



# GCSE Examiners' Report

Religious Studies

GCSE

Summer 2024

## Introduction

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

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

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

## Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	<a href="https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/">https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/</a>
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	<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: <a href="#">Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)</a>

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

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

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## Executive Summary

### Overview of Units

In the three units of the GCSE examination all the examination papers proved accessible, with a full range of marks achieved across the suite of examination papers. The two largest paper options were Judaism and Islam, in both unit 1 and unit 2. Again, there was no Sikhism option entry for units 1 and 2.

In terms of one identifiable trend there was a significant improvement in the use of specialist religious language across all papers. In terms of candidate performance in relation to core elements, the philosophy section of the papers required candidates to be able to answer questions where they choose which religion to focus on in the (b) questions and where they were required to answer from both religions (c) style questions; there was a noticeable development in candidate's understanding of this, and answering each style of question in the expected way was more evident in this series. It was also apparent from this section of the paper this year, candidates demonstrated a greater parity between Christianity and the option religion, with candidates often writing to the same standard from both Christianity and the second-choice option religion.

Another identifiable trend was in the ability of candidates to address the skills required to answer the evaluation questions; skills appear to have improved, particularly in the ethics and philosophy (d) responses. There was 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.

It was also evident candidates were using differentiated responses where a range of Christian knowledge and understanding was used to answer the questions. In the Christianity section, many candidates, where appropriate, also used and interpreted sources of wisdom and authority in their responses. There were fewer bullet points being used during this series; bullet point should not be used in answers. Many candidates demonstrated good literacy skills throughout the examination, and not just in the extended writing required in the response to question 1(d).

One consistent observation across the series is that some candidates were unable to give a full definition of the key concepts. A significant number of candidates also disadvantaged themselves when not attempting all questions on the examination paper.

<b>Areas for improvement</b>	<b>Classroom resources</b>	<b>Brief description of resource</b>
Religious Knowledge	<b>CHRISTIANITY KNOWLEDGE ORGANISERS AVAILABLE WJEC WEBSITE</b>	Knowledge organiser for Christianity; knowledge required across two world religions
Planning for revision	<b>REVISION PLANNER AVAILABLE WJEC WEBSITE</b>	Revision planner for the examinations to help candidates plan revision

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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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 all the questions in this section of the examination paper. This shows that the paper 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 questions. Many candidates also used and interpreted sources of wisdom and authority, where appropriate. There were fewer bullet points being used during this series. Candidates demonstrated good literacy skills throughout the examination and not just in the demand of question 1(d).

Candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the birth of Jesus, and many used specific religious language to gain the higher band marks. There were some references to the different Gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus. Where candidates approached their answer in this way, they wrote with accuracy. Some candidates made reference to Jesus being born on Christmas Day. Candidates engaged well with the 'c' question on forgiveness. Most were able to give specific examples of Christian teachings and achieved higher marks when these teachings were explained. However, where candidates did not gain the higher marks, they wrote about modern examples of forgiveness without linking them to Christian teachings. For example, some described who Gee Walker was without referring to Christian teachings. There was evidence of candidates fully engaged with the demands of the evaluation question. Many wrote alternative viewpoints and were able to use their knowledge and understanding from the whole unit to support points they made. Candidates were also awarded marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar and it is evident that centres have prepared their candidates for this question.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

- (a) What do Christians mean by the Holy Spirit?

Candidates engaged well with this. Most understood that the Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity. Where candidates have developed their understanding, they have identified the Holy Spirit as being one of the 3 persons of the Holy Trinity.

- (b) Describe the birth of Jesus.

Many candidates were able to re-tell the key points about the birth of Jesus. Some candidates made reference to the Immaculate Conception and Joseph's dream. Where candidates achieved the higher bands, they used specific religious language, with understanding, such as census, Magi, prophecy. Some candidates made reference to the different Gospel accounts, which they wrote with accuracy. This is identified in script 3 of the exemplar material. A few candidates wrote about Jesus being born on Christmas Day.

- (c) Explain Christian teachings about forgiveness.

Candidates engaged well with this question. Most had a good understanding of the key Christian teachings of forgiveness. For example, candidates were able to explain specific examples of forgiveness, such as Jesus on the cross, the adulterous woman and forgiving 70x7 times. Some candidates made reference to Gee Walker. Where candidates gained credit for this example, they linked a Christian teaching to support Gee Walker's views. However, some candidates described why Gee Walker forgave but did not support this with a Christian teaching. Some candidates listed Christian beliefs about forgiveness but did not explain them, resulting in a satisfactory response.

- (d) 'A Christian must go to church or chapel.'

Candidates have been prepared for this question and therefore there were very few gaps in responses. Where candidates achieved the higher bands, they made reference to the importance of specific worship, internal features and prayer within the church or chapel. Many candidates referred to distance and illness as a reason to disagree with attending a church or chapel. When candidates achieved higher bands about not attending a church or chapel, they made reference to God being omnipresent and being able to pray at home.

## **Unit 1 Philosophy and Ethics across all papers in Unit 1**

The questions in Q3 and Q4 seemed accessible to all candidates across all papers and the full range of marks were awarded. It was pleasing to see that many candidates attempted most questions in the 'Life and death section' Q3 but there was a noticeable difference in the 'Good and evil section' Q4 of the paper, where numbers of candidates choosing not to attempt these questions were higher.

The Philosophy section of the paper requires 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). There has been a noticeable development in candidates understanding this and answering each style of question in the expected way which is excellent. It is also apparent from this section of the paper this year that there is more parity between the two religions with candidates being able to often write to the same standard from both Christianity and their second-choice religion. There is some evidence of improvement in candidates using more religion specific terminology although this did vary from one paper to another.

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

- Q.3 (a) This question was answered in many ways by candidates with some choosing to include ideas such as it being a scientific theory, or a theory developed by Charles Darwin, whilst others specifically focused on ideas of adaptation or living things changing with an added development through an example. It was pleasing to see in the responses across all religion papers that it was accessible to all candidates and even weaker responses were able to access the marks available, especially if they were developed.

- (b) Describe from either Christianity or XXX beliefs about life after death.

This question was generally well attempted across all religions with the full range of marks being awarded. It was pleasing to see that candidates realised they needed to select either Christianity or their second chosen religion, with only a minority of candidates including both religions in their responses. The best answers gave a clear description of beliefs about life after death and included diversity in views/interpretations (for example, in Christianity, many candidates recognised there may be diversity in whether heaven and hell are seen as physical or spiritual places or recognising that Catholics may also accept belief in purgatory). There was lots of good use of religious terminology appropriate to the religion chosen by candidates. Philosophy script 3 shows an example where a candidate has not read the question and has written their response from the perspective of both religions which is not required for this question.

- (c) Explain Christian and XXX attitudes towards euthanasia.

This was a very accessible question with candidates across all papers showing a clear liking for answering it. The best responses made regular and effective use of relevant sources of authority, often quoting and explaining the meaning of appropriate teachings that link to religious views about euthanasia. It was also pleasing to see so many candidates were able to write in detail and give a balance of attitudes towards the issue in both religions as well as diversity within religions toward the issue. Some candidates simply stated and described attitudes rather than explaining them fully or offering reasons behind the views being held. There were a minority of candidates who did not seem to know what euthanasia is.

- (d) 'It is not possible to accept both scientific and religious views of the origin of the universe.'

It was encouraging to see so many candidates giving extended responses to this question and the full range of marks were awarded across all papers. Answers that were able to achieve the top marks available consisted of candidates being able to relate a range of views to the statement and discuss them rather than simply present what views said. The best answers used evidence and teachings where appropriate to support their arguments and it was particularly pleasing to see so many candidates able to use evaluative language terms and connectives such as 'however' which helped answers be more of a discussion. Many candidates were able to present a range of views, often including religious and showing understanding of literal and non-literal interpretations as well as contrasting these with scientific, Humanist and the views of atheists (non-religious views are a requirement of this question and most candidates successfully included these).

- Q.4 (a) What is meant by conscience? This question was answered well by candidates with secure understanding of their key word knowledge and were able to use accuracy to show understanding of the conscience being an 'inner voice'. It was disappointing to see a significant number of candidates did not attempt this question or seemed unclear on what the conscience was, often relating it in some way to the soul which is an incorrect response.

- (b) Describe either Christian or XXX perspectives about the origin of evil.

This question appears to have been misunderstood or misinterpreted by many candidates across all papers; they often didn't focus their responses on the origin of evil and instead gave lots of other general content linked to the topic of evil and suffering. The best responses were able to give multiple ideas of where religious believers think evil comes from or give a developed description of one key idea; both were equally creditworthy. A minority of candidates still wrote descriptions from both Christianity and their second religion.

- (c) Explain, from Christianity and XXX, beliefs about the aims of punishment.

A range of responses was seen across all papers for this question with all marks been awarded, although it was noticeable that a significant number of candidates chose not to attempt this question at all. A minority of candidates disappointingly misunderstood this question and wrote about punishment in terms of the afterlife. The best answers seen were able to identify some of the aims of punishment (for example, rehabilitation, justice, deterrent, protection, revenge) and explain religious views on them, specifically linking in teachings from sources of authority and showing secure understanding of why some aims may be preferable to others. Some candidates successfully also gave examples of punishments that would or would not be accepted linked to the aims of punishment. Some weaker responses simply listed what the aims of punishment were without any real explanation of the acceptance or non-acceptance from religious believers, or their responses seemed very repetitive rather than developing the content in a meaningful way.

- (d) 'God cannot exist when there is so much suffering in the world.'

This question achieved a range of responses, and it was clear that there were many ways in which candidates approached answering it. A significant number of candidates chose not to attempt a response or maybe ran out of time in completing the paper. The best answers recognised that the view expressed by the statement could come from non-religious believers or potentially from religious believers who found there to be a challenge between their beliefs about God and the level of suffering experienced. It was really interesting to see how the best candidate answers supported their arguments with relevant and modern examples and how they structured their responses to be a discussion of the characteristics of the nature of God alongside explanations for evil and suffering in the world not being God's fault. It was pleasing to see many candidates reference examples such as Adam and Eve, life being a test, or explanations of suffering being linked to the religion they had been studying.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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#### UNIT 1 OPTION 3120UA0-JUDAISM

##### Overview of the Unit

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. There were some bullet points used in the examination. Where candidates used them, they have not been able to achieve the higher bands as there was a lack of development.

Candidates clearly understood the meaning of the 'Rabbi' and wrote a clear definition. There were very few one-word answers to this question during the series. Candidates displayed good knowledge for the question about the Torah in the synagogue, however this was not always accurately linked to the demands of the question. Some candidates wrote about the internal features of the synagogue or the importance of the Torah. Where candidates scored in the higher bands for the 'c' question on the Jewish home, they were able to link specific examples of why they are important within the home. For example, they explained why the home is important to observe kashrut and why Jews can worship in the home. Candidates also displayed good knowledge of Judaism in the 'd' question. Many wrote about alternative ways Jews can show their belief in God. Some made reference to women not being able to wear a kippah, but they can still show their belief in God. However, some candidates misread the question and focused on Jewish identity without making the link to 'belief in God'.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

Candidates engaged well with question (a). Most candidates were able to give a clear definition of who the rabbi is. Most referred to the rabbi as a leader in the synagogue who leads worship and prayers.

There were a range of responses to question (b) and some candidates did not attempt it. Some candidates misread the questions and either wrote about the importance of the Torah or a description of the internal features of a synagogue. Where candidates achieved higher banding, they used excellent religious language, such as bimah, aron hakodesh and yad, and were able to describe specific worship using the Torah.

There were a range of responses to question (c). Some candidates gave very general responses about the home being important as it is where the family are. However, there would often be a lack of development. Some candidates wrote about how Jews celebrate Shabbat in detail. Where candidates achieved the higher bands, most referred to the home being a place where they celebrate Shabbat and observe kashrut. Some candidates also wrote about, festivals, the mezuzah and God being omnipresent, which they linked to a reason why the home is important.

Most candidates were able to give a clear reason about why the kippah is the only way to show belief in God in question (d). However, some candidates wrote more about Jewish identity rather than a belief in God, which can be seen in exemplar material, script 2. Some candidates made reference to women not wearing a kippah, but they are still able to show their belief in God. Many candidates gave alternative examples of the different ways Jews show their belief in God. This included wearing tallit and tefillin, celebrating festivals, following food laws and attending the synagogue. However, some candidates included inaccurate information about the items worn for worship. Where candidates did not achieve the higher banding, they described the different ways Jews show their belief in God without any evaluative language.

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## GCSE

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### UNIT 1 OPTION 3120UB0 - ISLAM

#### Overview of the Unit

The questions were accessible to candidates of all abilities and the full range of marks were awarded across all bands. A varied range of knowledge of Islam was demonstrated; some candidates showed clear understanding with excellent use of Islamic terminology, however, others offered more basic or general underdeveloped knowledge in responses. It was particularly pleasing to see more developed understanding shown from candidates in the 'describe' and 'explain' questions where responses were more focused on the questions asked and showed a variety in approaches to respond. There was clear evidence of many candidates engaging with the skill demands of the AO2 evaluation question although it was disappointing that many candidates were unable to independently develop arguments beyond a basic level.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

Many candidates were able to offer a clear and accurate description of the term 'Tawhid' in the (a) responses, successfully identifying it as the Oneness of Allah. A higher number of candidates than expected chose not to attempt this question suggesting that more focus on key terms may give candidates more confidence with their understanding of them. A minority of candidates appeared to be attempting to guess the meaning of the term, giving incorrect responses.

Responses question (b) were varied and it was pleasing to see variety in ideas presented by candidates. Many exceptional responses included developed descriptions of the different actions that Muslims perform to show respect which often included not only how they may treat the Qur'an when it is not being used (e.g. placed at the highest point in a room), but also the respectful actions they performed specifically before and when using it (performing wudu, placing it on a stand, reading it in Arabic) and all examples were credited. It was pleasing to see less able candidates offering basic understanding of these actions and at times, using some specific terminology within their knowledge. A minority of candidate responses gave general beliefs about the Qur'an rather than focusing specifically on how respect was shown towards it.

Overall, question (c) was well attempted by candidates, and it was pleasing to see the diversity in the way it was approached. Some of the best candidate responses were able to explain different types of prayer (Salah, Du'ah, Jummah) and give specific reasons why each was important. Other, equally creditworthy responses, focused on a more holistic approach to this question and gave multiple reasons why prayer generally holds such an important role in the religion of Islam. Some weaker responses needed to use more specific Islamic terminology and expand on the ideas given which could, at times, be underdeveloped.

The (d) question statement, 'Following halal diet rules is difficult for Muslims in Britain' had a clear focus on Muslim customs; in some responses needed to use more specific Islamic terminology and expand on the ideas given which could, at times, be underdeveloped. A variety of candidate responses were seen for this question, ranging from some exceptional answers with clear lines of argument and well-reasoned judgements being offered, to basic underdeveloped ideas being simply presented rather than evaluated. It was disappointing to see that many candidates seemed confused about what a halal diet may include which was visible through many candidates including large, detailed paragraphs on Sawm and fasting. The best answers discussed a range of arguments including accessibility in parts of Britain to halal food identifying shops or restaurants where it was available or not available, issues over packaging and time needing to be spent identifying if food were halal and even misunderstandings from non-Muslims towards the idea of halal food. These answers were able to offer both reasons to agree and disagree and it was also particularly pleasing to see some candidates offering understanding of the challenges specifically faced by children or relating ideas to how there may be conflict for some Muslims between their religion and aspects of society in Britain.

Many candidates were able to offer a clear and accurate description of the term 'Tawhid', successfully identifying it is the Oneness of Allah.. A higher number of candidates than expected chose not to attempt this question.

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## GCSE

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### UNIT 1 OPTION 3120UC0-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. Some of the responses particularly in the c and d responses were very brief; candidates disadvantaged themselves in terms of achieving higher marks.

Most candidates show a clear understanding of the different demands of the questions within the paper knowing the different requirements of a describe question compared to an explanation or evaluation question. Some candidates continue to find this a challenge and would gain from familiarising themselves more on the different demands of the 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, 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 specific questions due to their lack of knowledge and understanding of some key Hinduism terminology, this was particularly apparent within the (b) and (d) questions on congregational puja and the Upanayana. Candidates also confused to difference between Puja in the mandir and home. It would be beneficial for candidates to be more confident with Hinduism terms that are included within the specification, and that can also appear as part of the question. Candidates also occasionally confused ideas between Christianity and Hinduism particularly around the concept of God and Brahman. Candidates' knowledge and understanding of Hinduism ranges from outstanding to superficial. Candidates continue to have a lack of detailed understanding of Hindu rites of passage.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

Most candidates were able to give a definition of the key concept to differing levels of success. The most successful were able to correctly name the three gods, and their qualities, that are part of the Trimurti and recognise that they were aspects of Brahman. Some candidates did confuse Brahman with Brahma, and a small number of candidates chose not to answer this question suggesting they were unaware of the meaning of the term.

Those that attempted the question (b) either answered in detail or touched upon the topic with a couple of relevant points. The better candidates focused fully on puja in the mandir from how it is performed, by who and the importance of it for experiencing Darshan. Some candidates successfully described different types of puja that could take place within the Mandir and made excellent use of religious language. Candidates who did not achieve the higher bands lacked detail of description and spoke in general about a few things that Hindus would expect to see as part of puja in the mandir. Some candidates spoke about puja in the home instead of the mandir thus preventing progress within the bands. Points relevant to the home and mandir that were credited if candidates did not specifically mention the home.

In question (c) some answers were brief with relevant points included but the lack of explanation of the points made prevented candidates from progressing up the bands. The better candidates presented a detailed explanation of the differing beliefs about Brahman making use of teachings and beliefs including seeing Brahman as the source of all life, that every living thing is part of Brahman through the atman and the concept of Brahman being seen in different forms to show the different aspects of Brahman. The better candidates could explain how different Hindus understood the relationship between Brahman and the Atman. Some candidates referenced different beliefs and stories for the sacred text to support their explanations. Candidates who did not achieve the higher bands lacked detail of explanation and lost track of their answer going into more detail on how Brahman is worshiped through puja or focusing on the atman more than Brahman.

This was an accessible question (d), unfortunately a number of candidates found the question difficult due to the use of key Hindu terms within the question resulting in a number of candidates not attempting the question. The whole range of marks were awarded for this question with some excellent detailed evaluations being seen. These candidates evaluated in detail as to whether the Upanayana was the most important rite of passage making use of the other rites of passage to counter argue against it. Some candidates did not fully engage with the whole statement preventing them from attaining the higher bands. Some candidates had difficulty in counter argue the statement with other rites of passage and instead focused on other things that were more important to Hindus than rites of passage.

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#### UNIT 1 OPTION 3120UD0-BUDDHISM

##### Overview of the Unit

The examination was accessible, with appropriate coverage from the specification. The demand was comparable to previous papers, and the full range of marks were awarded across the questions. Generally, candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the main areas of Buddhism, and it was 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, it was noticeable that many seemed to lack a depth of knowledge needed to access the higher bands, for example, what Buddhists do when they meditate or the many reasons why Buddha is important. Again, this year it was noticeable that some candidates were unable to use Buddhist key terms in the (b), (c) and (d) answers, however better answers did include specific Buddhist terms and referred to sources of authority; this also has an impact on the bands that can be accessed.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

The (a) question required a straightforward definition of 'dhamma'. Generally, the question performed well. Candidates had either learned the WJEC definition or gave a valid definition in their own words. Many candidates supported their definition with an example, such as reference to the Four Noble Truths or the Eightfold Path; this was not necessary but did serve to demonstrate their understanding of the teachings of the Buddha. Some did confuse the concept with 'dukkha'. 'Dhamma' is a central concept so it was disappointing that some candidates did not attempt this question or could not correctly define it. To improve, candidates need to learn the key concepts by either using the given definition or being able to phrase it in their own way.

The (b) question required a description of the practice of meditation. In general, many candidates understood the requirement to describe rather than drift into lengthy explanations. At best, candidates clearly described some meditation practices, with some thorough knowledge of what Buddhists might do during samatha, vipassana or mettabhavana meditation. Some candidates did confuse the types of meditation but were credited for general practices. Many answers that lacked the use of specialist language were unable to access the highest band.

The (c) question required an explanation of the importance of the Buddha. Generally, responses to this question were good, with most candidates understanding the requirement to explain. The question was approached in different ways: some candidates focused on explanations of either his life or his teachings, while others made links between the two. Most candidates were able to explain the importance of Buddha's teachings, and his role as an example to others. Some candidates were able to list the parts of the Four Noble Truths or the Eightfold Path but failed to connect this to his importance as a teacher, whereas better answers referred to these teachings effectively as sources of wisdom. Weaker answers tended to focus more on description, often of the events in the early life of the Buddha, with little or no explanation of why these events might be important.

The (d) question required candidates to analyse and evaluate whether all Buddhists should celebrate Parinirvana Day. Candidates approached this statement in different ways, with some focusing on 'all' and others on 'should'. Either approach was acceptable with candidates able to access the higher bands if they included reference to religion and belief in their answers. Generally, performance in AO2 was weaker than in 2023, possibly due to the removal of the Advanced Information this year. The best answers demonstrated a mature approach that engaged in a discussion about the validity of the statement rather than just giving some different views about it. An awareness of diversity within Buddhism allowed the better answers to effectively argue whether 'all' Buddhists could or should celebrate Parinirvana Day, or any of the other festivals. Generally, the less effective answers argued from a freewill point of view, that Buddhists should not be forced into celebrating any festival. It was disappointing that a significant number of candidates did not appear to know anything about Parinirvana Day so made general comments about the celebration of festivals. In many cases there was a lack of specific religious language and inclusion of sources of wisdom or authority. Where candidates had prepared and did have good knowledge and understanding of Parinirvana Day and the other festivals, their answers failed to reach the higher bands as they misread the statement. As a result, their answers focused on whether Parinirvana Day was the most important festival without any consideration of the actual question set.

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### GCSE

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#### UNIT 1 OPTION 3120UF0-CATHOLIC

##### Overview of the Unit

This year's paper proved to be accessible to most candidates but there were common difficulties with the interpretation of question 1(b). These common misunderstandings caused candidates to lose a significant number of marks. Candidates failed to understand what 'living the Mass' means. The mean mark for this (b) question was lower than the other three, additionally fewer candidates attempted the question. Candidates were able to demonstrate A01 skills effectively in most (b) questions. The key concepts questions were answered exceptionally well this year, in particular question 1 (a).

The higher order questions, (c) and (d) are still proving difficult for a number of candidates. The (c) questions which required candidates to explain from the perspective of two religions proved difficult with candidates being well versed in only one of the religious perspectives (usually Catholicism). Whilst candidates made a great effort with the (d) questions, skills of analysis and evaluation need further development. It is unhelpful for candidates to use formulas that limit or restrict answers. Candidates would do better to develop lines of argument rather than stating different perspectives. It is really important that candidates read the question carefully and include lines of argument from other world views only when necessary. 1(d) in particular required candidates to discuss Catholic beliefs only. Other world views were an unnecessary inclusion here.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar for the most part was good. It is worth centres continuing to remind pupils to check their spelling punctuation and grammar in the question that is allocated to it. In this instance 1(d).

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1(a) was answered extremely well with the majority of candidates achieving full marks by giving a direct translation of *imago Dei*.

The majority of candidates attempted question 1(b) and understood what 'Mass' is but failed to demonstrate knowledge and understanding about 'Living the Mass'. Those who knew the term did very well and were able to exemplify how Catholics could do so. Candidates who misinterpreted the question tended to describe how to fully participate in the Mass.

The question 1(c) was answered well on the whole, with the majority of candidates being able to draw on the teachings of Jesus about forgiveness and well as referring to Jesus' personal example. There was evidence of good use of sources of wisdom and authority here. Some candidates failed to remain focused on the question and explained teachings about love or revenge rather than forgiveness.

The majority of candidates attempted question 1(d). Most knew what is meant by the Trinity but many failed to effectively analyse the importance of belief in the Trinity as a fundamental doctrine for Catholics. Many candidates stated other beliefs about God 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. From the answers I saw, fewer candidates achieved the highest bands this year.

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

Question 2(a) was answered extremely well with the majority of candidates achieving full marks. The majority of candidates referred to the rabbi as a teacher and leader of the synagogue.

Question 2(b) was answered fairly well on the whole. It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates were able to describe 'how' rather than 'why' which has been a common error in previous series. The majority of candidates answered the question knew what the Torah is and could refer to some ways in which the Torah is used. Most answers needed further development in order to gain full marks.

In question 2(c) it was evident from candidates' answers that they knew why the home is important. Many candidates were able to refer to ways in which the home is used for worship. However, some candidates tended to get sidetracked into describing what happens during that worship rather than why the home is important. For example, in referring to the home as a place of worship for the celebration for Shabbat, candidates tended to go in great detail describing Shabbat rather than focusing on the question.

Candidates struggled in the question 2(d). The majority of candidates knew what a kippah is and why Jews wear it. However, the majority of candidates struggled to really engage with the evaluation. Few were able to successfully analyse other ways of showing belief and how these may be more effective than wearing a kippah.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2024

### Unit 2 Christianity section across all papers

#### Overview of the Unit

There was a very good attempt at answering all the questions in this section of the examination paper. This shows that the paper was accessible to candidates. It was also pleasing to see differentiated responses where candidates used a range of Christian knowledge and understanding to answer questions. Many candidates also used and interpreted sources of wisdom and authority, where appropriate. There were fewer bullet points being used during this series. Candidates demonstrated good literacy skills throughout the examination and not just in the demand of question 1d.

There were a range of responses for question b about the resurrection. Some candidates misread the question and wrote about reincarnation. However, most candidates approached the question in two ways. This included either the resurrection of Jesus or the bodily resurrection of believers. Candidates engaged well with the 'c' question on the Bible. Most demonstrated excellent knowledge about why the Bible is important. Where candidates achieved the higher bands, they were able to explain why these reasons are important. Where candidates did not achieve the higher banding, there was a lack of development where reasons for the Bible being important were listed. There was 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. They made reference to original sin, baptism of Jesus, and free will. Candidates were also awarded marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar and it is evident that centres have prepared their candidates for this question.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

Q1 (a) What do Christians mean by the 'eucharist'?

There were a range of responses to this question. Some candidates did not know what 'eucharist' is and as a result they did not attempt the question. Some candidates did not develop their understanding of 'eucharist'.

(b) Describe Christian beliefs about the resurrection.

Many candidates attempted this question although there were a range of responses. Candidates who gained credit for this question achieved it by writing about either the resurrection of Jesus or a bodily resurrection of believers. Some candidates wrote about the crucifixion of Jesus and unfortunately did not achieve marks. Some candidates wrote about the resurrection of Jesus in detail and were able to identify important events surrounding this.

- (c) Explain why the Bible is important to Christians. [8]

Candidates engaged well with this question and there were very few 'not attempted' responses. Most candidates wrote in detail about reasons why the Bible is important. Where candidates achieved higher banding, they were able to explain the points they wrote about. For example, the Bible is important because it has authority as it contains the Ten Commandments. Some candidates also demonstrated excellent knowledge. Where candidates have not achieved the higher banding, there was a lack of development where reasons for the Bible being important were listed.

- (d) 'Infants should not be baptised.'

Most candidates attempted this question. Some candidates wrote about the importance of baptism for the Protestant Church. Many wrote about baptism removing original sin and how it is a sacrament. Most candidates referred to the child being unable to consent because of their age, as a reason to agree with the statement. Where candidates wrote in the higher bands, they made links to Jesus being baptised as an adult and therefore Christians should follow the example of Jesus.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2024

### UNIT 2 Philosophy and Ethics across all papers

#### Overview of the Unit

The Ethics questions in Q3 and Q4 seemed accessible to all candidates across all papers and the full range of marks were awarded. There was a slight dip in the numbers of candidates choosing to attempt questions in the 'Human rights' section of the paper but the full range of responses were seen.

It was especially pleasing to see the high-level responses from some candidates that showcased secure knowledge and understanding of the religions being studied. This often was reflected in accurate use of knowledge and key terms as well as effective use of teachings from sources of wisdom and authority. Less able candidates were also able to show their knowledge and understanding although this wasn't always consistent or adequately developed. The Ethics section of the paper requires 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). There has been a noticeable development in candidates understanding this and answering each style of question in the expected way which is excellent. There was also some outstanding use of religious and moral reasoning in AO2 (d) responses where candidates were using a range of evaluative terms to discuss the given statements effectively.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.3 (a) What is meant by 'divorce'?

Most candidates were successful in answering this question and appeared to have some understanding of the meaning of the term 'divorce'. Candidates who were awarded the full two marks available correctly identified that divorce is a legal action that takes place and that it happens between a married couple. Weaker candidates were able to access 1 mark if they showed some awareness of either of these ideas.

(b) Describe Christian or XXX teachings about the use of contraception.

It was pleasing to see a high number of candidates attempted this question and the full range of marks were awarded. The best answers were from candidates who specifically used relevant religious teachings from sources of authority in their answer and described what they meant and how they were interpreted. Furthermore, excellent responses often showed the diversity of views within a religion about the issue of whether or not to use contraception. Candidates wrote answers by either identifying what religious believers' views were about contraception or specifically giving examples (e.g. natural methods of contraception such as the rhythm method, artificial methods of contraception such as the pill or condom). A small number of candidates unfortunately still wrote a response including both religions rather than choosing one as specified in the question.

- (c) Explain, from Christianity and XXX, the roles of men and women within the family.

Many candidates appeared to find this question challenging, seen through the many ways candidates approached the question, the number of candidates who chose not to attempt it and the often-general responses that were seen. Weaker responses to this question often focused on the concept of equality between men and women, sometimes not specifically linking answers to the family. Other responses were much more sociological and focused specifically on the stereotypical roles of men and women in the family. The best responses seen were those that included religious content specific to the religions being examined, for example, discussing how it was through the roles that children were often introduced to a faith, taught practices from within the religion or how specific religious practices such as the celebration of festivals were carried out within the family.

- (d) 'Sex outside marriage is always wrong.'

The full range of marks was awarded to candidates in this question, and it was encouraging to see the evaluative nature of many candidate responses allowing them to progress through the bands. The open nature of the question allowed candidates to be credited for reference to sex before marriage, adultery or a combination of both. The best answers were those that took the statement in its widest sense and some very pleasing lines of arguments were sustained, including at times, reference to same-sex relationships which was excellent. Good use of teachings from sources of wisdom and authority and diversity of a range of views, including moral perspectives, allowed candidates to access the higher band marks available.

- Q.4 (a) What is meant by 'social justice'?

Candidates took a range of approaches to this question; some successfully gave a definition and an appropriate example whilst others provided a broader description of the meaning of the phrase. The best answers linked to ideas of equality, fairness of everyone in society and the idea of people having rights and what they needed. Unfortunately, some candidates seemed to pick up on the word 'justice' and their definition incorrectly linked to ideas of punishment. A significant number of candidates also chose not to attempt this question which is disappointing.

- (b) Describe Christian or XXX beliefs about freedom of religious expression.

This question generated the widest range of different responses from candidates across all papers with a significant number of candidates choosing not to attempt any response. In the best answers, reference was made to ideas such as freewill, examples such as dress, sharing faith, the practice of religion and even in some answers, links to freedom of speech. These answers not only included accurate and correct content, but also demonstrated understanding of religious expression having a positive and negative effect in society. Some weaker responses stated single ideas but there was a lack of descriptive development. A minority of candidates forgot that they only needed to write about one religion and did write from the perspective of both.

(c) Explain Christian and XXX beliefs about the dignity of human life. A full range of responses was seen across all papers for this question, with all marks being awarded. The best answers took a very holistic approach in their responses and applied a wide range of knowledge and understanding in their answers, both from Unit 1 and within other sections of study in Unit 2. To move up the band descriptors, the more coherent responses used appropriate religious teachings to support the points being made and linked to examples such as euthanasia, abortion or the death penalty. Weaker candidates were able to access the lower band marks by referencing relevant teachings they knew.

(d) 'Religious believers should always follow the laws of the country where they live.'

This question achieved the full range of marks available, and candidates took a variety of approaches in their responses. The best answers that progressed through the bands included specific examples of laws that should or shouldn't be followed, often supporting this with examples of people who may have challenged unfair laws. Candidates who achieved the lower marks available were able to express opinions on the statement and it was pleasing to see the improvement in trying to evaluate the views and build on more than simply presenting them.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### GCSE

Summer 2024

#### UNIT 2 OPTION 3120U10-JUDAISM

##### Overview of the Unit

There were a range of responses to this section of the examination paper and there was a slight decline in some candidates achieving marks in the higher bands. There were some differences in subject specific knowledge, where candidates did not apply their knowledge accurately to the demands of the questions and lost marks, as a result. There were fewer bullet points being used during this series.

Many candidates wrote a developed response to the question about Abraham and included subject specific language. There were a variety of responses to the 'b' question about how Jews prepare for Pesach. Some candidates were confused with other Jewish festivals whilst other candidates wrote about how or why Jews celebrate Pesach. However, marks were gained by describing how Jews clean the home and preparing the special seder foods. Some candidates confused their subject knowledge with the Tenakh in this question. However, where they gained marks, they wrote about the Talmud being the oral Torah, a guide to life and studying the Talmud as a duty. Candidates also displayed a variety of Jewish specific knowledge in the 'd' question. Many wrote about alternative ways Jews can show their Jewish identity. Some made reference to the minyan, covenant and links to Abraham. Some candidates made reference to only men being circumcised and how Brit Milah is non-consensual. However, there were some inaccuracies where some candidates provided incorrect information and confused Brit Milah with Bar Mitzvah.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

Many candidates were able to respond to question (a). Where candidates achieved full marks, they wrote about Abraham being the founder of Judaism and establishing a covenant with God. This is evident in script 1 of the exemplar materials.

There were a variety of responses to question (b). Many candidates wrote about how Jews celebrate Pesach rather than the preparations. Some candidates misunderstood the festivals and wrote about Rosh Hashanah whilst others re-told the story of Jews fleeing slavery in Egypt. Where candidates wrote about the specific preparations for Pesach, they made reference to cleaning the home and preparing food for the seder table.

There were a range of responses to question (c). Unfortunately, some candidates did not know what the Talmud was and wrote about items of clothing or the Tenakh. Some candidates wrote generic responses about why a holy book is important, without referring specifically to the Talmud. Where candidates gained marks, they wrote about the Talmud being the oral Torah, a guide to life and studying the Talmud as a duty.

Many candidates attempted question (d), and some were able to provide a weak alternative viewpoint. Where candidates wrote in detail, they made reference to the minyan, covenant and links to Abraham. Some candidates made reference to only men being circumcised and how Brit Milah is non-consensual and how circumcision cannot be 'un-done'.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### GCSE

Summer 2024

#### UNIT 2 OPTION 3120U10-ISLAM

##### Overview of the Unit

The paper was accessible to all candidates, the full range of responses was seen, and marks were awarded across all bands. Candidates demonstrated a varied knowledge of Islam; the most able used Islamic terms accurately and confidently to support the points they made whilst other candidates offered more general and less well-developed responses. It was pleasing to see the high attempt rate of each question with only the evaluation (d) response being significantly lower. It was particularly encouraging to see candidates seeming to be more understanding of the difference between the (b) describe and (c) explain skills, with the latter more developed in many candidate responses than seen in previous years. There was also a good engagement from candidates with the AO2 requirements in offering different views and discussing their merit.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

Many candidates were able to offer a clear and accurate definition for question (a), identifying that a prophet was someone who had direct contact with Allah, often described by candidates as a messenger or someone who brought a message from Allah. It was further pleasing to see candidates successfully recognise an example of a prophet with most identifying Muhammad or Isa. A small number of candidates gave incorrect or undeveloped responses to this question, suggesting more focus on familiarity with key terms would further enhance candidate confidence in recognising and using them accurately.

It was pleasing to see most candidates attempted question (b) and the majority were able to offer some understanding of attitudes surrounding clothing in Islam. Weaker candidates achieved marks from simply identifying items of dress; most notably mentioned were the hijab and burqa. More able candidates described views on clothing, showing awareness of what the Qur'an teaches about dress as well as diversity that exists in what may be worn or seen as acceptable in different countries. There was often a contemporary awareness of countries such as France which has rules that ban items of Islamic dress in public. It was particularly pleasing to see some candidates identify how men and women wear different items, using correct religious terminology. More developed answers also included identification of how Muslims dress when completing Hajj through wearing ihram, as well as mention of what Muslims may wear on special occasions to celebrate festivals or when they are praying in the Mosque; all these ideas were rightfully credited.

A good range of responses was seen from candidates, and it was encouraging to see the number of candidates able to draw on the more developed explanation skill required by this C question. Candidates who attempted this question generally were able to identify a range of actions that Muslims performed on Hajj including entering the state of ihram, circling the Kab'ah, running between the hills, visiting the Zamzam well, completing the stand on Mount Arafat, stoning the devil, shaving the head and celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr. Candidates did not need to include all practices to achieve the top band, but it was pleasing to see both breadth and depth in answers that allowed answers to progress to this standard. A significant number of candidates included irrelevant content for this question and focused more on what Hajj was, when it should be completed and why it was important whilst a small number of responses were very general and lacked specific detail, often focusing more on actions performed by Muslim to show respect to Allah rather than what they complete whilst on Hajj.

Candidates were able to discuss the importance of Id-ul-Fitr and compare it to other festivals such as Id-ul-Adha or Laylat-ul-Qadr in the (d) question. Some outstanding answers were seen where candidates effectively considered the reasons for each festival and why each one could be considered as the most significant. Many candidates who accessed the higher band marks available offered conclusions that drew on multiple arguments and considered a range of views with many concluding that all festivals are important to Muslims. Some candidates did unfortunately mix up the different festivals so whilst their reasoning was secure, their basic knowledge showed gaps. Others seemed unsure about what a festival was and used alternative arguments that referenced Hajj or Ramadan being more important festivals; whilst these views were given some credit, it highlighted that some candidates are not secure in their knowledge and understanding. It was also disappointing that this question was not attempted by a few candidates.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### GCSE

Summer 2024

#### UNIT 2 OPTION 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 enables candidates to progress through the bands. Some of the responses particularly in the d) responses were very brief, candidates disadvantaged themselves in terms of achieving higher marks.

Most candidates showed a clear understanding of the different demands of the questions within the paper knowing the different requirements of a describe question compared to an explanation or evaluation question. Some candidates continue to find this a challenge and would gain from familiarising themselves more on the different demands of the 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 would benefit from making use of lines of argument when evaluating.

Candidates continue to make good use of relevant subject specific terminology within their answers, it is positive that this is reflected within both Christianity and Hinduism, this has supported candidate's success when moving up the band descriptors. Having said this several candidates were unable to answer some of the Hinduism specific questions due to their lack of knowledge and understanding of some key Hinduism terminology, this was particularly apparent within the a) and d) questions on Ashrama and Varnashramadharma. It would be beneficial for candidates to more confident with Hinduism terms that are included within the specification that can also appear as part of the question as well as all key concept terms. Candidates' knowledge and understanding of Hinduism ranges from outstanding to superficial.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

Candidates either know or did not know the key concept in question (a). Those that were successful were able to note that there were 4 stages in life with some expanding their answers with naming them. Candidates who did not achieve marks either did not attempt the question or incorrectly guessed the answer.

There was a range of marks across the bands for question (b). The level of response varied dependant on the detail of the description. The better candidates described whilst making extensive use of relevant Hinduism specific terms which assisted with moving up the bands. Candidates were able to make links between the atman and moksha to reincarnation and how karma affected the cycle of reincarnation. Some candidates lost focus within the answers overly explaining the collecting of good and bad karma. Some candidates did mix elements of the Christian view of life after death with reincarnation where they spoke of reincarnation as joining with God in heaven.

Unfortunately, some candidates were unable to move up the bands as they focused on why Holi takes place and not how it is celebrated in question (c). The most successful candidates were able to explain in detail the different activities that take place during Holi and successfully justified through Hindu beliefs why these activities take place. Conference script 2 clearly shows the range and detail of explanation that could be included within this answer to achieve full marks. Many candidates were able to correctly recognise the festival and include relevant information as can be seen within conference script 1 but they struggled to expand on their explanations and occasionally the answers lacked order and structure thus preventing them reaching the higher bands. Conference script 3 is an example of a candidate that knows something about Holi but is unable to expand on it and go into detail on how it is celebrated. Some candidates mixed Holi with the festival of Diwali.

There was a variety of standard within candidates' answers for question (d), their success depended on them understanding what Varnashramadharma was. There were a number of candidates that did not answer this question due to their lack of knowledge on what Varnashramadharma was. Some candidates fully engaged with the question evaluating different beliefs against Varnashramadharma to assist them in deciding if Varnashramadharma was the most important beliefs. Beliefs such as the ahimsa, beliefs in Brahman, reincarnation and moksha were considered. This range can be seen within conference scripts 1 and 3 alongside justifications and conclusions that were included within the candidate's answers. There is also relevant and good use of religious language within these answers. Conference script 3 reflected some candidates' struggle to recognise key Hindu beliefs to counter argue the belief in Varnashramadharma and instead focused on practices to counter argue. Other candidates focused on the aspects of Varnashramadharma separately and evaluated which aspect of Varnashramadharma was the most important, this hampering their progress up the bands. The answers of such candidates often turned into an explanation of Varnashramadharma rather than an evaluation.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### GCSE

Summer 2024

#### UNIT 2 OPTION 3120U30-BUDDHISM

##### Overview of the Unit

The exam was accessible, with appropriate coverage from the specification. The demand was comparable to previous papers, and the full range of marks were awarded across the questions. Generally, candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the main areas of Buddhism, and it was 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, it was noticeable that many did not attempt the (b) question which seemed to indicate a lack of knowledge in this area. 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

The (a) question required a straightforward definition of 'anatta'. Generally, the question performed well. Candidates had either learned the WJEC definition or gave a valid definition in their own words. Many candidates supported their definition with an example, such as reference to the Three Marks of Existence; this was not necessary but did serve to demonstrate their understanding. Some definitions were not fully developed, or some did confuse the concept with 'anicca' or 'pratitya' which demonstrated a lack of learning of the key concepts.

The (b) question required a description of the Three Jewels and, in most cases, candidates did this without unnecessary explanations. Many candidates accurately described the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, with better answers drawing on knowledge from across the course. Many answers referred to them as the Triratna and the chant that most Buddhists make. Better answers described Buddha as an example, study of the Dharma to generate good karma, and the Sangha as a benefit to the community. Many also outlined their role as refuges. Specific religious language was generally well used, with some candidates drawing on examples of dharma as sources of authority. Some candidates did confuse the Three Jewels with the Three Marks of Existence (lakshanas) or the Three Poisons, while a number described the three parts of the Eightfold Path.

The (c) question required an explanation of the influence of the Five Precepts on Buddhist lifestyle. Generally, responses to this question were good, with most candidates understanding the requirement to explain. The focus of the question was how the precepts impact lifestyle, and this was approached in a number of ways: some candidates considered the influence of each precept in turn, while others set out their overall influence with specific precepts being used to illustrate the point made; some candidates saw the precepts as positive instructions of how a Buddhist should live, others saw them as pointers of what to avoid. The best answers made excellent use of sources of authority such as The Parable of the Burning House or the Upayakausalya Sutra (The Skill in Means Sutra) and were able to or upaya kausalya. Weaker answers tended to explain what each precept means, or merely listed them.

The (d) question required candidates to analyse and evaluate whether all Buddhists should attend places of worship. Generally, performance in AO2 was like that in 2023, with the majority of candidates being able to keep their focus on this statement so able to access the higher bands. The best answers demonstrated a mature approach that engaged in a discussion about the validity of the statement rather than just giving some different views about it. The better answers put forward very good reasons why a home shrine might be more suitable for some Buddhists, thus engaging with the statement of whether ‘all’ should attend places of worship. Many answers included effective reference to the features and functions of temples, viharas and home shrines, with the better answers referring to stupas, meditational areas, and offerings. Religious language was generally well used, with some candidates referring to Theravada or Mahayana practices as sources of authority, as well as the diversity of practices of lay and monastic Buddhists. Overall, this question was answered well, with only a minority of candidates misunderstanding the question and considering which is most important. Weaker answers tended to lack structure, with little consideration of more than one point of view.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### GCSE

Summer 2024

#### UNIT 3 OPTION 3120U30-CATHOLIC

##### Overview of the Unit

Analysis of the Unit 3 examination paper this year has shown that the paper was accessible, and the majority of candidates understood the requirements of each style of question.

The quality of spelling, punctuation, and grammar displayed by the candidates was notable, with the majority 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.

The performance of candidates in the Unit 3 examination paper this year generally showed progress in understanding assessment requirements. However, further support and guidance in refining evaluation and analysis skills will undoubtedly benefit candidates in the future.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

In terms of specific question types, the (a) questions were deemed accessible, with candidates demonstrating a robust understanding of how to answer these questions. However, it is unfortunate that there seemed to be confusion regarding the correct meaning of the key concepts, notably 1(a) and 2(a). It is worth centres emphasising the importance of these key concepts and their correct definitions.

The responses to the (b) questions were generally competent and detailed. It was encouraging to observe a clearer understanding among candidates of the trigger word for these questions, indicating progress in their comprehension of the assessment requirements.

Furthermore, there was an improved understanding of the expectations for the (c) questions this year, with many candidates explaining their answers in a coherent manner. Despite this progress, there were still some candidates who misconstrued the trigger words for the (c) questions and attempted to incorporate unnecessary evaluation and analysis in their responses.

The assessment of evaluation and analysis skills remains challenging for candidates, yet it was pleasing to note their awareness of the importance of elaboration in responses to the (d) questions. This was reflected in the marks awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar, emphasizing the significance of comprehensive answers. Responses to 1(d) reflected excellent knowledge and understanding of beliefs about life after death. However, fewer candidates demonstrated the skills of evaluation and analysis in these responses.

It was observed that some candidates struggled 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. Moving forward, centres may need to provide further guidance on how to effectively incorporate analytical reasoning in responses to enhance overall performance.

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

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Fax 029 2057 5994  
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website: [www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk)