

GCSE Examiners' Report

Religious Studies

GCSE

Summer 2025

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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.¹

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.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
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.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	<p>Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

¹ 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.	Portal by WJEC
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.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
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Executive Summary

Overview of Units 1, 2 and 3

In all three units of the GCSE Religious Studies examination, the examination papers proved accessible to candidates, with a full range of marks achieved across the full suite of examination papers. Again, in this series the two largest paper options were Islam and Judaism, for both units. Judaism is always the option religion for unit 3. There was again no Sikhism entry.

There was a significant improvement in the use of specialist religious language across all papers, with many candidates using specialist terms in their written work, across (b), (c) and (d) responses. There was a significant development in candidate's understanding of the requirements of different triggers in questions, and the correct answering of each style of question in the expected way was more evident in this summer series.

The ability of candidates to address the skills required in answering the evaluation questions has improved; skills appear to have developed, and particularly in the ethics and philosophy 3 and 4 (d) responses. There was again a noticeable development in candidate's understanding of the skills required to answer this type of question. There was also some outstanding use of religious and moral reasoning in the AO2 (d) responses, where significant number of candidates were using a wide range of evaluative terms to discuss the given statements in a comprehensive and effective way. This was evidenced in all papers.

It was also evident candidates were using differentiated responses, where a range of Christian knowledge and understanding were used. In the Christianity section, many candidates, where appropriate, also used and interpreted sources of wisdom and authority in their responses. Many candidates demonstrated good literacy skills throughout the examination papers, and not just in the extended writing required in the response to question 1(d).

Across the series there is evidence that some candidates were unable to give a full definition of the key concepts. It is of concern that some candidates did not appear to recognise the term or be able to give a definition in these low tariff and accessible questions. A significant number of candidates in this summer series also disadvantaged themselves when not attempting all questions on the examination paper. It is important candidates attempt all questions.

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UNIT 1 CHRISTIANITY SECTION ACROSS ALL PAPERS (EXCEPT OPTION F)

Overview of the Unit

There was a very good attempt at answering most of the questions in this section of the examination paper, showing it was accessible to candidates. It was also pleasing to see differentiated responses where candidates used a range of Christian knowledge and understanding to answer the range of questions. Many candidates also used and interpreted sources of wisdom and authority, where appropriate.

There were a variety of responses for the (b) question about ethical decision making. Some candidates did not focus on the demands of the question and as a result, did not achieve the higher marks. However, when candidates gained higher marks, they included religious language to support their responses. Candidates engaged well with the (c) question on love and explained specific examples of Christian teachings. There was evidence of candidates fully engaged with the demands of the evaluation question. It is also evident that centres have prepared their candidates for the spelling, punctuation and grammar element of the evaluation question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1 (a) What do Christians mean by 'Messiah'?

Candidates engaged well with this question. Most were able to define the Messiah as the 'Anointed One' and were able to gain full marks. Some candidates just referred to the Messiah as the Son of God, Jesus or Saviour without any development.

Question 1 (b) Describe Christian approaches to ethical decision making.

There were a variety of responses to this question. Where candidates gained higher marks, there was evidence of good religious language and examples to support how ethical decisions are made. For example, many candidates made reference to absolute and relative morality, use of the Bible, conscience, prayer and free will. However, some responses were brief and not developed and some gave examples of a situation without linking it to the question. For example, some said Christians were against euthanasia without linking their response to the question.

Question 1 (c) Explain Christian teachings about love.

Candidates engaged well with this question. It is evident that centres have prepared candidates well for the demands of this style of question and the skills have been embedded. Most candidates had a good understanding of the key Christian teachings of love. For example, candidates were able to explain specific examples of love such as agape and love thy neighbour. Where candidates wrote a very good or excellent answer, they explained points made. However, some candidates listed teachings about love, resulting in a satisfactory response.

Question 1 (d) 'Helping the community is the most important role of a church or chapel.'

Candidates had been prepared well for this question and therefore there were very few gaps in responses. Where candidates achieved the higher bands, they made reference to the community function of the church or chapel, with alternative responses linking to the church being a place to bring people together and to worship. Many candidates referred to why it is important to help the community and backed up their responses with references to foodbanks and the biblical quote 'love thy neighbour'. Some candidates wrote good responses but at times there was a lack of evaluative language. There were some very good examples of responses where candidates had linked their response to the statement, ensuring their judgements are relevant.

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Unit 1 Philosophy and Ethics across all papers in Unit 1

Overview of the Unit

For the Philosophical Issues sections of all Unit 1 papers (Q3 and Q4), questions were appropriately selected to cover the breadth of the specification and were accessible to candidates of all abilities, with a full range of responses being seen and the full range of marks being awarded. The Philosophical Issues section of the papers require candidates to be able to answer questions where they choose which religion to focus on (b style questions) and where they are required to answer from both religions (c style questions). It continues that there is appropriate selection of questions from across the specification to allow for this requirement across all world religions, whilst also allowing candidates to draw on their knowledge of non-religious beliefs which is also expected in Q3(d). Generally, performance of candidates was seen as similar across all world religions' papers; there has continued to be more parity between candidates writing to a similar standard in Christianity and their second chosen world religion. One question that appears to have caused some challenge to candidates, having the lowest attempt rate in all papers was 4(b) with a focus on the belief/practice of pacifism; interestingly this is the same across all world religions.

Many candidates seem confident with the demands of each style of examination question, and it is reassuring to see the multitude of ways they are accessing the marking. There appears to be more confidence shown in the difference between 'describe' and 'explain' questions although at times, some candidates are mixing up their AO1 and AO2 skills and not using sufficient evaluative language in their (d) responses. One particular concern is the high number of candidates appearing to rely on acronyms to help them organise and structure their responses; this has, at times, seemed to restrict some as answers aren't always developed fully, or responses seem disjointed. Generally, the use of religious terminology used by candidates across papers was good, although each world religion paper has shown some gaps where continued focus on this would be beneficial.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 3 (a) What is meant by 'afterlife'?

This question was generally popular with candidates, having a high attempt rate. Candidates were able to access the marks in different ways, usually either offering a general understanding of the term (e.g. linking it to what happens after death) or specific understanding from their selected religions (e.g. specifically talking about the soul or heaven/hell/reincarnation).

Question 3 (b) Describe Christian or XXX beliefs about caring for the world.

It was encouraging to see that this question was generally well attempted by candidates across all papers and the full range of marks was awarded. Particularly pleasing to note is that most candidates knew that they had to select to write about Christianity or their second world religion and it was only a minority of occasions where candidates wrote about both. The best answers gave specific information in their responses from their chosen religion and used key religious terminology, including words such as stewardship or responsibility alongside specific examples of actions religious believers could choose to do. Weaker candidates were able to give basic responses to access some marks although needed further development to move up the band descriptors.

Question 3 (c) Explain Christian and XXX teachings about the origin of the universe.

Weaker responses to this question tended to give descriptive responses or rely on retelling stories about the creation of the universe, although in the Christian part of the required answer, many candidates unfortunately got their days of creation mixed up. More sophisticated responses from Christianity explained more accurately beliefs about creation, developing ideas such as how it could be interpreted by Literalists and Non-literalists. Answers that accessed the higher marks available were able to match the quality of these responses in the second chosen world religion, using specific religious terminology and accurate detail consistently.

Question 3 (d) 'Only God has the right to choose when a person's life ends.'

The openness of this question and the many links candidates could make to topics across the specification encouragingly allowed a wide variety of responses and access for candidates to the full range of marks. It was pleasing to see that centres are rigorously teaching candidates the requirement of needing to include a non-religious perspective in responses and a multitude of examples were referenced and linked to the statement, including murder, the ethical issues of euthanasia, abortion and the death penalty and well as general teachings or beliefs around the sanctity and quality of life. Many candidates were able to present a range of views and contrast their beliefs and teachings around the arguments they constructed, allowing even weaker candidates to show their evaluative skills. It was pleasing to see that some candidates were able to use evaluative language to offer a discussion, but many responses did lack an overall conclusion at the end which would have helped to draw responses to a close and elicit a final thought on the statement from candidates.

Question 4 (a) What is meant by ‘suffering’?

It was pleasing to see that this question encouraged a high response from candidates with many able to access the full marks available. Some used the WJEC definition provided, whilst others chose to show their understanding of the term through their own worded definition that was developed using appropriate examples.

Question 4 (b) Describe Christian or XXX attitudes towards pacifism.

This question appears to have been least popular with candidates across all papers, having the lowest attempt rate. It is unclear whether this is because candidates were not sure of the meaning of the term ‘pacifism’ or for some other reason. Candidates who answered this well were able to access the marks from either specifically focusing on pacifism and examples of it seen within their chosen religion or they drew on their knowledge of pacifism through religious beliefs about war which were credited within the context of the response. Some candidates incorrectly made guesses at what they thought the question was focusing on or gave very brief and underdeveloped responses that were unable to move up the band descriptors.

Question 4 (c) Explain Christian and XXX beliefs about how criminals should be treated.

The openness of this question allowed candidates of all abilities to access it, and a range of responses were seen across all religions. The best responses were seen where candidates drew on a variety of ideas, including linking treatment of prisoners to human rights, giving specific examples from prison reformers or people who support prisoners in prison or simply those responses that used teachings to effectively show differing views. A significant number of candidates talked about the death penalty or potential punishments that could be considered. Weaker responses lacked development or talked generally without specific religious content, offering showing candidates appeared stronger in their understanding of one religion than another.

Question 4 (d) ‘The death penalty is a fair punishment.’

Even though this was the final question on the paper, it was satisfying to see the high numbers of candidates who were still writing at length in their responses, suggesting they had much to say about religious beliefs on the death penalty. The best responses were able to show knowledge and understanding of how teachings relating to the death penalty could be interpreted in different ways or show how contrasting beliefs within a religion led to diversity in opinions. Whilst there was no requirement to include non-religious views in this response, many candidates chose to do so and accurately gave this as an alternative viewpoint. Weaker responses tended to be more descriptive and lacked evaluative language or missed the word ‘fair’ in the statement and simply talked about whether the death penalty was right or wrong. It was interesting to see the variety of ways in which candidates approached this question and the extensive thought that went into their arguments.

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UNIT 1 OPTION 3120UA0-JUDAISM

Overview of the Unit

There was a mixed attempt at answering most of the questions in this section of the examination paper. Candidates found the (a) and (b) questions more accessible. Some candidates displayed some good Jewish knowledge throughout the examination paper. However, at times candidates did not apply the knowledge accurately to the demands of the questions and lost marks as a result.

Candidates clearly understood the meaning of 'omnibenevolence' and wrote a clear definition. However, some of these responses were not developed to achieve the full two marks. There were a range of responses for the b question where some candidates wrote specifically about how the Torah is used in worship. There were some disappointing responses to the 'c' question about the Shema. Some candidates did not focus on the demands of the 'teachings' of the Shema and as a result, do not achieve the higher marks. Some candidates did not make the link to 'in Britain' in the evaluation question. This resulted in some candidates writing generally about Shabbat.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 2 (a) What do Jews mean by the 'omnibenevolence'?

Candidates engaged well with this question. Most candidates were able to give a clear definition of omnibenevolence as 'all-loving'. Some candidates did not link their response to God and therefore did not achieve the full two marks.

Question 2 (b) Describe how Jews use the synagogue for prayer.

There were a range of responses to this question. Some candidates focused specifically on the use of the Torah during prayer. Some candidates wrote about why Jews attend the synagogue and therefore they did not focus on the demands of the question. Where candidates achieved higher banding, they used excellent religious language, such as the minyan, aron hakodesh and the seating arrangements. There were some candidates who wrote responses like a list and as a result, they did not develop the points they made.

Question 2 (c) Explain the teachings of the Shema.

There were some disappointing responses to this question. There were some inaccuracies about where the Shema is found, and some candidates wrote about the Shema containing the Ten Commandments. Where candidates achieved the higher bands, they specifically referred to the teachings of the Shema and supported the teachings with evidence, such as teaching it to your children and when it should be recited.

Question 2 (d) 'It is easy for Jews to observe Shabbat in Britain.'

There were some disappointing responses to this question and some candidates did not attempt the question. Some candidates wrote about observing Shabbat in a general sense, without making the link to 'in Britain'. However, where candidates achieved the higher bands, they made reference to observing Shabbat in Britain, using examples of driving on Shabbat, preparing the food for Shabbat and the difficulties in finishing work and school, to support their judgements. Some candidates used religious language, appropriately and some even referred to Shabbat as 'Queen Shabbat.'

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UNIT 1 OPTION 3120UB0 - ISLAM

Overview of the Unit

The paper was accessible to candidates of all abilities; appropriate questions from across the specification were selected and terminology used in answers directly reflected the wording of the specification. The full range of marks were awarded across all questions on the paper and candidate focus on the quality of knowledge as well as AO1 and AO2 skills, allowed for progression through the marking bands. General performance from candidates across the paper compared appropriately with that seen in previous years; the required skills show they have been embedded as the standards of each style of question are better understood.

Many candidates appeared to understand the demands of each style of examination question and a variety of tools were seen to be employed by them to access the marks available. It is encouraging to note there seems to be more familiarity with the difference between the skills of 'describe' and 'explain' although, at times, there remains a lack of use of evaluative language in (d) responses which can be more descriptive. Candidate knowledge of the religions of Christianity and Islam, as well as non-religious views, ranged from 'basic' to 'outstanding' showing the paper was fully accessible to candidates of all abilities. It is pleasing to note that a significant majority of candidates are writing more length to their (c) and (d) responses. As seen in previous years, there still seems to be some candidate unfamiliarity or mixing up of the use of religious terms, specifically Islamic Arabic terms; giving a specific focus to this would allow many candidates to potentially be more confident in answering questions fully.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 2 (a) What do Muslims mean by 'Adhan'?

Many candidates were able to give an accurate and appropriate definition of the term 'Adhan' in their (a) responses, successfully knowing this is the Islamic call to prayer; a minority appeared to guess its meaning giving a variety of wrong answers. Many were able to give additional relevant information such as that it is given by the muezzin or that it happens from the minaret in the mosque. However, this question was least answered on this section of the paper by candidates, suggesting that there remains a lack of confidence at times with use of Islamic terms.

Question 2 (b) Describe how Muslims perform zakat.

A range of responses were given by candidates to the (b) question; many were able to give relevant information about how zakat is performed, although some lacked specific detail or focused more on *why* the pillar is completed more than *how*. The best answers were able to show case their levels of knowledge around the practice of zakat, often showing they knew what it was and how it was given, whilst also giving appropriate information about how it may be collected differently in the UK as well in Islamic countries or showing specific knowledge about how the money may be used. A minority of candidates did mix up 'zakat' with some of the other pillars which is disappointing and suggests more familiarity and focus on key terms is still required by some centres.

Question 2 (c) Explain why the Qur'an is important in Islam.

The popularity of the (c) question on the importance of the Qur'an was shown through the high number of candidates who attempted a response; it was pleasing to see different ways in which they were able to access marks, with often multiple reasons being given in their responses. Many candidates referred to ideas associated with how the Qur'an was revealed, what it contains as well as how respect may be shown to it, linking all these to show its level of importance to Muslims. Some weaker candidates only gave brief descriptive reasoning or general responses that were not developed, meaning they were not able to move up the marking bands.

Question 2 (d) 'The Shahadah is the most important pillar for Muslims.'

It is encouraging to see more lengthy responses being written by many candidates in their responses to (d) questions; this may be due to confidence with the knowledge required or more familiarity with the required discussion/evaluation skills being taught. Many candidates were able to offer varied reasons for the importance of the Shahadah; some identifying it was the first pillar of Islam and seeing it as underpinning other pillars or that it was felt the Shahadah summed up the essence of what it means to be a Muslim. This was pleasingly contrasting with a wide variety of alternative pillars whilst many candidates also referring to other Islamic beliefs outside of the five pillars which were also credited. Weaker responses often ended up giving descriptive rather than evaluative responses and would benefit from more focus on the use of evaluative language within their answers.

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UNIT 1 OPTION 3120UC0-HINDUISM

Overview of the Unit

The paper was accessible to candidates as all questions aligned and reflected the scope and range of the specification. Terminology used aligned and reflected the terminology within the specification. Assessment objectives 1 and 2 were assessed within the relevant questions across the paper. The full range of band descriptors and marks were awarded across the paper. The quality of responses enabled candidates to progress through the bands. A number of candidates disadvantaged themselves by not attempting all Hinduism questions; questions 2(a) and 2(d) were poorly attempted.

Most candidates show a clear understanding of the different demands of the questions within the paper knowing the different requirements of a describe question when compared to an explanation or evaluation question. Some candidates continue to find this a challenge and would gain from familiarising themselves more with the different demands of the various questions across the paper. Additionally, the use of formulas can be unhelpful when completing the (d) questions as this can lead to a lack of evaluation and analysis.

Candidates continue to make good use of subject specific terminology; it is positive that this is reflected within both Christianity and Hinduism, and this has supported candidate's success when moving up the band descriptors. Having said this, a number of candidates were unable to answer some of the Hinduism questions due to their lack of knowledge and understanding of some key Hinduism terminology; this was seen across the Hinduism questions. Candidates' knowledge and understanding of Hinduism ranges from outstanding to superficial.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 2 (a) What do Hindus mean by Varanasi?

There were many candidates who did not attempt this question. However, candidates that succeeded within this question recognised the importance of Varanasi as a place of pilgrimage for Hindus and its location on the banks of the River Ganges.

Question 2 (b) Describe the Nam Samskar (naming) ceremony.

Candidates that answered this question recognised that the Nam Samakar occurred soon after birth and they could describe some to the practices that took place. On occasions candidates overly focused on the choosing of the name of the child prior to the ceremony instead of the ceremony itself.

Question 2 (c) Explain the relationship between Brahman and atman.

Candidates that answered this question understood what Brahman and the atman are but struggled to understand the relationship between both, which prevented them from moving up the bands. Some candidates successfully made use of Hindu stories to explain the relationship between Brahman and the atman and recognised that the atman would eventually join with Brahman at moksha.

Question 2 (d) 'Hindus must attend puja in the mandir.'

There were many candidates who did not attempt this question. However, candidates that succeeded within this question could evaluate successfully whether Hindus had to attend puja in the mandir with some recognising that Hindus do not have to attend puja in the mandir at all. Some candidates disadvantaged themselves by focusing on the rights and wrongs of performing puja instead of the focus of the statement.

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UNIT 1 OPTION 3120UD0-BUDDHISM

Overview of the Unit

The examination was accessible, with the specification covered appropriately. The demand was comparable to previous papers, and marks were awarded across the range, with the mean increasing by 3.3 marks. Candidates generally demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the main areas of Buddhism, with many able to describe, explain, and evaluate in the appropriate places. While many candidates showed thorough knowledge of the course content, the depth required to access higher bands was sometimes lacking. For example, many struggled to explain why Buddhists celebrate Wesak, with some describing how it was celebrated, which was not the skill required for the (c) question. This year it was noticeable that more candidates were able to use Buddhist key terms in answers to questions (b), (c), and (d), which is testament to teachers preparing them for this. In many cases sources of authority were well chosen and used effectively. This had a positive impact on the bands that candidates achieved.

The examination paper assessed both assessment objectives with candidates required to define a key concept (Buddha), describe the Buddha's teachings on dukkha, explain why Wesak is celebrated, and evaluate whether mettabhavana is the most important type of Buddhist meditation. The (a) question proved to be the most popular and most accessible as there was little room for confusion with another concept. The (b) question performed well with most candidates achieving over half the marks available. Unfortunately, the (c) question was not answered particularly well by many candidates who were unable to move up the marking bands. The (d) question performed in a similar way to 2024's evaluation question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 2 (a) What do Buddhists mean by 'Buddha'?

Candidates engaged well with the (a) question with most being able to give a clear definition of 'Buddha'. Most referred to Buddha as Siddhartha Gautama who was the awakened one. Some gave the glossary definition, but many wrote out their own definition which showed understanding of what Buddhists mean by 'Buddha'. Answers that achieved 1 mark tended to give an incomplete definition, e.g. the first person to overcome suffering.

Question 2 (b) Describe the Buddha's teachings about suffering (dukkha).

The (b) question was accessible and answered by most candidates who were able to describe something about dukkha, e.g. one of the Four Noble Truths. The better responses referred to the three types of dukkha (pain, realisation that good things don't last, the belief that everything is permanent), or how it is at the heart of the Four Noble Truths with effective use of tanha, nirodha and magga as key religious language. Some candidates explained that dukkha is caused by the Three Poisons (greed, hatred, ignorance), or that it is a difficult concept to explain as unsatisfactory might be a better interpretation than 'suffering'. Although not necessary in a (b) answer, some candidates did include the quote "all of life is suffering". Weaker answers tended to be more focused on tanha as the cause of suffering, without looking at any other teachings.

Question 2 (c) Explain why many Buddhists celebrate Wesak.

There were a range of responses to the (c) question with the stronger answers considering the reasons for celebrating the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha, showing understanding of the impact of these events for Buddha and Buddhists. Other acceptable reasons for celebrating were considered e.g. to teach children, to accrue karma. Lower scoring answers tended to be mainly descriptive of the ways in which Buddhists might celebrate Wesak. Without some attempt to explain the reasons for the celebration, many candidates were unable to move into the higher bands. The weakest answers appeared to be guesswork, with candidates seeming to use their knowledge of Christian festivals to make assumptions about Buddhism.

Question 2 (d) 'Mettabhavana is the most important type of meditation.'

In the (d) answers, the use of 'most important' in the statement about mettabhavana provided most candidates with a clear focus and they were able to effectively consider the relative value of this type of meditation, alongside deliberation of samatha and/or vipassana meditations. It was pleasing to note that many more candidates evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the points they made in their discussions, with judgements supported by evidence and examples. In most cases this enabled an answer to move up the marking bands. Weaker answers were unable to move out of the lower bands due to a lack of accurate knowledge and understanding of the different types of meditation, which made it impossible for them to engage with whether mettabhavana was the most important of the different types. Some answers lacked the use of specialist terms which was disappointing as this had improved in recent years. Many candidates appeared to be better prepared this year, both in terms of subject knowledge and the skills needed to better answer a (d) question.

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UNIT 1 OPTION 3120UF0-CATHOLIC

Overview of the Unit

This year's paper proved to be accessible to most candidates. The key concepts questions were answered exceptionally well this year, in particular question 3 (a). It is pleasing to see that there is a high percentage of attempt at all four key questions in this paper. Candidates were able to demonstrate A01 skills effectively in most (b) questions.

However, there were common difficulties with the interpretation of question 1(c). There was a significant number of gaps for this question causing candidates to lose a substantial number of marks. Candidates failed to understand what 'interfaith dialogue' means and the mean mark for this (c) question was low demonstrating that many candidates struggled to achieve the higher bands. This pattern was reflected in the (c) also. 3c and 4 c were better attempted, and achievements were higher.

The higher order questions, (c) and (d) are still proving difficult for a number of candidates. Candidates performed significantly better in the Philosophy and Ethics questions in the (c) and (d) questions.

Whilst candidates made a great effort with the (d) questions, skills of analysis and evaluation need further development. There were fewer use formulas that limit or restrict answers this year allowing candidates to better develop lines of argument. It is important that candidates read the question carefully and include lines of argument from other world views only when necessary.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1 (a) What do Catholics mean by the 'Trinity'?

This question was answered extremely well with the majority of candidates achieving full marks by giving a correct definition of the term Trinity.

Question 1 (b) Describe Catholic beliefs about Original Sin.

The majority of candidates attempted the question and understood the beliefs about Original Sin. There were some very insightful answers where candidates linked biblical beliefs with Church practices of baptism. There were some excellent references to sources of wisdom and authority.

Question 1 (c) Explain how Catholic groups could work for reconciliation through inter-faith dialogue.

This question proved difficult for many candidates. Many were able refer to dialogue meaning 'talking together' but answers, on the whole, were general and confused. Many candidates referred to the work of charities rather than groups associated with interfaith dialogue.

Question 1 (d) 'The most important belief about Jesus is that he rose from the dead.'

The majority of candidates attempted the question. Most knew what is meant by the resurrection but failed to draw out the significance of belief in Jesus' resurrection. Many candidates stated other beliefs about Jesus without developing their answers through analysis and evaluation. Candidates tended to rush from one point to another before fully engaging with the line of argument. Fewer candidates achieved the highest bands for this question this year.

Spelling punctuation and grammar remains very much in line with previous years, with most candidates achieving the intermediate band.

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UNIT 2 CHRISTIANITY SECTION ACROSS ALL PAPERS

Overview of the Unit

There were a range of responses in this section of the examination paper. Candidates found the b, c and d questions most accessible. Many candidates used religious language appropriately to support their responses, and some candidates used their knowledge from unit 1 to answer some of the questions.

Some candidates did not clearly understand the meaning of 'revelation' and included definitions that were not always linked to Christianity. Candidates engaged well with the (b) question about Heaven and included appropriate religious language to support their responses. Most candidates also engaged well with the (c) question about pilgrimage. They were able to explain the importance of pilgrimage, using specific examples to support their answers. There was also evidence of candidates fully engaged with the demands of the evaluation question. Most candidates were able to use their knowledge and understanding to support points they made, and many referred to Pope Francis in their responses. It is also evident that centres have prepared their candidates for the spelling, punctuation and grammar element of the evaluation question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1 (a) What do Christians mean by 'revelation'?

There were a range of responses to this question. Some candidates did not know what 'revelation' was and as a result they did not attempt the question. Some candidates wrote a detailed definition of revelation, linking it to God. Some candidates wrote a basic definition, linking revelation to a discovery of something.

Question 1 (b) Describe Christian beliefs about Heaven.

Candidates engaged well with this question. Many candidates wrote detailed descriptions, including reference to eternal life with God. Some candidates wrote about Hell being the opposite of Heaven. There were some candidates who described purgatory as a preparation for Heaven. Where candidates gained the higher marks, they often made reference to sources of authority to support the points they made.

Question 1 (c) Explain why pilgrimage is important to Christians.

Many candidates engaged well with this question and there were very few 'not attempted' responses. Most candidates wrote in detail about reasons why the pilgrimage is important and where candidates achieved higher banding, they were able to explain the points they wrote about. Some candidates wrote a description of what happens during pilgrimage and as a result they did not focus on the demands of the question.

Question 1 (d) 'The Bible is the only source of authority for Christians.'

There was evidence of candidates being fully engaged with the demands of this question. Most candidates were able to use their knowledge and understanding to support the points they made. They often gave balanced viewpoints, using religious language and sources of authority in their judgements. Many candidates used their knowledge and understanding across both units to provide different viewpoints in this question. A number of candidates also referred to the late Pope Francis in their responses

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UNIT 2 PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS ACROSS ALL PAPERS IN UNIT 2

Overview of the Unit

All questions in the Ethical Issues section of all Unit 2 papers (Q3 and Q4) were appropriately taken from different areas of the specification and appear to be accessible to candidates of all abilities. The full range of marks have been awarded across all bands for questions and knowledge throughout all papers has been reflected at all standards, from 'basic' to 'exceptional'. Like Unit 1, the Ethical Issues sections of the Unit 2 papers require candidates to be able to answer questions where they choose which religion to focus on (b) style questions and where they are required to answer from both religions (c) style questions. This expectation seems to have been understood by most candidates with only small numbers including both religions in (b) responses and not working for consistency between religions in (c) responses.

The accessibility of questions 3 and 4 on all papers was shown through the way candidates have accessed the marks in different ways, sometimes generally and sometimes more specifically related to the religions they have studied. Marks awarded show many candidates confidently know the difference between the skills of 'describe' and 'explain' and this is reflected in both the content and skill in responses. Some candidates remain weaker with their discussion/evaluation skills when answering (d) questions focused on a given statement as weaker responses are more descriptive and would benefit from applying more use of evaluative language.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 3 (a) What is meant by 'cohabitation'?

Many candidates across all papers attempted this question successfully with no real issues. The best responses were those that referred to people living together with a suitable appropriate example.

Question 3 (b) Describe Christian or XXX attitudes towards adultery.

It was pleasing to see that this question had a high attempt rate, the full range of marks were awarded, and the majority had selected only one religion to write about. The most confident responses referred to relevant religious teachings appropriate to the religion selected, describing these within their response. Some candidates gave basic responses that were underdeveloped or repeated the same information multiple times within their answers without giving any new information.

Question 3 (c) Explain Christian and XXX beliefs about marriage.

This question, through its openness, allowed all candidates to access and show their knowledge; there was a myriad of ideas candidates chose to write about including general ideas about marriage or marriage ceremonies, beliefs specific to the religion using religious teachings and religious terminology and sometimes linking marriage to issues such as divorce or sexual relationships which were all credited. Weaker responses didn't offer more than descriptive ideas or simply repeated general ideas. The best answers were seen with candidates who were able to offer a consistent approach of the skill of explanation throughout their answer and who showed extensive knowledge and understanding of marriage specific to the religions they had studied, expertly sharing this in an organised and structured way.

Question 3 (d) "Religious believers should support same-sex relationships."

This question allowed for the full range of marks in each band to be awarded and it was pleasing to see many candidates choosing to write at length to explain a variety of religious views. Although not explicitly required by this question, many candidates also included some reference to non-religious views or linked the statement specifically to developments today in areas of equality such as referencing the Equality Act of 2010; this is pleasing to see more able candidates making links between issues they may have studied in the Human Rights section of the course here and across the specification. It is also noteworthy to highlight that many answers reinforced arguments used with links to appropriate teachings. Some weaker candidates failed to develop their arguments fully, didn't offer consistency in alternative views presented or lacked evaluative language in their responses.

Question 4 (a) What is meant by 'human rights'?

This question was answered well by candidates where either a developed definition was given of the phrase or a more basic definition with relevant example. Weaker candidates were able to be awarded a mark if they had just included an appropriate example.

Question 4 (b) Describe Christian or XXX beliefs about discrimination.

It is encouraging to see that candidates who attempted this question were confident in knowing what the term 'discrimination' meant and different ways of accessing marks were seen across all papers. Some chose to focus solely on religious teachings and applied them to beliefs about discrimination whilst other candidates focused more on examples of religious people or organisations who have worked against discrimination and shown it is wrong; both approaches were credited. The best answers successfully described multiple specific religious ideas without repetition which is what some less able candidates did at times.

Question 4 (c) Explain Christian and XXX beliefs about how wealth should be used.

Candidates seemed to like this question, and it is noteworthy to mention the specific information some were able to bring specific from the religions they have studied. Charity featured highly as part of most responses with the best answers linking ideas of the use of wealth to relevant teachings. A minority of responses gave more descriptive answers or answers where there was an imbalance in knowledge between the religions studied.

Question 4 (d) 'All religious believers have a responsibility to work for equality.'

Generally, this question showed a pleasing number of candidates attempting it but distinctly lower than any other (d) question on the paper. Some candidates seemed to misinterpret the statement and focused just on religious beliefs or teachings about equality rather than exploring whether there is a responsibility potentially because of those teachings to work for equality; this was often the link missing in answers that were awarded below band 3 that prevented them progressing higher up the bands. It was encouraging to see that many candidates referred to specific examples of religious individuals who have stood up for equality but at times, this made answers become more descriptive of what they did rather than evaluating why they did it and relating it to the statement.

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UNIT 2 3120U10-JUDAISM

Overview of the Unit

There was a mixed attempt at answering most of the questions in this section of the examination paper. Candidates found the a and d questions most accessible. Some candidates displayed some good Jewish knowledge throughout the examination paper. However, at times candidates did not apply the knowledge accurately to the demands of the questions and lost marks as a result.

Candidates clearly understood the meaning of 'Brit Milah' and wrote a clear definition. There were a range of responses for the (b) question where some candidates described where the mezuzah is found without linking it to how it is a symbol of Jewish identity. There were some disappointing responses to the (c) question about how Jews celebrate Pesach. Some candidates wrote about why Pesach is celebrated and some focused mainly on the foods for Pesach. There was also some confusion with other Jewish festivals. Many candidates were fully engaged with the demands of the evaluation question. Most candidates were able to evaluate the importance of the Ten Commandments. Where candidates gained higher marks, they were able to write about other important duties for Jews.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 2 (a) What do Jews mean by 'Brit Milah'?

Many candidates were able to respond to this question. Where candidates achieved full marks, they wrote how Brit Milah is the circumcision ceremony of an eight-day old boy. Some candidates translated Brit Milah as 'Covenant of the Cutting' and achieved the full two marks. There were some candidates who wrote about a Bar Mitzvah ceremony and as a result they did not gain marks.

Question 2 (b) Describe how the mezuzah is a symbol of Jewish identity.

There were a variety of responses to this question. Many candidates described the mezuzah without clearly linking it to how it is a symbol of Jewish identity. Where candidates had developed their description of the mezuzah, they were able to link the mezuzah showing the people in the home are Jewish. Some candidates unfortunately did not know what the mezuzah was and therefore did not gain marks. Where candidates achieved the higher marks for this question, they included religious language such as monotheism and omnipotence.

Question 2 (c) Explain how Jews celebrate Pesach.

There were a range of responses to this question. Unfortunately, some candidates did not fully respond to the demands of the question and therefore, lost marks. Some candidates misread the question and wrote about why Jews celebrate Pesach. Many candidates focused on the foods used during Pesach, without focusing on the other celebrations. Some candidates also wrote about different festivals. Where candidates achieved the higher marks, they included religious language to describe the celebrations. This included words such as matzah, Haggadah and the prophet Elijah.

Question 2 (d) 'Following the Ten Commandments is the most important duty for a Jew.'

There was evidence of candidates being fully engaged with the demands of this question. Most candidates were able to use their knowledge and understanding to support the points they made. They often gave balanced viewpoints, using religious language and sources of authority in their judgements. There was evidence of many candidates making reference to specific commandments and evaluating why the commandment is important. Many candidates used their knowledge and understanding across both units to provide different viewpoints in this question.

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UNIT 2 3120U10-ISLAM

Overview of the Unit

The paper was accessible to all candidates, and a full range of responses was seen across all questions, showing the full range of bands and marks being awarded. It was pleasing to see the high attempt rate of most questions and candidates demonstrated a varied knowledge of religious views, ranging from basic to exceptional. It was particularly encouraging to see many candidates writing at length for the higher mark responses which allowed progression through the marking bands. General performance from candidates across the paper compares appropriately with that seen in previous years; the required skills show they have been embedded as the standards of each style of question are better understood.

Candidate familiarity with the demands of each style of question was reflected through both knowledge and skills; there was good engagement from candidates with AO1 and AO2. There does still, at times from some candidates, remain some uncertainty with use of evaluative language and if more focus were given to this, AO2 responses could be strengthened further. Use of religious terminology seems secure from many candidates who sat this paper which is pleasing to note.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 2 (a) What do Muslims mean by 'Muhammad'?

Most candidates were able to access marks in the (a) response that required understanding of the term 'Muhammad'. The best answers were able to state his role as a Prophet in Islam, with many candidates knowing he was the 'final Prophet' or being able to easily offer information about his life such as the fact he founded the religion of Islam or was the chosen messenger for the Qur'an. A few candidates did include incorrect information in their responses, such as stating he was the 'first Prophet' which was concerning.

Question 2 (b) Describe the conditions for Lesser Jihad in Islam.

Almost 20% of the candidate entry did not attempt this question; many simply gave a 'list' of ideas rather than a description of the conditions needed. It is fair to say that some candidates struggled with the (b) question that asked for a description of the conditions of Lesser Jihad. The best answers stated multiple ideas but showed awareness of what the condition was in their description; for example, stating that there needed to be a valid reason for the holy war and then giving suggestion of what this may look like.

Question 2 (c) Explain the importance of the features of a mosque.

It is pleasing to see the different ways in which candidates approached the (c) question asking for an explanation of the importance of the features of the mosque. Many candidates were able to state features both outside and inside the mosque and suggest reasons why they were important linked to their use to Muslims. Weaker responses often listed examples or didn't go beyond offering a basic description. A few candidates also focused on items you may find in the mosque rather than features of the building which was disappointing. Many candidates were easily able to identify what the important features of a mosque were and give an explanation as to why they were important, with both some breadth and depth in responses. This was a very accessible and popular question.

Question 2 (d) 'Belief in the afterlife is the most important belief in Islam.'

More length was seen from many candidates in response to the (d) evaluation question and it is very reassuring to see the development in evaluation techniques. Many candidates were able to offer a holistic approach to their consideration of whether belief in the afterlife is most important for Muslims through exploring other beliefs and practices that may hold equal or more importance; notable examples included belief in Allah, belief in existence on earth or even very sophisticated responses that considered belief of Islamic practices such as the five pillars of Islam. Some weaker candidates still struggled to use evaluative language consistently and often offered a more descriptive response of Islamic beliefs about the afterlife so it would be beneficial for centres to continue to model methods of evaluating when considering a given statement.

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UNIT 2 3120U30-HINDUISM

Overview of the Unit

The paper was accessible to candidates all questions aligned and reflected the scope and range of the specification. Terminology used aligned and reflected the terminology within the specification. Assessment objectives 1 and 2 were assessed within the relevant questions across the paper. The full range of band descriptors and marks were awarded across the paper. The quality of responses enabled candidates to progress through the bands.

Most candidates showed a clear understanding of the different demands of the questions within the paper, understanding the different requirements of a describe question compared to an explanation or evaluation question. A minority of candidates continued to find this a particular challenge and would benefit from familiarising themselves with the different demands of the questions across the paper.

Candidates continued to make good use of subject specific terminology; it is positive that this is reflected within both Christianity and Hinduism, and this has supported candidate's success when moving up the band descriptors. It is pleasing to report that most candidates attempted the majority of the Hinduism questions. The skills, knowledge and understanding required for the Hinduism questions appear embedded in, with both teachers and candidates better understanding the requirements of the qualification.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 2 (a) What do Hindus mean by caste (varna)?

Most candidates successfully answered this question recognising that it represents the Hindu social class that is passed on from generation to generation, and majority were able to include specific examples of different castes.

Question 2 (b) Describe why Hindus care for the needy.

Most candidates successfully attempted this question gaining marks. Many candidates focused on the concept of dharma and gaining positive karma, some candidates also included specific examples of care for the needy to support their descriptions. More able candidates were able to recognise that caring for the needy is one of the four purposes in Hinduism and that caring for the needy could be seen as following ahimsa.

Question 2 (c) Explain how Hindus can attain moksha.

Most candidates gained marks through their understanding of moksha where they were able to show what moksha was and how they could achieve it through their karmic actions. Some candidates shared specific examples of what deeds could lead to gaining or not moksha to support their explanations. More able candidates were able to consider desireless actions and linking attaining moksha to living in accordance with the principles of Varnashramadharma.

Question 2 (d) 'It is difficult to celebrate Hindu festivals in Britain.'

Most candidates achieved a satisfactory standard within this question and were able to focus on the celebration of festivals in Britain. Many exemplified specific festivals, such as, Diwali and Holi and showed how they could be adapted to work in Britain but were still acceptable to Hindus. More able candidates also considered implications in terms of discrimination and societal attitudes to seeing Hindu festivals in Britain. Candidates would benefit from further developing judgements within their answers to support them in achieving the highest band.

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UNIT 2 3120U30-BUDDHISM

Overview of the Unit

The examination was accessible, with appropriate coverage from the specification. There was a large increase in the mean mark, but as the entry is quite small it is difficult to make comparisons with previous years. On the whole, high number of candidates attempted each question, more so than last year. Except for the (b) question, the demand was comparable to previous papers, with the full range of marks awarded across the questions. Generally, candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the main areas of Buddhism, and it was again pleasing to note that most candidates were able to describe, explain and evaluate in the appropriate places. At best, some candidates demonstrated thorough knowledge of the content of the course; however, again this year it was the (b) question which seemed to cause the most issues. It was not attempted by a number of candidates seeming to indicate a lack of knowledge of the (s)kandhas, and the teachings linked to them. Most candidates were able to use specific Buddhist terms, and many referred to sources of authority thus having an impact on the bands that can be accessed.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 2 (a) What do Buddhists mean by 'puja'?

Most candidates were able to respond to the (a) question, with many achieving the full two marks by either giving the glossary definition or offering their own definition. Candidates who were awarded 1 mark gave an incomplete definition e.g. merely writing 'worship' without giving a full definition or an example.

Question 2 (b) Describe Buddhist beliefs about the five aggregates ((s)kandhas).

Despite being the least attempted question, over three-quarters of candidates did try to provide a description of the Buddha's teachings about the five aggregates, the (s)kandhas. It was pleasing to note that most candidates seemed to be more comfortable using the term (s)kandhas. Unfortunately, it was the question that candidates most struggled with. There were some limited answers that merely listed the (s)kandhas or did not develop a description of what each so were unable to move beyond band 2. Better answers focused on the teachings and made the link to anatta, anicca and the changing nature of the (s)kandhas. Many answers used the example of Nagasena and the Chariot effectively to explain the idea of emptiness and pratitya samutpada. Some candidates failed to score marks as they confused the (s)kandhas with the Five Precepts.

Question 2 (c) Explain the importance of features of a home shrine in Buddhist worship.

The (c) question performed well. It was answered by most candidates who achieved similar marks to the corresponding question in 2024. Candidates could achieve marks for answers that were either broad or deep. Better answers explained the importance of specific features, showing a good overview of several Buddhist concepts and teachings e.g. explaining why the bell might represent karma through its reverberations. Answers that struggled to move up the bands tended to be only descriptive or a showed a misunderstanding of the question, with answers offering general information about the importance of a shrine rather than the features.

Question 2 (d) 'Suffering (dukkha) is the most important teaching in the Marks of Existence (lakshanas).'

Statistical evidence showed this question performed in a very similar way to last year's (d) question. Better answers discussed dukkha, with examiners accepting a variety of beliefs and teachings. The more focused answers did discuss whether it is the most important of the lakshanas, with some developed arguments about the relative value of anicca and/or anatta. For the highest band, examiners expected to see some awareness that dukkha is a mark of existence and ideally what it meant to be 'marked' by dukkha. Many answers did use some relevant quotes from the Buddha to back up the points they made. Weaker answers merely explained what each lakshana meant, or they mixed up anicca and anatta so struggled to make pertinent arguments. In comparison with unit 1 there seemed to be more poorly constructed (d) answers that were limited to band 2; fewer candidates made judgements about the value of the points made. Many answers were started with, 'I agree/disagree with the statement ...' without making it obvious whether they did or did not.

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UNIT 3 3120U30-CATHOLIC

Overview of the Unit

Analysis of the Unit 3 examination paper responses show that the paper was accessible, with the full range of available marks achieved across the paper. The majority of candidates showed a good understanding of the requirements of each style of question, and many attempted all questions. The quality of spelling, punctuation, and grammar displayed by the candidates was notable again this year, with many attaining intermediate or higher standards in these areas. This reflects positively on the candidates' attention to detail and their commitment to presenting responses in a coherent manner. It is evident that centres have prepared their candidates for the SPaG focus in 1(d).

In terms of specific question types, all questions were accessible. However, some candidates were unable to give a full definition of the key concepts. Additionally, a significant number of candidates also disadvantaged themselves when not attempting all questions on the examination paper. For example, around a quarter of candidates did not attempt to answer the 2(a) or 4(a) key concept questions. This is unfortunate as these questions assess fundamental subject knowledge and offer a valuable opportunity to secure straightforward marks to contribute to their overall performance. It is worth centres continuing to emphasise the importance of these key concepts and their correct definitions.

The responses to the (b) questions were generally competent and detailed. However, it is worth noting that it is important to provide a detailed description in the response to these questions rather than simply listing points, as this demonstrates deeper understanding and secures higher marks.

There was a clear understanding with most candidates on the expectations for the (c) questions this year, with many candidates explaining their answers in a coherent manner. Despite this, there were still a few candidates who misconstrued the trigger words for the (c) questions and attempted to incorporate unnecessary evaluation and analysis in their responses. Candidates engaged well with the 'd' questions, and many demonstrated excellent knowledge on the given topic. A notable strength here was the knowledge shown of the rosary and its use, with some candidates expressing at length the prayers and the mysteries of the rosary. Where candidates achieved the higher bands, they were able to offer alternative ways of worshipping God in their responses. The assessment of evaluation and analysis skills remains challenging for candidates, yet it was pleasing to note an awareness of the importance of elaboration in responses to the (d) questions.

It was observed that a few candidates still struggle with the phrase 'This is a strong/weak argument because...', as it appeared to cause confusion regarding its relevance to the analysis of the questions. Centres may need to continue to provide further guidance on how to effectively incorporate analytical reasoning in responses to enhance overall performance. This year's Unit 3 paper effectively differentiated across the ability range, with many candidates demonstrating sound knowledge, clear understanding, and the ability to apply their learning in context. However, some responses would benefit from greater precision, especially in addressing command words and supporting points with relevant examples or evidence. Centres are encouraged to continue focusing on examination technique, particularly the importance of answering the specific demands of each question. Overall, it was encouraging to see the thoughtful engagement of many candidates with the subject matter.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1 (a) What do Catholics mean by 'purgatory'?

Many candidates were able to confidently respond to this answer, showing excellent knowledge of that afterlife, and offering clear definitions of purgatory. However, a significant number of candidates suggested that purgatory is a place of judgement, with souls able to go to Hell from there. This is inaccurate and does not align with Catholic teaching.

Question 1 (b) Describe what Catholics might do to celebrate Christmas.

A variety of responses were put forward for this question, with many candidates correctly identifying and describing ways in which Catholics may celebrate Christmas. Candidates generally linked practices with beliefs, and all correct responses were credited. Some candidates included Advent practices within their answer, but these could only be credited if there was a specific link with Christmas, for example, the white candle on the Advent wreath being lit on Christmas Day.

Question 1(c) Explain the importance of a place of worship for Catholics.

Candidates generally showed a very good level of knowledge and understanding of the importance of a place of worship here, and most could articulate their responses well. Some candidates chose to refer to the aids to worship found in a place of worship, such as the altar or font; others responded to the question by referring to the need for a special place for community prayer and worship. Both approaches were equally acceptable, and all relevant responses were credited. The candidates that achieved the highest marks were careful to explain the importance of the place of worship, rather than just describing what might be found within it.

Question 1 (d) 'Advent is the most important time in the Church's year'.

Many candidates showed excellent knowledge and understanding of the liturgical year in their responses to this question. In some answers, there was a great deal of explanation, with little evaluation and analysis. However, the candidates that achieved the higher marks were able to incorporate strong evaluation and analysis within their responses and could also suggest alternative times within the Church's year that may be as or more important than Advent, with appropriate reasoning. It was a pleasure to see the excellent use of religious language and key terminology in many responses to this question. Nearly all candidates were aware of the extra marks awarded for SPaG on this question; therefore, very few candidates left this question unanswered.

SPaG The majority of candidates achieved Intermediate or high-performance bands for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question 2 (a) What do Catholics mean by 'Theotokos'?

The candidates who knew the correct response to this question were articulate and clear in their answers. However, a significant number of candidates did not attempt this question, despite this being a key concept on the specification. There was also some confusion in a few responses with other Greek terms, such as Ichthus.

Question 2 (b) Describe the Virgin Birth stories.

Many candidates could describe elements of the Virgin Birth stories, and most understood what was meant by this. However, some candidates referred to the birth of Mary, which was incorrect and therefore could not be credited.

Question 2 (c) Explain how Catholic beliefs are depicted through art.

It was a pleasure to read a variety of responses to this question, and to see so many different types of art identified and explained. Art was taken in the widest sense, and candidates could refer to any different ways of depicting beliefs through art, with no specific ideas expected in responses. Some candidates referred to specific pieces of artwork, such as the Creation of Adam or the Pietá by Michelangelo; others referred more generally to items such as statues, stained glass windows, and symbols used to understand the Trinity. The candidates that achieved the highest marks were able to link the art they identified with Catholic beliefs, and to clearly explain their responses.

Question 2 (d) 'Praying using rosary beads is the best way to worship God.'

A notable strength here was the knowledge shown of the rosary and its use, with some candidates expressing at length the prayers and the mysteries of the rosary. A few candidates referred to the rosary as a way to connect with Mary as an intercessor in prayer. Where candidates achieved the higher bands, they were able to offer alternative ways of worshipping God in their responses. Some candidates showed an excellent level of knowledge and understanding of the Mass as an alternative way to worship God, with a significant number of these responses referring to the Eucharist as the 'source and summit of Christian life.' Good use of teachings from sources of wisdom and authority allowed candidates to access the higher band marks available.

Question 3 (a) What do Catholics mean by ‘commitment’?

Many candidates were aware of the meaning of this key concept, and were able to give relevant examples of commitments, both religious and non-religious. However, fewer responses were able to clearly articulate a definition of this key term, and many candidates used the word ‘commitment’ in their definition without explaining what that meant.

Question 3 (b) Describe what happens in a Catholic marriage ceremony.

Many candidates were able to respond correctly to this question. They could clearly describe different parts of the marriage ceremony, especially the exchange of vows and rings. However, a few candidates mentioned other events such as preparation classes or the reception afterwards. Neither of these were relevant to the question and could therefore not be credited.

Question 3 (c) Explain the Catholic Church’s attitude to adultery.

Many candidates displayed the ability to use sources of wisdom and authority to support their explanations in these responses, especially the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament. Excellent knowledge and understanding of adultery were shown in many responses, with some candidates referring to more complex ideas, such as the concept of remarriage after divorce. However, a few candidates tried to evaluate and analyse adultery in their responses which showed a lack of understanding of the trigger word.

Question 3 (d) ‘It is difficult for a Catholic to be married to a non-Catholic.’

Many responses to this question showed evidence of the skills of evaluation and analysis, with some candidates writing excellent discussions of the key issues, including religious and moral reasoning to support their arguments. Many candidates identified issues that may occur in interfaith marriages, and some were able to evaluate the impact of these issues on the marriage.

Question 4 (a) What do Catholics mean by ‘censorship’?

Unfortunately, almost a quarter of candidates did not respond to this question, despite it being a key concept on the specification. Of those candidates who did respond, many gave accurate definitions, along with relevant religious and non-religious examples.

Question 4 (b) Describe Catholic teachings on the equality of men and women.

This question was well answered by many candidates, with many showing a very good level of knowledge and understanding of key teachings relating to this topic. A significant proportion of responses included reference to sources of wisdom and authority, for example, the idea in the book of Genesis of being made in God’s image.

Question 4 (c) Explain Catholic views about wealth.

Many candidates could articulate their responses to this question clearly and coherently. Some candidates focused on the use of wealth while others referred to gaining wealth. Both approaches were relevant and could be credited. Again, a significant number of responses included reference to relevant sources of authority, such as the parables of Jesus, and most were able to explain these within the context of the question.

Question 4 (d) 'Catholics should do more to promote human rights.'

Many candidates responded well to this question and could put forward reasoned arguments as to whether or not Catholics should do more to promote human rights. Some candidates referred to key Church documents, such as *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Lumen Gentium*. A number of candidates included reference to the good work provided by CARJ and CAFOD as examples of the work already being done to support human rights. However, over 20% of candidates did not attempt this question. Further support and guidance from centres in refining timing of answers and ensuring all questions are attempted would undoubtedly benefit candidates in the future.

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 4275

Email: GCSEReligiousStudies@wjec.co.uk

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