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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCSE  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 1:  
CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM 3120UB0-1**

**SUMMER 2022**

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# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2022

### UNIT 1

#### 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 from outstanding to 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. Disappointingly, there was evidence of a rise in the number of candidates who did not attempt to answer questions in the Christianity section of the examination paper. It was encouraging to see an increase in the number of candidates using references from sources of authority and the demonstration of an understanding of diversity in Christian traditions.

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, Teachings and Practices – Christianity

##### Q.1 (a) **What do Christians mean by 'omnibenevolence'?**

Most candidates were able to give the exemplar definition of the key concept or some form of definition of the key concept. A minority of candidates confused omnibenevolence with omnipotence and a number of candidates did not attempt the question.

##### (b) **Describe what happened at the crucifixion of Jesus**

There were some outstanding answers in response to this question; a very detailed description of the biblical account of the crucifixion of Jesus. However, some candidates misread the question and gave an account only of the trial of Jesus; the focus of the question is the crucifixion. Disappointingly, a significant number of candidates did not appear to know any details of the crucifixion and simply stated Jesus died on a cross.

It is important to note that simply repeating the same statement in a different way will not achieve any more marks. Some answers were very brief and some included the use of bullet points which almost always leads to a lack of a coherent description.

**(c) Explain different ways in which Christians might worship God.**

Some excellent responses were unpacked in detail regarding the different ways in which Christians might worship God. Detailed responses offered a wide range of examples as part of the response, and these examples were used to support the explanations.

Where candidates simply listed activities which take place in a church or chapel as a form of worship, 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 brief, using less than half of the available space, 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 examples from different Christian traditions. Disappointingly some candidates seemed unaware of the meaning of worship and were unable to answer the question.

**(d) 'The most important teaching for Christians is to love God.'**

The more able candidates were able to fully analyse and evaluate the significance of the Bible's teachings about love of God as the most important. It is pleasing to note that many candidates correctly focused on the demands of the question, by unpacking arguments and ideas about how love of God is (or is not) the most important Christian teaching. The most common view expressed was that love of neighbour was as important or indeed more important. It is also pleasing to note many candidates were using, correctly, references to sources of authority. Unfortunately, a number of candidates included atheist and humanist viewpoints; this was not appropriate on the Christianity paper in terms of the question asked because the question asked solely for a Christian perspective.

### **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 meaningful 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.' These, and other connectives, are very useful phrases to help candidates structure and unpack arguments.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2022

### UNIT 1

#### 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 Q.1 Christianity or Q.2 Islam from Section A and the majority of candidates choosing to answer both the 'Philosophical Themes' sections of the paper ('Life and death' / 'Good and evil') in Section B. There was also 'Summer 2022 advance information' given to candidates where the section of the specification was identified for AO2 questions. This had mostly a positive impact with many candidates completing extended writing in these questions.

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.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### PART A – Core Beliefs, Teachings and Practices – Islam

##### Q.2 (a) What do Muslims mean by 'du'ah'?

Many candidates were able to give a clear and accurate definition of the term 'du'ah', either referring to 'private prayer' or 'personal prayer'. Some chose to extend their answer, also giving examples of what Muslims might ask for in this type of prayer. This development was not necessary for the two marks. Some candidates chose not to attempt this question, suggesting they were unaware of the meaning of the term and there were, disappointingly, a high number of candidates who appeared to guess a multitude of possible wrong answers.

##### (b) Describe how Muslims observe Ramadan.

The question required a description of **how** Muslims observe Ramadan; the best answers gave a coherent description of the actions performed by Muslims. Answers awarded the top band used religious terminology extensively and were able to give specific information on what Muslims do, either offering breadth in the number of actions performed or depth in how specific actions are carried out. Both approaches were credited-worthy. Many answers, however, failed to focus just on 'how' Ramadan is observed but also gave description, or sometimes explanation, of 'why' it is performed by Muslims.

Some candidates lapsed into explanation of what Ramadan is and why it is important, only giving brief reference to how Muslims observe it. A number of candidates gave a very short and brief response to the question which required more detail.

**(c) Explain the importance for Muslims of the Shahadah.**

Many candidates approached this question successfully, including awareness in their responses of the Shahadah being a pillar and the statement of faith in Islam and referencing the significance of its beliefs including Tawhid, acceptance of Muhammad and his role within Islam, when the Shahadah is spoken and how being a Muslim is dependent upon acceptance of the Shahadah. A high number of candidates referenced that the Shahadah is the first pillar in Islam underpinning all other pillars and many stated the exact words of the Shahadah within their answer. However, some candidates limited their responses by simply writing everything they knew about the Shahadah without relating this directly to the question which focused on its importance. A minority of candidates mixed up Shahadah with some of the other pillars, therefore offering an incorrect response. Some candidates would have benefited from extending each individual idea presented in their response to give a fuller explanation.

**(d) 'For Muslims, the Qur'an is the only guide for life'.**

A range of responses was seen to this question and many candidates were able to offer more than one viewpoint and a level of discussion around the statement. It was pleasing to see the extended length of answers offered by some candidates. The best answers offered multiple lines of argument for the importance of the Qur'an and its role as both a source of authority and guide in the daily life of Muslims, alongside evaluation of other sources of guidance that Muslims may look to, including the Hadith and Sunnah, the Imam, the conscience and Sharia Law. Candidates who achieved the higher bands were able to evaluate the arguments and formulate judgements, offering an overall conclusion on the statement.

Some candidates, however, simply presented knowledge about the Qur'an without relating it to the statement whilst others offered a one-sided argument or just offered ideas without developing them or reflecting on them evaluatively. No credit was given for responses that referred to Christian, atheist/humanist perspectives as the statement clearly focused on Islamic views.

### Summary of key points

- Candidates should learn and be able to use a range of key and specialist terms which may be both used within the wording of questions and within their responses to demonstrate knowledge of the specification and the religion of Islam.
- Candidates need to be reminded to read questions carefully and direct their answers towards the question being asked rather than just giving general content relevant to the topic stated within the question.
- 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.
- References to sources of authority should be included in candidate responses where relevant.

- In all (d) style responses, candidates must remember to include a range of views with appropriate lines of arguments that they should reflect on in order to offer a critical, evaluative approach to the statement provided. Use of connectives and evaluative language in responses will help to achieve this.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2022

### UNIT 1

#### General Comments

#### Questions 3 and 4 - Religious Responses to Philosophical Themes

This is the third year of this particular specification. 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 3(d) and 4(d). This may have been because of timing issues.

It was pleasing to note that the vast majority of candidates felt confident in defining the key concepts in 3(a) and 4(a). In some cases, these were full definitions 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 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 where 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 component. 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 units 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 purporting to be Biblical or Qur'anic sources. Few candidates made reference to the Hadith as a source of authority nor to the role of the Imam.

There are many opportunities in the paper for candidates to include references to relevant contemporary philosophical 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. For this part of the paper (Part B), definitions do not need to be placed within a religion specific context. 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. Unlike 1 and 2(a), the key concept does not have to be defined within a religious context.

**(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; religious leaders; religious founders, philosophers, the Law etc.

**(c) Questions** – These questions usually require candidates to demonstrate an understanding of an area of specification content from religion(s) or religious tradition(s). 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 not 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. This is not necessary. 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 each of the unit. 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. 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 soul.'(2)**

Generally well answered, although some candidates found difficulty in expressing clearly what they knew and understood in their writing. This is a concept that does not easily exemplify and therefore needed a precise definition to be awarded full marks. Many references were made to 'the spiritual part of a person' which was fully creditworthy. Answers limited to 'me' were not able to be credited.

**(b) Describe how religious believers might support sustainability.(5)**

Many responses focussed on 'why' not 'how'. The question could be responded to in two ways; either relating to generic practice of religious communities e.g. eco places of worship, prayer, religious action group. Alternatively, the response could be centred around the actions of one particular faith group. References were accepted regarding practices that non-religious and religious believers might employ e.g. writing letters to M.P.'s or leading campaigns. It was pleasing to see that some candidates made reference to the actions of eco-mosques and the role of Christian and Muslim charities in leading recycling programmes. To achieve the highest band responses must include the use of specialist and appropriate religious, philosophical or ethical terms.

**(c) Explain from Christianity and Islam how funerals reflect beliefs about life after death. (8)**

This question required candidates to relate their knowledge and understanding of how **funeral rites** reflect beliefs in **life after death** in **two** religious traditions. There were many responses which were limited to explaining funeral rites or beliefs about life after death in one religion. The connection between the two is a clear requirement of the specification. There were some high band responses in which candidates had not only linked funeral rites to beliefs about life after death but also included references to diversity within each tradition.

- (d) **‘Abortion is every woman’s right to choose’. (15)**  
There were some excellent responses to this question which demonstrated informed analysis and evaluations. The majority of responses related to a variety of religious viewpoints and used an extensive and appropriate range of specialist terms and sources of authority. Answers were often well structured through a logical sequence of arguments rather than a writing frame which often limits argument to ‘point, explain and evaluate’ in two religious traditions. Some candidates failed to reach the higher bands due to a lack of focus on ‘*a woman’s right to choose.*’

**Q.4 (a) What is meant by morality? (2)**

This was well answered with precise definitions which were often supported with an appropriate example. It is rather disappointing that although the vast majority of candidates understood what is meant by ‘morality’ the term was not generally used in responses to (b), (c) and (d) questions. There are many instances where the use of key concepts are relevant in responses to questions.

(b) **Describe what Christians or Muslims believe makes an act wrong? (5)**

This question required candidates to write their response from either Islam or Christianity. Responses were often very general with little relation to a specific religious tradition. Some references were made to an act going against ‘love thy neighbour’ or the actions of the Prophet Muhammad, but the references often lacked context. Some references were made to absolute and relative morality which were relevant to the demands of the question.

(c) **Explain Christian and Muslim teachings about evil (8)**

Although the majority of candidates showed an understanding of what was meant by evil many responses made general comments which could be true of a number of religious traditions. As previously stated, (c) questions do not require candidates to compare the attitudes from the two traditions but just to explain the distinctive teachings and attitudes.

(d) **‘It is impossible to forgive’. (15)**

The majority of responses gave considered and informed judgements. A range of viewpoints were often given and most candidates focussed their answer on whether it is actually possible to forgive. Some references were made to relevant examples such as Gee Walker and Martin Luther King. It is important that when relevant examples are used in a response that the candidate clearly focuses on how the example relates to their argument. There were frequent examples where the response was under-developed or incomplete perhaps due to a lack of time. It was pleasing to see reference to some contemporary examples, such as the acts of forgiveness by the Christchurch Muslim community after the terrorist attack on the Mosque in New Zealand.

## Summary of key points

- (c) questions require responses from two religious traditions. Higher bands cannot be awarded if candidates only write about one religious tradition.
- Although candidates are able to give clear definitions of key concepts in 'a' questions there appears a reluctance to use such specialist terms in other responses. This is particularly noticeable in (d) questions.
- Schemas of understanding of distinctive religious traditions are often lacking in an understanding of why there is diversity within a tradition.
- Candidates must focus on the demands of the question to achieve the higher bands.



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