



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCSE
RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 2:
CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM 3120U20-1**

SUMMER 2022

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General Comments

Question 1 Christianity:

The paper proved accessible to candidates and the full range of marks were awarded across the paper. The knowledge of Christianity demonstrated in this examination varied between outstanding and inadequate. There was evidence of a significant number of candidates not engaging with the examination paper and, as a result, some of the responses of these candidates were very brief. Where responses were very brief, candidates disadvantaged themselves in terms of achieving any range of higher marks. Given the optionality allowed in 2022, there was evidence of a significant number of candidates who did not attempt to answer questions in the Christianity section of the paper. As in unit 1, there was an increase in the correct use of sources of authority, where quotations were used by candidates to support their knowledge of Christianity generally and in their evaluations in the extended writing.

Candidates must remember to clearly state the number of the question(s) they are continuing to answer on any additional writing pages they use, e.g., 1d. 2c. It is extremely challenging to try and match up their responses if candidates do not make this clear, and while there is no intention to deter candidates from using the continuation space, the fact that so many candidates did not make this obvious on their examination papers caused significant delays to the marking process during the marking period.

Centre must remind candidates not to write their responses on the pages that have 'DO NOT WRITE ON THIS PAGE' printed on them; responses written on these pages may be missed during the scanning process.

Comments on individual questions/sections

PART A – Core Beliefs, Teaching and Practice – Christianity

Q.1 (a) What do Christians mean by 'vows'?

Most candidates were able to give the exemplar definition of the key concept or some form of definition of the key concept. The most common response was to include actual examples of the wedding vows exchanged in church by a bride and groom.

(b) Describe Christian teachings about the Bible

There were some outstanding answers in response to this question; many candidates presented a clear understanding of the composition and nature of the Bible, with a recognition of the Bible as source of authority for all Christians. Unfortunately, a number of candidates misread the question and gave a summary of teachings from the Bible or simply narrated a particular Bible story. It is essential candidates carefully read each question and respond to the demands of the actual question. A number of candidates explored different Christian perspectives on the interpretation of the Bible by different Christian traditions and this was encouraging to see.

Comments on individual questions/sections

(c) Explain why the Eucharist/Communion is important to Christians.

Some excellent responses unpacked in detail regarding the different ways in which Christians view the importance of the Eucharist/Communion. Detailed responses offered aspects of a communion or eucharist service as part of the response, and these examples were used to support explanations. Where candidates simply described a communion or eucharist service without any explanation, higher band marks were not awarded. The rubric demand of the question was to ask for explanation and not a simple description. Some responses were very brief, where candidates offered very short answers and disadvantaged themselves. It was pleasing to note some candidates were clearly aware of different Christian traditions and were able to use aspects of services from different Christian traditions, citing both Catholic and Protestant traditions.

(d) 'Pilgrimage is the most important Christian practice.'

The more able candidates were able to fully analyse and evaluate the significance of pilgrimage for Christians, and in this very open evaluation question, engaged with lots of other Christian practices as being more important. The most common example of pilgrimage used was the example of Christians going to the Holy Land to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. There were examples of sophisticated arguments to support the view of pilgrimage as being the most important practice in the sense that Christians would be inspired to live as Christians because they had visited the places where Jesus actually lived.

Summary of key points

It is important that candidates attempt to answer questions as fully as possible; too many candidates gave 'short' response to the (b) and (c) questions and the level descriptors clearly indicate that extended responses are required in order to achieve the higher marks. Bullet points should not be used.

In the evaluation responses, it is important that candidates construct a response based around the question; using phrases such as 'this is a strong argument because', 'this is a weak argument because', 'a further argument to support this is'. These, and other connectives, when justified and used meaningfully, are very useful trigger phrases to help candidates structure and unpack arguments, while demonstrating evaluation.

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General Comments

Question 2 Islam:

The paper was accessible to all candidates and the full range of marks was awarded across the paper. Due to the WJEC adaptations made on the paper, candidates had a choice of questions, having to choose 3 out of the 4. This optionality saw many candidates choosing to answer either Q1 Christianity or Q2 Islam from Section A and the majority of candidates choosing to answer both the 'Ethical Themes' sections of the paper ('Relationships' / 'Human Rights') in Section B.

Some good and excellent responses were seen from candidates across the whole paper. However, at times, there was a 'misreading' of some questions or candidates responded to questions without applying their knowledge specifically to what was being asked. Some candidates seemed unable to distinguish the difference between the AO1 skills of 'describe' and 'explain'; at times writing too much or not giving enough detail. There were also some candidates who chose not to attempt some questions on the paper.

Some candidates chose to make use of additional pages for their responses; they should be reminded to clearly state the number of the question(s) being attempted as it is extremely challenging to try and match up their responses if this is not done. This caused significant delays to the marking process this Summer.

Candidate should also be reminded not to write responses on pages that state 'DO NOT WRITE ON THIS PAGE'.

Comments on individual questions/sections

PART A – Core Beliefs, Teachings and Practices – Islam

Q.2 (a) What do Muslims mean by 'ummah'?

Many candidates successfully gave a correct and accurate definition of the term 'ummah' referring to it as the 'worldwide community of Muslims' or similar wording. Some candidates did not attempt to answer the question suggesting they were unaware of the term, or they guessed at an incorrect answer.

(b) Describe the internal features of a mosque.

The question required a description of the features found *inside* a Mosque. Disappointingly, many candidates didn't just focus on the internal features, instead including both internal and external features. The external feature of a minaret was continually mentioned in responses but could not be credited. Breadth, where candidates gave high numbers of internal features and depth, where candidates focused on a smaller number, were seen and both methods credited. There was also at times too much straying into explanation rather than description, where candidates not only stated what the feature was but why it was important. The best answers used religious terminology extensively within their responses, demonstrating understanding of appropriate terms such as Qiblah, minbar, mihrab, Kab'ah and wudu.

(c) Explain Muslim beliefs about Heaven

A range of responses to this question were seen; some excellent, where candidates clearly understood the requirements of the question and focused on Muslim beliefs about Heaven, and others where candidates talked more generally about Islamic views on the afterlife (akhirah), thereby missing the focus of the question. Where answers contained detailed explanations, candidates referred to specific details about Heaven (Jannah) such as the bridge of As-Sirat, Heaven being described as a garden/paradise, having different levels and the requirements of living a good life to achieve Heaven as a reward. However, too many answers lapsed into detailed mention of Hell (Jahannam) or talked generally about Muslim beliefs about what happens after death rather than offering specific information about Heaven as required by the question.

(d) 'Muslim dress customs are not important'.

This question provided the opportunity to write extensively, but disappointingly, some responses were short, and arguments were often under-developed. Most answers focused solely on Muslim dress for women and referred to specific items of clothing such as the hijab and burkha. A minority of answers referred to Islamic teachings about dress, linking arguments to dressing modestly to please Allah or humans being given freewill to have a choice about dress, but didn't fully support arguments with evidence and didn't offer a range of viewpoints on the statement. The best answers seen were those that used evaluative language and developed effective lines of argument which were critically evaluated to reach judgements. A minority offered exceptional understanding and insight into different types and appropriateness of dress, contrasting examples from Islamic countries, referencing ideas about dress worn on Hajj or controversy over dress in countries such as France. These responses were able to fully respond to the demands of the question.

Summary of key points

- Candidates should learn and be able to use a range of key and specialist terms to show their understanding of key beliefs and teachings within Islam. References to sources of authority should be included in candidate responses where relevant.
- Candidates need to be directed to read questions carefully and ensure information they include in their response is specific to the question asked and not general content.
- Candidates need to respond to the specific demands of each style of question; in b style questions, candidates are required to give only a **description** whereas in c style questions candidates are required to give an **explanation**. Often inclusion of the word 'because' in c style responses will help to develop explanation skills.
- In all d style responses, candidates must remember to include a range of views with appropriate lines of arguments that they should reflect on to offer a critical evaluative approach to the statement provided. Use of connectives and evaluative language in responses will help to achieve this.

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General Comments

Questions 3 and 4 Religious responses to ethical themes:

The report should be read in conjunction with the mark scheme which contains the assessment criteria and indicative content for each question. Each of the types of questions are analysed later in the report as are considerations regarding each individual question. The paper differentiated well. All questions were accessible although there were a number of non-attempts in 3d and 4d. In many cases this appeared to be because of timing issues. It was pleasing to note that the vast majority of candidates felt confident in defining the key concept in 3a. In some cases, these were full explanations or less full but supported with a relevant example.

It was also pleasing to note candidates' engagement with the AO2 questions. Responses were often coherent and included a range of different viewpoints. There appeared to be less reliance on writing frames which can sometimes restrict an answer, and more examples of prior planning before embarking on answering the question. Such planning often included key words, sources of authority and main points for discussion. Such strategies often helped candidates formulate evaluative discussions rather than just recall of information.

The paper requires candidates to answer from Christianity and a further religious tradition. A common finding across the paper was a lack of knowledge and understanding of the second religion in Questions 3 and 4. It was rare to find a detailed and mature understanding of a schema of a second religion in responses. Candidates often seemed to have some sketchy understanding (or misunderstanding) of a second religious tradition which they applied to all questions. This imbalance had an impact particularly on 'c' questions when responses are expected from two religious traditions.

This year candidates were not required to include references to non-religious traditions. Many did, but these were often weak generalisations which did not reflect the integrity of a non-religious world view. References to Humanism were often misinformed and/or generalisations.

The **use** of appropriate religious/specialist language is a key criteria in this paper. Some candidates confidently used key religious, philosophical and ethical terms to express their arguments. It was disappointing to see that there were few candidates who transferred their knowledge of relevant key terms from their other unit into their answers. It was also disappointing to see the lack of specialist language used in 'd' questions. Candidates would often use a more limited range of specialist terms in 'd' questions compared to the rest of the paper.

Candidates are expected to make reference to sacred texts where appropriate. The form of reference is not dictated. What is important is that the sacred text is contextualised to show clearly the rationale for its inclusion. There were many instances where a candidate referred to, for example, 'love thy neighbour' but failed to explore the meaning of the reference in connection with the question. Conversely, there was an increased trend of giving lengthy narrations of parables without applying the teaching to the focus of the question. Direct references are not needed, however, some candidates seemed to think that by placing quotation marks around a statement that credit would be gained. There were some very spurious quotes alleged to be Biblical or Qur'anic sources.

There are many opportunities in the paper for candidates to include references to relevant contemporary ethical debates. As detailed later in the report some candidates had some understanding but were unable to effectively deploy this information to answer the question. This often resulted in a case-study, descriptive narrative rather than a reference to support a particular view or judgement.

The demands of each type of question are distinct and, reflecting previous reports, it is appropriate to consider candidate performance in each type of question before scrutinising responses to individual questions.

- (a)** Questions. These questions are always based on the key concepts. Candidates are required to give a definition of one of the key concepts. For this part of the paper definitions do not need to be placed within a religion specific content. Often candidates supported their definition with an example. It is important to remember that in addition to answering 'a' questions the use of key concepts can be credited, where used appropriately, as part of the criteria for 'b', 'c' and 'd' questions which require the use of 'religious/specialist terms'. This cross transference of knowledge was not always evident in candidates' responses. Some of the key concepts are difficult to exemplify. In such cases candidates should try to give a full definition rather than create a spurious example.
- (b)** Questions. These questions require candidates to select and then describe relevant information using specific religious language to respond to the question. These answers require a deployment of information. Candidates are expected to refer to a source of authority, where relevant. References to sources of authority do not need to be confined to sacred texts. Relevant sources of authority could include references to God; Jesus; the prophets; sacred scriptures; conscience; family; ethical philosophers, religious leaders; religious founders, the Law etc.
- (c)** Questions. These questions usually require candidates to demonstrate an understanding of an area of specification content from two religions. Candidates answered this question in a variety of ways. Some inserted the heading of the two traditions they had studied and wrote relevant details under each heading. Some candidates tried to answer from the two traditions simultaneously pointing out similarities and differences. details given which traditions were being referred to. A response cannot be awarded a high band if the response is only from one religious tradition or includes a non-religious tradition. There was an increasing number of examples where candidates had tried to turn these explain questions into an evaluation 'd' type question. This would not meet the rubric of the question nor the assessment criteria. It was apparent that some candidates believed they had to compare the two traditions' responses and therefore sought to make them polar opposites. It is recognised with the marking criteria that there will sometimes be overlap between particular traditions beliefs regarding a certain issue and that a response will be judged upon the evidence, including the specific religious language and interpretation of sources of authority.

- (d) Questions. This question requires an extended piece of writing and carries half the marks for the paper. The most effective responses use a well selected range of information with appropriate sources and language to justify their arguments. It is the argument and evaluative discussion which makes this question different to the demands of a c question. Candidates are expected to select evidence to reinforce and exemplify their arguments. There were an increasing number of instances where candidates gave a viewpoint and then added that this was a strong argument because it is what faith members believe or because it is not a weak argument. To gain higher bands responses must show informed reasoning as to why an argument is considered strong or weak. This year many responses displayed a depth of knowledge of the focus of the question, but at times, such knowledge was displayed without any analysis or evaluation and appeared similar to how a 'c' type question might be answered.

As has been reported in past reports, it is vital that the candidates read the question and understand what the demands of the rubric are. There are an increasing number of examples of candidates hi-lighting key words which helps to focus on the response required

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.3 (a) What is meant by commitment? (2)**
The majority of responses gave an adequate description of what is meant by commitment with many including a relevant example. A few responses gave a detailed example but failed to actually define the concept.
- (b) Describe from either Christianity or Islam the nature and purpose of the family. (5)**
The question asked for a response from either Christianity or Islam. Many responses were very generic with little reference to the specific religion chosen. There were many examples of stereotypes and misconceptions with references to perceived traditional roles within Muslim families. Surprisingly, within answers relating to the Christian tradition, many references were made to the role of the father going out to work and the mother cooking at home and looking after the children as a Christian practice. Some responses only focussed upon the nature **or** the purpose. High attaining answers described roles such as learning about Halal dietary codes or the importance, as expressed in the Quran, of children obeying parents.
- (c) Explain from Christianity and Islam attitudes towards divorce (8)**
The question required candidates to respond from Christianity and Islam. Unfortunately, many responses focussed on only one tradition with, at best, some very general comments made about the second tradition. Some responses indicated similarities between the two religious traditions such as within both Islam and Christianity divorce is regrettable and there will be strategies within the faith communities for reconciliation. It is creditworthy, when accurate, to illustrate similarities between and within religious traditions as well as differences.

There were some high level responses which included relevant religious teachings from the Bible, Quran and Hadith and specific religious language such as annulment and Shariah councils. Some responses explained the diversity of attitudes within Christianity.

- Q.3 (d) Religious believers should never use contraception (15)**
 This was generally a well answered question. There were some high-level responses which gave a range of viewpoints justified by religious practice and sources of authority. Many responses gave a detailed consideration of circumstances when religious believers might use contraception. Responses generally showed an accurate knowledge from at least one religious tradition. There was no requirement for candidates to include view-points from non-religious traditions; the directive of the question was *religious believers*. When such references were made they often were not rooted in a worldview, as such, but the belief that Humanists do whatever they individually want to do without reference to any moral reasoning. This is a misrepresentation of Humanism. The question also attracted a SPaG mark. It was noticeable that a more limited range of religious and specialist language was used. Perhaps this was due to uncertainties regarding accurate spelling.
- Q.4 (a) What is meant by extremism? (2)**
 This was generally well answered.
- (b) Describe reasons why religious believers might agree with censorship (5)**
 The question asked why *religious believers* might agree with censorship. Many responses were very general without any reference to attitudes from religious believers. Some responses described examples of censorship or gave reasons for and against censorship. These were not credited. There were some appropriate references to offence that can be caused by drawing pictures of the Prophet Muhammad or blasphemy.
- (c) Explain from Christianity and Islam attitudes to wealth (8)**
 This question could be responded to with a focus on gaining or using wealth or a combination of both. There were some high-level responses which explained Christian and Muslim attitudes to wealth and gave very detailed explanations. However, such detail often only related to one religious tradition with the second tradition often only being referred to with very general comments. Highly developed answers often incorporated reference to the teachings of Jesus such as reference to the Rich Man and Lazarus and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats and to the importance of following the teachings of the Qur'an regarding gambling. It is important that responses use such teachings to illustrate a point made in the explanation. Sometimes the response included lengthy descriptions of such teachings without any reference to how they relate to the question focus. It was pleasing to see a number of responses which included a cross transference from Unit 1 of knowledge and understanding of zakat and saddaqa.
- (d) 'Religious believers should do more to encourage human rights'. (15)**
 This was often a less developed answer than 3d. It appeared that this was sometimes a result of time pressure but also that there were few examples of human rights in the working knowledge of candidates. Some responses described examples of human rights abuse but failed to draw out from their descriptions a response to the question asked. Although references were made to some religious believers e.g. Martin Luther King, Oscar Romero and Malala, there were limited references to religious agencies working for human rights. The question also attracted a SPaG mark. It was noticeable that a more limited range of religious and specialist language was used. Perhaps this was due to uncertainties regarding accurate spelling.

Summary of key points

Be aware of the requirement to explain from 2 religious traditions in C questions.

- There are many opportunities throughout these units to use references to contemporary situations and religious charities and agencies.
- When referring to teachings from sacred texts it is important to draw out the meaning from the teaching in relation to the question demands than to give the narrative of the story.
- In 'd' questions it is important to give relevant evidence and justification for conclusions as to whether a point is strong or weak.



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