a range of issues, including the death penalty and homosexuality, and schools of thought, including modernist perspectives.
- referred precisely to different types of crimes, using correct terminology.
- discussed punishments including the death penalty, and whether this was still appropriate today.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- be more specific about what teachings the Qur'an and Hadith contain.
- relate the response specifically to today, so a clear indication of modern issues and how Islamic teachings might or might not address them could be made.
- mention sources of shari'a as relevant for all time. This could be developed to explain how they could be interpreted for today.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 3C: A STUDY OF JUDAISM

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Section A** questions test candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Section B** questions test candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

Q1 - Theme 2b: The challenge of science

Q2 - Theme 3a: The development of Reform Judaism and Jewish attitudes to pluralism

Q3 - Theme 1a: The structure and development of the Talmud and its importance within Judaism

Q4 - Theme 1c: Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (Rashi) and Moses Maimonides:

Q5 - Theme 2c: Holocaust theology

Q6 - Theme 3b: Jewish family life, including diversity of views within Judaism about gender equality

#### Contextual information

- the total entry for 2024 is 70 compared with 135 entries in 2019
- age 18 accounts for 95.2% of entries, a decrease of 4.1% compared to 2019
- most profiles are showing little variation. The majority of candidates were females at 81.5% with 89.2% entries under an English language medium
- as per 2019, Wales still accounts for 100.0% of entries in this unit. Secondary schools remain the majority centre entry at 96.9% down from 99.2% in 2019
- the largest group of entries are in prior performance category 6, accounting for 16.9% of entries, this was similar in 2019 but at 14.8%.

#### Positive features of responses:

- there was evidence of accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context as well as good and accurate use of views of scholars/schools of thought – especially in Q1 and Q5.
- there were a number of strong scripts that demonstrated confident, critical and perceptive analysis and evaluation of the issues in Section B, which indicates improvements are being made in developing candidates' analytical and evaluative skills.

### **Issues for centres to consider:**

- in Section A where questions where answers were not as strong, it was evident in some cases, as in Q.1 for instance, that some candidates failed to understand the term 'evolution', and thus gave a response that was not fully accurate. The same can be said of Q.2 where the concept of interfaith dialogue had not been understood by some candidates.
- for weaker candidates in Section B there was a tendency to embark upon AO1-type narratives or biographies with insufficient analysis and evaluation.
- responses which rely on phrases such as 'this is a strong/weak point' but without any accompanying evaluative reasoning or evidence are also still evident.
- the issue of poor handwriting still persists, and it is to be hoped that future candidates who struggle to write legibly can be identified in order that access arrangements can be made for them to have additional support during the examination.

### **Comments on individual questions/sections**

#### **Section A**

- Q.1** This was by far the most popular question in this section with the highest mean score in this section.

#### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- views of scholars/ schools of thought were used accurately and effectively
- views from a wide variety of Jewish denominations were included which displayed a thorough knowledge and understanding of different Jewish understandings of the creation process, with reference to evolution.

#### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- the focus of the question needs to be maintained as, in relation to this question, a number of responses became little more than a general discussion about the relationship between Judaism and science
- greater diversity of responses from within Judaism relating to the creation process, with reference to evolution is required
- lengthy explanations of Darwin's theory of evolution and/or detailed narrative accounts of the Genesis creation story are not required unless the candidate develops salient points that are ultimately related to Jewish understandings of creation and evolution
- an accurate understanding of specialist language, such as the term 'evolution' needs to be improved upon as in some responses it had clearly not been understood, resulting in a lack of relevant information
- the focus of the question needs to be maintained as, in relation to this question, a number of responses became little more than a general discussion about the relationship between Judaism and science.

**Q.2** This was by far the least popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- candidates had an accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of the concept of interfaith dialogue
- the relationship between the Pittsburgh Platform and its impact upon the views of Reform Judaism towards interfaith dialogue was discussed in depth with excellent use of evidence and examples
- traditional views within the Orthodox movement, as well as the fact that there has been a change in attitude by some, were examined.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- an accurate understanding of the concept of 'interfaith dialogue' is required
- the focus of the question needs to be maintained. In this particular question, some candidates wrote lengthy answers comparing the differences between Reform and Orthodox Jews but made no reference at all to interfaith dialogue
- avoid providing a detailed historical account of the background to the establishment of the Reform movement and the Pittsburgh Platform which does not address the question.

**Section B**

**Q.3** This was the second least popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- the relationship between the Gemara and the Mishnah was very well understood and served as a strong foundation in order to support the arguments being made
- strong lines of argument, accompanied by relevant examples of content from the Gemara and/or the Mishnah, were used skilfully as part of the debate.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- the tendency to include lengthy AO1-type information about the Gemara and Mishnah at the expense of analysis and evaluation is to be avoided
- arguments offered either in support of, or against the premise need further elaboration.

**Q.4** This was the least popular question in this section with the second lowest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- the evaluation focussed accurately on who was of greater importance in relation to 'understanding Hebrew scriptures'
- views of scholars were used appropriately and in context
- detailed reasoning and/or evidence supported the views given.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- the tendency to include lengthy AO1-type biographical information about Rashi and Maimonides at the expense of analysis and evaluation is to be avoided
- candidates should aim to offer a more detailed evaluation rather than merely stating 'this is a weak argument' or 'this is a strong argument'.

**Q.5** This was the second most popular question in this section with the highest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- there was purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue in relation to whether or not there can possibly be a legitimate response to the Holocaust
- the views of a variety of named Holocaust theologians were used accurately, appropriately and in context.
- the responses showed a very good standard of coherence, clarity and coherence.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- the tendency to include lengthy AO1-type information describing the theodicies proposed by named Holocaust theologians without any accompanying analysis and evaluation is to be avoided
- candidates should endeavour to be accurate in attributing theological arguments to the correct Holocaust theologians
- candidates should aim to offer a more detailed evaluation rather than merely stating that '(named theologian) offers a weak argument' or '(named theologian) offers a strong argument' without any supporting evidence or reasoning.

**Q.6** This was the most popular question in this section with the second highest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- successfully identified and addressed the issue by demonstrating that there is diversity within Judaism regarding equality between women and men.
- used the expectations of modern-day society to good effect in developing a cogent argument.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- greater awareness of the diversity of views within Judaism would enhance the response
- despite having a good knowledge and understanding of attitudes to equality within Judaism, an awareness of the need for coherence, clarity and organisation when analysing and evaluating the issue is vital
- the tendency to include lengthy AO1-type information describing the roles of women and men in Judaism should be avoided.



# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### 3D: A STUDY OF BUDDHISM

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Section A** questions test candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Section B** questions test candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

Q1 - Theme 4a: Beliefs and practices of Tibetan Buddhist traditions with reference to mudra, mandala and mantra

Q2 - Theme 2b: Responses to the challenges from science

Q3 - Theme 3a: Responses to the challenges of pluralism and diversity

Q4 - Theme 1c: The contribution made to the development of Buddhist thought by the work of contemporary Buddhist teachers:

Q5 - Theme 1a: The Pali Canon: its role in Buddhism as a whole

Q6 - Theme 2a: Historical development of Buddhism in Japan

#### Contextual information:

- the total entry for 2024 is 276 compared with 530 entries in 2019. Age 18 accounts for 95.7% of entries, an increase of 3.6% compared to 2019.
- most profiles are showing little variation. The majority of candidates were females at 82.2% with 69.3% entries under an English language medium.
- as per 2019, Wales still accounts for 100.0% of entries in this unit. Secondary schools remain the majority centre entry at 76.1% down from 82.4% in 2019.

#### Positive features of responses:

- in some there was very good use made of relevant quotations from various religious texts and scholars as evidence and examples. exemplify concepts or practices
- there was an improvement in the use of specialist vocabulary as well as in spelling grammar and punctuation in general.
- guidance given to some candidates by centre to structure their answers and using well defined paragraphs and appropriate connectives in both Section A and B responses
- read the question carefully and selected information to address the question as set for example Q5, which focused on 'central importance' of the Vinaya 'for the sangha'
- when answering Q6 the majority of candidates could identify the three main traditions within Japanese Buddhism was pleasing to witness

- in high scoring AO2 responses detailed reasoning and or evidence was provided to support the lines of reasoning and conclusion provided. There was also very good use made of relevant quotations from various religious texts and scholars as evidence and examples to support arguments presented.

#### **Issues for centres to consider:**

- some candidates continue to not read the question carefully enough and fail to select information to address the question set especially in AO2 questions. These questions very often contain words and phrases that try to help or guide candidates - 'central importance' or 'unique'. It is also good practice to refer back to the question consistently in the answer
- for weaker candidates in Section B there was a tendency to embark upon AO1-type narratives or biographies with insufficient analysis and evaluation
- responses which rely on phrases such as 'this is a strong/weak point' but without any accompanying evaluative reasoning or evidence are also still evident
- candidates should be encouraged to structure their AO2 responses in a clear and coherent way, with a logical conclusion.

#### **Comments on individual questions/sections**

##### **Section A**

**Q.1** This was the most popular question in this section with the highest mean score in this section.

##### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- Tibetan practices were correctly identified. Each of the 3 practices names were examined in detail, including background information where relevant.
- The meaning and significance of each practice within the religion and to the individual Buddhist was made.

##### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- the need to focus more on the definition of the trigger word -'Examine' as a number of candidates did little more than describing the practices. Examine means - 'Portray and account for different facets of, or angles on, a complex practice, concept or belief.'
- although it is not possible to have a perfectly balanced answer when discussing three named practices, answers which completely focus on two with very little reference to the third are limiting their possible level of achievement

**Q.2** This was the least popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

##### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the question set
- provided a balanced response which identified areas within Buddhism where science poses a challenge, e.g. the supernatural aspects of the religion
- included relevant examples in support as well as relevant quotations mainly by the Dalai Lama.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- focus on specific demands of the question set rather than a ‘write all you know’ approach to the relationship between Buddhism and science.
- more focus on the areas where science does challenge Buddhism so as to achieve a more balanced response.
- avoid answering an AO1 question as if it were an AO2 one.

**Section B**

**Q.3** This was the second most popular question in this section with the joint lowest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the question set and discussed the value of different kinds of experience within Buddhism, in the Buddha’s life and in Buddhist texts
- counter-argued effectively with reference to key Buddhist teachers and texts such as the Kalama Sutta
- exemplified their arguments
- provided a well-constructed conclusion bringing all the strands of the response together.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- supported all argument with relevant examples and evidence
- any knowledge and understanding used needs to be framed as an argument in response to the issue in the question set and not simply presented as AO1 information

**Q.4** This was the second least popular question in this section with the joint lowest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the question set and demonstrated knowledge and understanding of Thich Nhat Hanh’s teaching and analysed and evaluated those teachings in the context of the question.
- were able to construct valid counter-arguments and support them with evidence and examples such as the Dalai Lama.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- read the question carefully and focus on the demands of the question set - on the specific teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh and using that knowledge and understanding in an evaluative way.
- It is an AO2 question not an AO1 question avoid giving a narrative account of Thich Nhat Hanh’s life.

A number of candidates simply saw the word ‘Vinaya’ and wrote everything they knew about it. Others discussed the nature of the Pali Canon in its entirety without any reference to the question set. However there were some very good answers which focused on ‘central importance’ and ‘for the sangha’

**Q.5** This was the least popular question in this section with the second highest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- identified the role and significance of the Vinaya within the monastic Sangha and questioned its value to the lay sangha
- supported the arguments presented with reference to specific content within the Vinaya
- were able to present valid counter arguments and evaluate ‘central importance’ with reference to the importance of the Sutta Pitaka or Abhidhamma Pitaka.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- focus on specific words in the question set such as ‘central importance’
- refer specifically to the content of the Vinaya to support the arguments presented
- focus on other texts which may be of more importance to the sangha remembering to give examples and evidence in support within the context of the question set.

**Q.6** This was the most popular question in this section with the highest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- identified the three main traditions of Japanese Buddhism – their beliefs and practices
- were able not only to discuss the unique characteristics of each tradition, but also to evaluate the uniqueness of their practices within Buddhism as a whole
- formed a balanced conclusion based on the arguments and evidence presented.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- use knowledge and understanding (AO1), but only to analyse and evaluate and construct arguments in response to the issue in the question set.
- read the question carefully and focus on keywords such as ‘unique’.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### 3E: A STUDY OF HINDUISM

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Section A** questions test candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Section B** questions test candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q1 - Theme 1a: Nature and significance of the Upanishads
- Q2 - Theme 3a: The difference between diversity and pluralism
- Q3 - Theme 4c: Hindu bioethics
- Q4 - Theme 2c: The challenges to Hinduism from secularisation and science
- Q5 - Theme 1c: Shri Paramahansa Ramakrishna
- Q6 - Theme 3c: The changing roles of men and women in Hinduism (including different views within the religion)

#### Contextual information:

- the total entry for 2024 is 105 compared with 219 entries in 2019. Age 18 accounts for 98.1% of entries, an increase of 5.9% compared to 2019.
- most profiles are showing little variation. The majority of candidates were females at 89.3% up from 81.7% in 2019 with 97.1% entries under an English language medium.
- as per 2019, Wales still accounts for 100.0% of entries in this unit. Secondary schools remain the majority centre entry at 95.1% up from 90.1% in 2019.

#### Positive features of responses:

- in some there was very good use made of relevant quotations from various religious texts and scholars as evidence and examples. exemplify concepts or practices
- there was an improvement in the use of specialist vocabulary as well as in spelling grammar and punctuation in general.
- guidance given to some candidates by centre to structure their answers and using well defined paragraphs and appropriate connectives in both Section A and B responses.

### Issues for centres to consider:

- some candidates continue to not read the question carefully enough and fail to select information to address the question set especially in AO2 questions. These questions very often contain words and phrases that try to help or guide candidates - 'central importance' or 'unique'. It is also good practice to refer back to the question consistently in the answer
- for weaker candidates in Section B there was a tendency to embark upon AO1-type narratives or biographies with insufficient analysis and evaluation
- responses which rely on phrases such as 'this is a strong/weak point' but without any accompanying evaluative reasoning or evidence are also still evident
- candidates should be encouraged to structure their AO2 responses in a clear and coherent way, with a logical conclusion.

### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### Section A

**Q.1** This was the by far the most popular question in this section with the highest mean score in this section.

#### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- identified the main themes such as the relationship between Brahman and atman, jnana yoga, Vedanta philosophy and yajna
- explained the significance of these themes in the context of Hinduism as a whole.
- referred to specific texts as evidence and examples.

#### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- identify more than one theme within the Upanishads
- refer to their significance for Hindus in detail, with reference to specific texts such as the Katha Upanishad.

**Q.2** This was the by far the least popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

#### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- defined pluralism
- referred to a broad range of evidence and examples to support the view that Hinduism is a pluralist tradition
- explained the plurality of Hinduism both externally and internally.

#### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- question needs to be addressed using AO1 skills - some candidates answered it as an AO2 question and therefore the parts dealing with Hinduism not being a pluralist tradition were irrelevant and could not be credited
- the meaning of pluralism needs to be clearly defined
- specific examples needed to support the view

## Section B

**Q.3** This was the most second most popular question in this section with the second lowest mean score in this section.

### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the question set and recognised the importance of the phrase ‘totally compatible’ in the question
- provided a balanced analysis and evaluation in terms of arguments and counter arguments
- arguments supported by evidence and examples from Hindu texts, teachings and scholars.

### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- focus on key words in the question
- the need to construct AO2 arguments from AO1 material rather than simply presenting knowledge about the issue
- arguments need to be supported by specific evidence/examples.

**Q.4** This was the second least popular question in this section with the highest mean score in this section.

### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the question set
- provided a balanced responses which identified areas within Hinduism where science poses a challenge – the belief in God - and areas where there is no challenge and evaluated whether these challenges were effective or not
- included relevant examples in support

### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- focus on specific demands of the question set rather than a ‘write all you know’ approach to the relationship between Hinduism and science.
- more focus on the areas where science does challenge Hinduism and evaluate the effectiveness of those challenges.
- avoid answering an AO2 evaluation question as an AO1.

**Q.5** This was the least popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- focused on the key words in the question set including the phrase ‘only’
- provided a balanced response – how Ramakrishna was influenced by some Western aspects but also by other aspects such as eastern mysticism
- arguments were supported by reference to specific events/teachings from Ramakrishna’s life.
- provided a balanced conclusion.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- avoid simply giving a biography of Ramakrishna
- focus on key word of the question 'only' and shape the arguments presented to answer the issue
- support the arguments presented with specific evidence and examples from Ramakrishna's life
- evaluate the impact of other influences on Ramakrishna.

**Q.6** This was the most popular question in this section with the second highest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were able to evaluate the historical/traditional role of women in Hinduism and some of the perceived changes seen today with reference to the situation in India, difference in urban/rural areas and in non-Hindu countries
- supported arguments with a wide range of evidence and examples from specific Hindu texts, changes to the law in India and the contribution of feminists such as Madhu Kishwar
- provided a balanced conclusion based on the arguments presented.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- all statements/arguments presented need to be supported by specific evidence and examples.



# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 3F: A STUDY OF SIKHISM

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Section A** questions test candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Section B** questions test candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q1 - Theme 2b: Changing role of men and women in Sikhism
- Q2 - Theme 4a: The status and importance of Rahit Maryada and Rahit Namas
- Q3 - Theme 1c: Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the founding of the Sikh empire
- Q4 - Theme 2c: Difference between diversity and pluralism
- Q5 - Theme 3a: The challenges to Sikhism from science and its responses to secularisation
- Q6 - Theme 1a: Role and significance of the texts of Mul Mantra and the Japji of Guru Nanak

#### Contextual information:

- the total entry for 2024 is 32 compared with 57 entries in 2019. Age 18 accounts for 96.9% of entries, an increase of 7.4% compared to 2019.
- most profiles are showing little variation. The majority of candidates were females at 64.5% down from 72.5%. As per 2019, Wales still accounts for 100.0% of entries in this unit.
- secondary schools remain the majority centre entry at 87.1% up from 62.7% in 2019, FE Establishments have declined by 24.4%.

#### Positive features of good candidates' responses:

- in some there was very good use made of relevant quotations from various religious texts and scholars as evidence and examples. exemplify concepts or practices
- there was an improvement in the use of specialist vocabulary as well as in spelling grammar and punctuation in general.
- structured their answers using well defined paragraphs and appropriate connectives in both Section A and B responses.

**Issues for centres to consider with some candidates:**

- continue to not read the question carefully enough and fail to select information to address the question set especially in AO2 questions. These questions very often contain words and phrases that try to help or guide candidates - 'central importance' or 'unique'. It is also good practice to refer back to the question consistently in the answer
- for weaker candidates in Section B there was a tendency to embark upon AO1-type narratives or biographies with insufficient analysis and evaluation
- rely on phrases such as 'this is a strong/weak point' but without any accompanying evaluative reasoning or evidence are also still evident
- should be encouraged to structure their AO2 responses in a clear and coherent way, with a logical conclusion.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 4: A STUDY OF RELIGION AND ETHICS

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Section A** questions test candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Section B** questions test candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q1 - Theme 2c: Finnis' Natural Law and Proportionalism: application of the theory
- Q2 - Theme 3b: Concepts of determinism
- Q3 - Theme 1a&1b: Meta-ethical approaches: Naturalism and Intuitionism
- Q4 - Theme 3a: Religious concepts of predestination
- Q5 - Theme 4a&b: Religious concepts of free will and concepts of libertarianism
- Q6 - Theme 1c: Meta-ethical approaches: Emotivism

#### Contextual information:

- the total entry for 2024 is 704 compared with 1,258 entries in 2019. Age 18 accounts for 93.6% of entries, an increase of 2.3% compared to 2019.
- most profiles are showing little variation. The majority of candidates were females at 80.3% with 83.9% studying under an English language medium.
- Wales maintained the percentage of entries at 98.6%. Centre type shows variation in candidates entering at Secondary schools decreased from 85.1% to 79.5%.

#### Positive features of responses:

- approaches to the application question (Q1) on this paper demonstrated a real improvement in skills
- it was pleasing to see improving understanding of Theme 1 Emotivism (Q6) in the specification.

#### Issues for centres to consider:

- a number of responses demonstrated clear AO1 knowledge and understanding, but often simply compared or juxtaposed opposing scholarly views in their AO2 responses without any real evaluation or engagement with the issues raised in the questions. This was particularly the case with some Welsh medium scripts where responses simply listed opposing views
- there is a tendency by some candidates to over-simplify some of the key ethical principles, perhaps in a bid to make them easier to remember, but this is often to the detriment of correct explanation and application.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### Section A

**Q.1** This was by far the most popular question in this section with the highest mean score in this section.

#### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- used Finnis' basic goods and requirements of practical reason systematically to apply to immigration
- recognised that there are different forms of immigration e.g. that there is a difference between asylum seeking and economic immigration and that Natural Law might have a different approach to different forms
- had a good grasp of Finnis' own approach to immigration and were able to discuss this in terms of the common good and the importance of authority.

#### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- avoid using very simplistic definitions of Finnis' goods and requirements e.g. 'equality' as these often led to misapplication
- need to stick to application of Finnis' principles rather than drifting into negative personal opinions about immigration. Some answers made uncomfortable reading
- get the balance right between knowledge of Finnis and application – some weaker responses tended to be all knowledge and little application or very general application with little reference to Finnis.

**Q.2** This was by far the least popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

#### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- had a clear understanding of soft determinism as a form of determinism and set the theory in context
- were able to use examples from Hobbes and Ayer very effectively to illustrate the theory
- could draw on the work of modern scholars such as Strawson in their explanations

#### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- use accurate examples – weaker responses used examples in a way which showed real lack of understanding of the 'determined' element of soft determinism
- focus on the question - some responses just wrote about hard determinism and did not understand that soft determinism is not the same or wrote about libertarianism. Some candidates appeared to be using pre-prepared responses which did not engage with the question.

## Section B

**Q.3** This was the second least popular question in this section but achieved the highest mean score in this section.

### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- used excellent knowledge of the meta-ethical approaches to underpin confident and thoughtful analysis and evaluation which really reflected on what would make an approach superior.
- were able to draw on a wide range of scholars from the specification and beyond in their evaluation

### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- engage with the question and evaluate rather than just comparing and juxtaposing two different approaches. AO2 skills are essential
- inclusion of scholarly views would support more general answers
- do not mix up Naturalism and Natural Law or think that Naturalism is a normative approach.

**Q.4** This was the second most popular question in this section but achieved the second lowest mean score in this section.

### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- showed obvious understanding of the key vocabulary in the question and used this understanding to produce thorough and confident evaluations
- used the views of scholars in this section and demonstrated connections to other elements of the specification such as the problem of evil in a coherent and focused way.

### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- evaluate views from each side of the debate rather than simply comparing the scholars.
- focus on the question set - some wanted to evaluate omnipotence or omniscience rather than benevolence.
- the main focus of the question was predestination so avoid writing entirely about the problem of evil instead.

**Q.5** This was the most popular question in this section with the second highest mean score in this section.

### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- drew on a wide range of scholarly approaches but remained focused on the question. Successful responses sometimes selected very different material but used this effectively to analyse the issue.
- could unpick the difference between free choice and free will and to link to theories which make this distinction.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- need to focus on the question and offer analysis and evaluation of the issues raised, rather than simply list points about the various theories
- refer to the scholarly views and the relevant content listed in the specification.

**Q.6** This was the least popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- picked up on the 'only strength' element of the question and argued for other strengths of the theory, engaging well with the question
- demonstrated an understanding of the differences between Ayer and Stevenson and offered nuanced evaluations about whether either encouraged moral debate more successfully.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- focus on the question was a key issue. Many candidates did not successfully grasp the issues raised by the question and simply wrote about the strengths and weaknesses of the theory
- there were many general responses which focused more on other meta-ethical theories and compared these with Emotivism. Candidates should be advised that the bulk of their response must deal with the theory identified in the question.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 5: A STUDY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Section A** questions test candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Section B** questions test candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

Q1 - Theme 4a: Religious language as non-cognitive and symbolic

Q2 - Theme 2b: Miracles-the definitions of

Q3 - Theme 3b: Religious language as cognitive, but meaningless

Q4 - Theme 2a: The influence of religious experience on religious practice and faith

Q5 - Themes 3 & 4 Religious language

Q6 - Theme1a: Religious belief as a product of the human mind-Sigmund Freud.

#### Contextual information:

- the total entry for 2024 is 703 compared with 1,259 entries in 2019. Age 18 accounts for 93.7% of entries, an increase of 2.6% compared to 2019.
- most profiles are showing little variation. The majority of candidates were females at 80.3% with 83.9% studying under an English language medium. Wales maintained the percentage of entries at 98.6%.
- centre type shows variation in candidates entering at Secondary schools decreased from 85.1% to 79.5%.

#### Positive features of responses:

- more successful responses showed signs of having looked at source material where possible
- there were some excellent responses which showed a good range of evidence and exemplification.

#### Issues for centres to consider:

- when addressing AO2 questions, AO1 type information should only be used as a basic backdrop to the 'evaluation' asked for
- some candidates would benefit from a structure for AO2 questions which would allow for a more coherent and logical essay.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### Section A

**Q.1** This was the least popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

#### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- were not purely generic with regards to symbolic language. In other words, the responses did actually deal with religion
- recognised Randall's four functions of symbols, including to arouse emotions and to bind communities and referred to aspects of his work such as 'splendour'
- knew that Randall did not see religion and science as being incompatible
- knew the distinction which Tillich drew between a sign and a symbol and were able to relate this to religious symbolic language. They often did refer to national flags and traffic lights but were able to relate this to religious language
- understood that Tillich said there is only one literal statement about God which is that 'God is Being Itself'
- made reference to Tillich's 'Ultimate Concern' with understanding.

#### **The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- do not provide generic information when referring to signs and/or symbols. Use meaningful and pertinent examples of symbolic religious language from the world religion studied. This will also demonstrate synoptic awareness
- gain a secure understanding of Randall or Tillich, as many struggled to address the question set
- gain a secure understanding of the meaning of the phrase 'Ultimate Concern' or 'Being Itself'

**Q2.** This was the by far the most popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

#### **What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- included depth and detail about each of the three scholars, rather than a superficial summary from a revision guide. Wider reading and research really showed in this question as did comprehensive class notes
- dealt with material concerning Hume in a structured fashion which showed an understanding of his perspective. Considerable detail was examined without straying into an evaluation of the views of Hume
- clearly stated Aquinas' categories of miracles with examples. Excellent responses could refer to primary and secondary causes and how these related to miracles. AS links regarding material on Aquinas were recognised and further enhanced responses
- understood Holland's view that an event can be understood religiously as a sign and interpreted as a miracle
- recognised that Swinburne says that miracles are possible due to God's omnipotence. His definition was not only stated but also understood as shown by the accompanying explanation.



**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- treat this question as an AO1 question not and AO2 one.
- do more than merely give the basic definition of miracles according to up to three scholars or just describe what they believed a miracle to be
- gain a secure knowledge and understanding of scholars and be able to ascribe material incorrectly to one or more scholars. Summary versions of the views of scholars are not valid A level response
- provide a logical structure to any material on Hume.
- Secure a clear understanding of the views of Holland and appreciate that the claim to a miracle is due to interpretation of the occurrence.

**Section B**

**Q.3** This was the second least popular question in this section but achieved the highest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- made pertinent suggestions as to why Logical Positivism effectively demonstrates that religious language is meaningless. Examples include the argument that religious language does not fulfil the demands of the Verification Principle
- illustrated their response by giving examples of religious language and why Logical Positivism says that particular example of religious language is meaningless.
- noticed that the Verification Principle itself cannot be verified. This can then lead to the suggestion that Logical Positivism is flawed thus not effectively demonstrating that religious language is meaningless
- included the views of scholars in an evaluative way. This was most effective when included with reference to both The Verification and Falsification Principles. A popular inclusion was Swinburne's 'toys in the cupboard'
- mentioned the view that religious language can be considered to be non-cognitive hence the claims of Logical Positivism are irrelevant as they are referring to cognitive language.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- do not treat this as an AO1 question on Logical Positivism and just list AO1 information, AO2 skills of analysis and evaluation are required to answer the question set
- gain an awareness of the distinction between the Verification and Falsification Principles
- do not simply state scholars' views but use their views as a form of analysis and evaluation.

**Q.4** This was the second most popular question in this section with the third highest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- used AS material on religious experience to good effect. This often resulted in a range of types of religious experience being referred to in a way that contributed to the evaluation. This resulted in candidates being able to state the lines of enquiry from a variety of perspectives.
- gave specific examples of conversion or miracles which allowed them to make a case on at least one side of the argument.
- commented that one view is that religious beliefs and practices can only come about as a direct result of a religious experience.
- they also stated that many religious believers have never had a religious experience. The basis for their belief lies elsewhere and they still also carry out religious practices.
- gave examples of ways in which a religious experience can directly influence beliefs and practices, such as affirming a faith system. It should be emphasised that learning the specific examples cited in the Specification is a good springboard for these responses.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- consider any possible influence that religious experience might have on religious beliefs and practices
- be able to recognise views which suggest that religious experience can directly influence religious beliefs and practices
- do not simply write AO1 material relating to types of religious experiences or AO1 material on what religious beliefs and practices might be. Engage with the question set
- broaden 'religious experience' into distinctive types of such experiences. This meant that the response was generic and missed specific pertinent lines of enquiry relating to a particular type of religious experience.

**Q.5** This was least popular question in this section with the lowest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- suggested that religious claims are very relevant today as these claims are intended to be cognitive. Such cognitive claims affect the lives of billions of people and so issues surrounding religious language have relevance today.
- made the point that religious claims could lose their relevance as many concepts used as part of religious language are not exclusive to religious language. For example, myths are used in a variety of contexts. Some added that myths are also products of a particular time and could be considered to be relevant to that time only.
- noted that sacred writings are very relevant as they provide the code for ethical conduct within a particular religious tradition.
- They questioned the relevance of issues surrounding religious language as some concepts used in religious language are beyond human comprehension. Examples include 'infinite' and 'timeless.'

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- don't just state what religious language is. For example, that religious language is contained within sacred writings or words used to describe that which is 'otherworldly.' Engage with the question as to whether religious language issues are relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Often 'technology' was referred to but it was in no way linked to the question.
- do not turn this into a question about Logical Positivism. Whilst some credit can be given for material relevant to the question, many responses read as if they were answering an entirely different question
- don't divert the question and give AO1 information on the problems of religious language.

**Q.6** This was most popular question in this section with the second highest mean score in this section.

**What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:**

- spent a minimal amount of time describing Freud's explanation of religious belief. This set the scene for the evaluation but did not dominate the response.
- took each part of Freud's explanation for religious belief and evaluated these in turn. This made the response clear and coherent and showed good understanding of his views.
- many suggested that his explanation is inadequate as he did not take into account the many benefits of religion to individuals and to society.
- others suggested alternative reasons as to why it could be considered that Freud's views are biased, such as his own pre-existing ideas before any research was done.
- noticed that his Anthropological Studies could be considered to be inaccurate and therefore inadequate.
- countered this by suggesting the similarities between religious rituals and the rituals displayed by people with Obsessive Compulsive Disorders. This is an argument in favour of the adequacy of Freud's explanation of religious belief.

**The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:**

- do not spent an inordinate amount of time writing AO1 material about Freud's explanation of religious belief
- do not rely on rote learning and/or undue reliance on brief revision notes to address an AO2 question
- do not spent an inordinate amount of time contrasting Freud with Jung. Some reference to Jung was permissible by way of suggesting that one explanation was more adequate than the other. However, many candidates tried to respond as if this were a question about Jung's views.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 6: TEXTUAL STUDIES (NEW TESTAMENT)

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

**Section A** questions test candidates' **AO1 skills - knowledge and understanding** of religion and belief.

**Section B** questions test candidates' **AO2 skills - analysis and evaluation**, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

#### Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q1 - Theme 1b: Parables – purposes and interpretations
- Q2 - Theme 2c: Close study of New Testament texts (miracles)
- Q3 - Theme 1a: Parables – types and characteristics
- Q4 - Theme 2b: Miracles – purposes and interpretations
- Q5 - Theme 3a: The Letters (1 Peter) – authorship and readership
- Q6 - Theme 4b: Apocalyptic literature – purposes and interpretations

#### Contextual information:

- the total entry for 2024 is 26 compared with 43 entries in 2019. Age 18 accounts for 84.6% of entries, an increase of 17.2% compared to 2019
- most profiles are showing little variation. The majority of candidates were females at 68.2% down from 86.2% in 2019. Wales still accounts for 100.0% of entries in this unit
- centre type shows variation in candidates entering at Secondary schools decreased from 44.8% to 40.9%, with FE Establishments holding the majority at 59.1% in 2024.

#### Positive features of good responses:

- wrote in an appropriate A01 or A02 style for the question set
- did not provide unnecessary introductions or conclusions for A01 questions
- read and understand the question set and so the material they selected in their analysis and evaluation flowed throughout their response in a constant discursive analysis and evaluation.

**Issues for centres to consider with regards to some candidates:**

- provided short responses thereby self-restricting the ability to relay information and attain higher bands
- demonstrated a lack of sufficient subject area knowledge and understanding in order to address the question set
- need to be reminded of the need for capital letters for key terminology, e.g., God, Jesus, Christian, Peter, Jewish.
- handwriting remains a concern for a number of scripts and centres need to be aware of their candidate's handwriting style and ability *under exam conditions* and, if necessary, make appropriate access arrangements so that their work can be accessed by WJEC examiners. It is not possible to award material that cannot be read.

## Supporting you

### Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: **029 2240 4274**

Email: [GCEReligiousStudies@wjec.co.uk](mailto:GCEReligiousStudies@wjec.co.uk)

Qualification webpage: [AS/A Level Religious Studies \(wjec.co.uk\)](http://wjec.co.uk/AS/A-Level-Religious-Studies)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

### CPD Training / Professional Learning

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

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