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# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCE (NEW)  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
AS/Advanced**

**SUMMER 2019**

Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at:  
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### **Annual Statistical Report**

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### 1A. An Introduction to the Study of Christianity

##### General Comments

It is pleasing to note that the examination paper did not raise any concerns and so fulfilled its aim of setting appropriate questions in a fair and accessible manner. The full range of marks were employed to the answers provided. The following report will more naturally focus on obvious areas of improvement and does not negate the excellent attempts shown by many students.

With a move to online marking it is crucial that candidates place their Question number and part attempted *in the box provided* on the paper. Should they add something later on, again, a clear repetition of the question number and part in the margin will ensure it is attached to the rest of their answer.

A number of candidates only completed part of a question, or only one whole question (a) and (b) with no attempt made at all at others. Anything credit worthy would have been credited had candidates attempted a response and they should be encouraged to do so.

Generally, it should be noted that all questions carry equal marks. Again this year, many students wrote considerably more in the (b) answer, losing both valuable time and marks on/from other questions.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

###### Section A

**Q.1 (a) Explain different ways in which the birth narratives help in understanding the doctrine of the incarnation. [AO1 15]**

This was the most popular Section A question with almost 80% of candidates attempting this question. With a facility factor of 43.5 it appears to have been one of the most accessible Part (a) AO1 questions.

###### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- identified that the central element here was the nature of Christ through his incarnation and kept that as the focus.
- the above was accessed through the hypostatic union and kenotic theory, with accurate illustrations provided from the birth narratives in appropriate support of the same.

- Some other candidates emphasised either the hypostatic union or kenotic theory with accurate illustrations provided from the birth narratives in appropriate support of the same.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- simply re-told the birth narratives, but with no direct reference to the question set.
- some candidates achieved limited success by comparing the Matthew and Luke accounts and highlighting the differences between them in a way of accessing 'fully God' and 'fully man' arguments.
- redaction criticism was often brought into the answer to help explain these differences but all too frequently without mentioning the incarnation. With many candidates appearing to try and answer a different question to that set, and by doing so limited their level of achievement.

**(b) 'Jesus was no more than a human being.'  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

The facility factor of 61.0 and the mean of 9.1, both suggest this was the most accessible part (b) AO2 question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- employed a range of arguments that engaged with the idea of whether Jesus could or could not be regarded in his time and now as being 'more than' a human being. There were some clear examples of confident and critical analysis (Band 5).
- quoted Biblical texts and used them as justification for the argument e.g. John 1.14 as an illustration that Jesus had to be more than a human being as He had been involved in creation. The resurrection of Jesus was another popular avenue explored. Likewise, the fact that he was born, grew up, ate, hungered, suffered and died all variously employed to support that argument that Jesus was just human.
- an appropriate use of scholars to support various arguments were often effective.
- a conclusion that came to a viewpoint and supported this with either a final point or a brief summary of the main argument(s) often illustrated a confident analysis.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some candidates did not fully evaluate and rather presented a one-sided argument whether it was for or against the question's quotation. While some of these still obtained Band 3 'most of the issues raised by the question' it was rare that such an answer could progress to Band 4.
- some candidates were writing a response of their own thinking. Dependent on what that thinking was and how it was presented some could obtain Band 2 'some valid analysis' but many actually presented 'a basic analysis' Band 1.

**Q.2 (a) Explain different ways the New Testament helps Christian understanding of the resurrected body. [AO1 15]**

This was the least popular question from Section A, with only an 18.2% attempt rate. The facility factor of 37.5 and the mean of 5.6 both suggest that some candidates found this question challenging.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- presented responses that focused on the question of Jesus' resurrection and not the general resurrection.
- included an accurate and appropriate use of the various resurrection appearances illustrating both the changes and continuity of Jesus' resurrection body.
- presented information that there were changes in Jesus' appearance / body abilities post-resurrection.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some mistakenly wrote about Jesus' 'reincarnation'.
- understood there was a resurrection with the aforementioned changes, but to the point that Jesus was not recognised at all in bodily form. Wrongly exemplified this point by stating that Thomas was unable to touch the wounds (which is contrary to the very point of the account, proving that he could touch Jesus' resurrected, altered yet continuous body).
- wrote about Thomas not being able to touch Jesus' wounds because they had healed as a sign of the resurrection.
- attempted to address the question as it were an AO2 question and began to argue about whether the resurrection happened or not.

**(b) 'The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is an historical fact.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

This question was only attempted by 18.9% of candidates. The facility factor of 53.2 suggests this was an accessible part (b) AO2 question for those who attempted it.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- did not simply evaluate whether the resurrection was possible or not, but their arguments to the specific question set - whether it was an historical fact or not.
- made full use of the Biblical accounts in support of the view that it was historical.
- incorporated the views of scholars to support both sides of the argument (typically, N. T. Wright and Rudolf Bultmann).

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some candidates became too one sided, and particularly so when too focused on Redaction Criticism as a form of argument to say the resurrection is not an historical fact.

- veered towards answering a different question about whether there was “a historical Jesus” rather than the question set “a historical resurrection of Jesus.”
- ignored the Biblical accounts and so simply presented generic views.

## Section B

### Q.3 (a) Explain the modern view of a suffering God as understood by Jurgen Moltmann. [AO1 15]

This was the most popular question from Section B with an attempt percentage of 37.5%. Whilst the mean for this question is only 6.4, some candidates excelled at this question, it appeared to be one they enjoyed and engaged with.

#### *Features of stronger responses:*

- utilised Moltmann’s theological points either comprehensively (breadth) or by referring to a smaller number in greater detail (depth).
- the development of Moltmann’s theology into a political theology was well presented by some candidates.
- referred to Moltmann’s theology, most particularly: his observation of C20th suffering, that this echoes the cry of Jesus from the cross, the fact that cry needs to be re-understood and brought into questions raised today by theodicy, that the Christ event on the cross is a God event.

#### *Features of weaker responses:*

- misrepresented part or even all of Moltmann’s theology e.g. that Moltmann opposes the idea of God suffering.
- wrote half or more of a response on the impassibility of God and the immutability of God whether or not combined with omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence of God without mentioning Moltmann until a final paragraph.
- some candidates’ responses entered into an AO2 type debate about whether Moltmann was wrong and that God cannot suffer.

### (b) 'If God suffers, God is not God.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]

This appeared to be a question many candidates found very accessible with a facility factor of 59.0 and a mean of 8.8.

#### *Features of stronger responses:*

- appropriately referred to the questions and issues surrounding God’s impassibility, immutability, omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence. Some also referred to the work of Moltmann in their response, using the information in an evaluative way.
- made reference to Jesus and wider Biblical material about God’s nature and suffering e.g. Abraham’s plea bargaining. A variety of scholars also were also referred to e.g. Aristotle, Spinoza, Augustine and Irenaeus.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- the material was too descriptive (AO1) and was not evaluated.
- were often one-sided evaluations.
- misunderstood the question and discussed human suffering and the impact this has on God.

**Q.4 (a) Examine Luther's arguments for justification by faith alone. Evaluate this view. [AO1 15]**

This was the second most popular question in Section B with an attempt rate of 33.7% and the highest mean score (7.4) of any part (a) question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- demonstrated understanding of Luther's theology and were able to express it clearly by referring to:
- Biblical texts from the specification and beyond to support Luther's arguments.
- theological evidence supporting *sola fide* and *sola scriptura* as the foundations of Luther's argument.
- the historical context in a way to illustrate Luther's argument e.g. indulgences were commonplace but could not purchase salvation.
- Luther's spiritual journey as a way of illustration e.g. the devout monk could not find spiritual peace in spite of following his rule of life.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- entered into an AO2 type debate about whether Luther believed in justification by faith whilst others wrote in terms of Luther's opposition to justification by faith, and his support of works.
- other candidate responses lacked depth and detail and as a result limited their access to the higher bands.
- wrote narrative style answers of the events of 1517 onwards including the Council of Trent but without explaining Luther's arguments.

**(b) 'The New Testament letters make clear that justification includes both faith and works.' [AO2 15]**

Whilst this question appeared to be accessible with a facility factor of 47.5 the mean mark of 7.1 was the lowest scoring for a part (b) question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- answered the question and maintained that this was the focus of the New Testament letters.
- represented those that had gained a Biblical knowledge of the debate between faith and works.
- gave good conclusions, grappling with which side of the argument the candidate had decided to support.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- ignored the New Testament letters almost completely.
- consequently, arguments were constructed that had validity, but outside the specific remit of the question thereby restricting the candidate to the lower bands.
- thereafter, there were those who were confused from the outset about the meaning of the question and how to answer it.

**Q.5 (a) Examine Barth's understanding of baptism. [AO1 15]**

This was the least popular question from Section B, with only a 23.0% attempt rate. The facility factor of 35.0 and the mean of 5.3 both suggest that candidates found this question challenging.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- focussed on the question and demonstrated a thorough understanding of Barth's view on baptism.
- focussed on Barth and used infant baptism purely as an occasional illustrator to Barth's point e.g. consent is required, infants cannot give consent.
- Other candidates achieved a Band 4 as they did not present the same breadth of Barth's understanding or sufficient detail of the same, often because they incorporated too much about infant baptism *per se*.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some candidates appeared to choose this question as they could write something about baptism, but appeared to know little if anything about Barth's views.
- some mistakenly claimed that Barth supported infant baptism and that sacramental grace was to be received from baptism.

**(b) 'Baptism requires consent by the person who receives it.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

This was the least popular question in Section B with an attempt rate of 26.8% and the second highest mean score (8.9) of any part (b) question. A facility factor of 59.4 suggests it was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger answers:***

- others referred to 'present day' considerations with some constructing a 'safeguarding' argument that the child has no consent and so it was done 'against them' given they cannot alter / erase the fact of the baptism in the future.
- this could lead to a 'freedom of choice' argument that they may choose another religion.



### ***Features of weaker answers:***

- some candidates seemed prepared for an 'infant versus believers' baptism' question and they delivered it. Whether these were pre-learned essays rather than an ability to address the actual question set is unclear.
- as with the previous (b) answers some candidates opted for either consent or not and so produced a one-sided evaluation variously agreeing or disagreeing with the proposition.

### **Summary of key points**

- Stronger candidates had prepared their subject material and adapted this to the question set, weaker candidates failed to do this and simply repeated what they learnt in a particular format with only a thinly disguised attempt to match it to the question set.
- Weaker candidates did not have a real grasp of the subject area on the question set e.g. of the birth of Jesus Christ or his resurrection, of Moltmann's view of a suffering God, of Luther's justification by faith or Barth's understanding of baptism. With the prime source material so unclear or confused, it hindered any attempt to answer the question.
- When addressing AO1 questions candidates should omit long introductions saying what they are going to say without actually saying it. Time is far better spent by writing just a short introduction, if it is considered absolutely necessary, e.g. 'Luther's arguments for justification by faith began / arose / formulated....' Likewise, no conclusion, or a second re-write of the essay is required for AO1 and gains no credit unless something new is included.
- AO2 questions were typically longer and generally gained a higher mark or band by most candidates. Again, however, in terms of maximising potential there is no need of an introductory paragraph and still less when it acts as the conclusion detailing the stance the candidate will take. Too frequently this led to a one-sided answer. The higher band answers were those that were analytical and evaluative throughout the answer. They provided a conclusion (preferably one that comes to a final decision), possibly with a clarifying point to reinforce that decision.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2019**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**1B. An Introduction to the Study of Islam**

**General Comments**

The paper proved accessible and provided opportunity for candidates to illustrate their strengths in particular areas of the Specification selected.

In Section A the most popular answer was Q.2 on Ramadan (89.1% attempt rate). In Section B, the most popular question was Q.5 (63.2% attempt rate), followed by Q.3 (27.0% attempt rate)

The standard of answers displayed the full range, although it was pleasing to see that marks awarded were towards the positive end of the Bands. What was again noticeable for the third year running was the quality of part (b) (AO2) evaluation answers and the fine balance of marks between the AO1 and AO2 assessment objectives overall.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Section A**

**Q.1 (a) Explain how different practices during Ashura express Shi'a identity. [AO1 15]**

This question had very few responses (attempt rate 13.2%). This question has a facility factor of 51.0, but the mean for this question was the lowest of all the part (a) questions on the paper.

Those candidates that did attempt this demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of Ashura; however, some failed to make a clear link explaining how this is representative of Shi'a identity and how these practices were distinct and set apart from other expressions of Islam.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- a clear focus on how each practice reflected Shi'a identity.
- a range of practices such as the street procession in Karbala, images of Husayn, the ta'ziya, self-flagellation and pilgrimage.
- the understanding that Ashura activities highlighting persecution and suffering remind Shi'a of the focus on liberation in the future, forgiveness and salvation.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- mainly focused of self-mutilation.
- did not explore the significant themes underlying the Ashura activities.
- very little knowledge of the historical significance and background to Ashura.

- (b) **‘A focus on suffering during Ashura misrepresents Shi’a identity.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

The facility factor of 45.2 and the mean of 6.8 (the lowest for any part (a) question) both suggest that some candidates found this question challenging.

Candidates commented that the idea the practices appear barbaric to others and self-flagellation was discussed by many in detail. More substantial debates incorporated a contrast with Sunni practices and considered the underlying purpose of the message of forgiveness and future unity.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- considered different lines of argument beyond the focus of self-flagellation.
- reached a balanced conclusion considering the significance of self-flagellation and appreciated the over-emphasis this is given from outside Shi’a.
- were able to recognise the underlying purpose of the message of forgiveness and future unity.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- little supporting evidence by way of example.
- pure focus of self-flagellation.
- a vague and general comparison with Sunni practices.

- Q.2 (a) Explain different benefits that Ramadan may bring for a Muslim.** [AO1 15]

This was by far the most popular question (an 89.1% attempt rate). A facility factor of 57.2 and the second highest mean mark for part (a) questions on the paper suggest this question was accessible to candidates.

In general, most candidates were able to give some response to the question and all candidates understood practices associated with Ramadan. However, some candidates gave an account of the practices of Ramadan without discussing the different benefits; alternatively, some included a short statement as an afterthought.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- tended to use a thematic approach and identified different strands of benefits such as the social, spiritual and moral.
- were aware of the ability of the month of Ramadan to unite Muslims both locally and worldwide.
- included reference to physical benefits.

- Explained the benefit of following the practice of Muhammad and remembering the ‘night of power’.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to simply describe how Ramadan was practised.
- listed some benefits as an after-thought.
- lacked detail and variety.

- (b) ‘Id-ul-Fitr is the most important part of Ramadan.’  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

The facility factor of 56.3 and mean of 8.4 both suggest this question was accessible to candidates.

This was well answered by many candidates with some strong arguments focusing on the spiritual elements of Ramadan which are of importance to Muslims. A popular argument was to consider the stereotypical idea that Id could be seen as a party rather than as a spiritual process but were effective in pointing out the importance of both spiritual and social benefits. The notion of community cohesion and a time for the Ummah to contemplate their faith was also considered.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were able to express and argue the correlative relationship between Ramadan and Id-ul-Fitr.
- balanced arguments that saw beyond stereotypical notions of ‘party time’!
- appreciated the injustice of the question when both practices during and at the end of Ramadan are significant in their own way

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to see Id-ul-Fitr as mainly an opportunity to celebrate finishing rather than appreciating its true implication.
- lack of detailed argument.
- a repeating of the same argument about Ummah and celebration.

**Section B**

- Q.3 (a) Examine the nature and purpose of prayer within Islam. [AO1 15]**

This was the second most popular question in Section B. It was also the question with the highest mean score (9.8) of any of the part (a) questions on the paper. The facility factor of 65.1 also suggest this was an accessible question to candidates.

Most responses were answered well, although there were many candidates who offered a generic explanation of prayer focusing on the set daily prayers. References to the nature of prayer were good on the whole, with an awareness of the different types of prayer within Islam in more comprehensive answers. Some candidates also included detailed explanations of wudu and related it to the purpose of prayer. Purpose focused on connecting with Allah, different kinds of prayer timings.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- variety in terms of the nature of different types of prayers.
- good explanations of how some prayers are distinctive in purpose.
- excellent use of technical vocabulary in relation to prayer.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to just focus on the five daily prayers.
- lack of detail about purpose and tended to be more descriptive.
- lack of technical vocabulary.

**(b) 'Prayer for Muslims is more than an act of piety.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

This was the question with the highest mean score (8.5) of any of the part (b) questions on the paper. The facility factor of 56.6 also suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

There was some excellent debate about the importance of intent in prayer set against the importance of following a set pattern and the example of Muhammad. Candidates elaborated each case effectively with some balanced evaluations

***Features of stronger responses:***

- appreciation of the crucial teaching about intent in Islam.
- considered the pros and cons of the term 'piety'.
- distinguished between public and personal prayers in relation to piety.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- a basic 'for' and 'against' following a set pattern.
- did not explore the term 'piety'.
- were not always aware of the importance of intent.

**Q.4 (a) Explain the role of a rasul (messenger) in Islam.**

**[AO1 15]**

There were very few responses to this question (an attempt rate of 12.1%), the mean for this question (7.0) was the fourth best on the paper for part (a) questions, which suggest that some of those who attempted this question found it challenging. Those who answered were aware of Muhammad's role and some tended to focus solely on this. Other answers explored the term in relation to the other four key rasul (messengers).

***Features of stronger responses:***

- technically accurate in relation to purpose of specific rasul.
- good explanation of the distinctive role of Muhammad.
- aware of the nature and purpose of the first four messages and how these are considered as becoming distorted.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- just focused on Muhammad and his message.
- side-tracked into the purpose of the Qur'an.
- no awareness of the holistic picture of a rasul within history.

**(b) 'The concept of 'messenger' has not been successful in Islam.' [AO2 15]**

There were very few responses to this question (an attempt rate of 12.1%), the mean for this question (7.6) was the fourth best on the paper for part (b) questions, which suggest that some of those who attempted this question found it challenging.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- awareness of past failures and inconsistencies.
- related the distortions to human error.
- could appreciate each point of view about 'success' as incoherent to the other and yet defend consistency of each.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to be one-sided.
- just focused on Muhammad.
- limited examples used.

**Q.5 (a) Explain how the use and treatment of the Qur'an by Muslims reflects its status as a source of authority in Islam. [AO1 15]**

This was a very popular question (an attempt rate of 63.2%). A facility factor of 56.8 suggests the question was accessible to candidates and the mean (8.5) was the third highest of the part (a) questions on the paper.

Most candidates could give detailed accounts of how the Qur'an is treated and used and it was pleasing to see that very few candidates missed the demands of the question completely.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were able to merge description with explanation of the significance using a range of examples from Islamic practice.
- the implications of use and treatment for status were unpacked effectively by way of specific examples given on such as legal and moral guidance, points of reference for religious matters, and the significance of the Qur'an as the word of Allah.
- remained focused on the question.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to be mainly descriptive about ways in which the Qur'an was used and treated without explaining the significance of the actions.

- Assertions were made about the status of the Qur'an in isolation e.g. exploring how it was revealed and why it is absolute and authoritative per se.
- got side-tracked into an explanation of the Qur'an.

**(b) 'The Qur'an's authority has real relevance in a Muslim's daily life.'**  
**Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

This was a very popular question (an attempt rate of 63.2%). A facility factor of 56.9 suggests the question was accessible to candidates and the mean (8.5) was the highest of the part (b) questions on the paper.

There were a full range of responses to this question. The open-ended nature of the question meant that there were a variety of approaches that could be taken and there were. The most popular argument was regarding the timeless nature of the Qur'an and the daily guidance it offers for Muslims and humanity.

***Features of stronger answers:***

- brought in modern-day examples that were not featured in the Qur'an.
- appreciated the role of guidance from Hadith and Sunna.
- balanced arguments about the extent of the Qur'an's authority and the role of human understanding in applying understanding of the principles within the Qur'an.

***Features of weaker answers:***

- tended to be very absolute about whether it does or does not have relevance.
- did not draw upon the many examples from Muslim daily life.
- tended to treat the debate as whether the Qur'an has authority or not.

**Summary of key points**

- Some excellent knowledge and understanding were evident in AO1 responses.
- AO2 responses were of a good quality throughout, on average scoring almost as highly as the AO1 responses.
- The best answers were those that were able to demonstrate their knowledge and showcase their evaluation skills, whilst at the same time having the ability to remain focused on the specific nature of the question, both in AO1 and AO2 questions.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2019**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**1C. An Introduction to the Study of Judaism**

**General Comments**

The standard of many responses showed that candidates had been well prepared with accurate and extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms. The paper appeared accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the range of bands. Most candidates were able to refer to the diversity of Jewish traditions where required and there was some use of specialist terminology, although terms were not always correctly spelt.

Candidates need to focus on the question set and answer the demands of particular questions. Some candidates failed to do this and did not read the question carefully, especially in part (b) and therefore did not address the issues raised by that question. It is important candidates engage in an evaluative response (AO2) in part (b) responses rather than simply stating knowledge of a topic (AO1). The vast majority of candidates attempted both parts of each question, although on occasion responses were too brief to access the full range of marks.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Section A**

**Q.1 (a) Explain the diversity of views within Judaism with regards to mitzvot (commandments) [AO1 15]**

This was significantly the most popular choice for Section A of this paper (90.4% attempt rate) and the large number of candidates responded to this question with varying degrees of detail. The facility factor of 61.3% suggests the question was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- explained the diversity of views within Judaism with regards to the mitzvot from the points of view of Orthodox, Reform and Hasidic Jews.
- made reference to the mitzvot generally but supported their answers with reference to the keeping of kashrut and expectations about a kosher home.
- used examples from issues over the celebration of Shabbat and how different traditions of Judaism approach the celebration of Shabbat in a modern society.



***Features of weaker responses:***

- completely ignored the demand of the question and simply wrote all they knew about the mitzvot without any reference to the demands of the question.

**(b) 'The concept of mitzvot is divisive within Judaism.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

The facility factor of 43.0 and the mean of 6, both suggest that some candidates found this question challenging.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- there were a variety of responses, mainly with a focus on the difference of interpretation between Orthodox and Reform Jews.
- many candidates recognised the importance of tradition and even though the interpretation of the mitzvot may lead to differences in application, all Jews are unified in their devotion to God.
- there was a pleasing maturity in some of the responses with some sophisticated evaluation.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- failed to engage with the demands of an evaluation response.
- some candidates did not appear to understand the nature of an evaluative response and the expression of one, single point of view is not the basis of a good evaluation.

**Q.2 (a) Examine the Jewish teachings about tefillah (prayer) with reference to the Amidah.**

**[AO1 15]**

This question was not a popular choice and very few candidates attempted this question (12.0% attempt rate). However, the facility factor of 53.3 suggests that this question was accessible for those candidates who attempted it.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- responded with an overview of Jewish prayer leading to the special significance of the Amidah prayer.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- the focus of the question was to examine Jewish teachings about tefillah (prayer) and not simply to offer a description of how Jews pray. Many offered only a simple description of how Jews pray and candidates disadvantaged themselves by not responding to the demands of the actual question.
- a small amount of knowledge demonstrated about the Amidah prayer; a simple description was generally offered without explanation.

- (b) **‘Prayer has become a spiritually ineffective ritual.’**  
**Evaluate this view with reference to Judaism.** [AO2 15]

This question was not a popular choice and very few candidates attempted this question (12.0% attempt rate). However, the facility factor of 49.8 suggests that this question was accessible for those candidates who attempted it.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were able to identify the ritualistic nature of prayer and the general problem identified with this in terms of habitual prayer without genuine devotion.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- few candidates demonstrated a real understanding of the term ‘spiritually ineffective ritual’.
- did not get to grips with the particular demands of this question and generic answers about prayer were the norm.

**Section B**

- Q.3 (a) **Examine Jewish beliefs about the afterlife.** [AO1 15]

Candidates appeared to be well prepared for this question and it achieved the second highest mean score (8.6) of any part (a) question. The facility factor of 57.6 suggests that this question was accessible for those candidates who attempted it.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- demonstrated a whole range of views concerning Jewish beliefs about the afterlife, along with correct use of appropriate terminology.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- incorrectly stated there are no references to the afterlife in the Torah; there are references but very few.
- did not use terminology appropriate to the study of Judaism, and mixed up Christian terminology with Jewish terminology.

- (b) **‘Jewish beliefs about judgement and the afterlife are not relevant for Jews today.’** [AO2 15]

Both the facility factor of 51.1 and the mean of 7.7 suggest this question was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- considered a number of viewpoints about the relevance of Jewish beliefs about the afterlife, showing awareness and insight to the relevance of such beliefs in modern society, reaching out to include ideas on the influence of a more secular society and its impact on Jewish beliefs and practices.
- considered the views of different traditions within Judaism.
- focussed on the reason for living a good life and following the mitzvot as a way to the reward of an afterlife.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- reference was only made to one part of the demands of the question, either the afterlife or judgement.
- no reference made to the diversity in beliefs from different Jewish traditions.
- no reference to the importance of beliefs about an afterlife being relevant today.

**Q.4 (a) Examine the significance of the rituals of Rosh Hashanah. [AO1 15]**

Whilst this question was the least popular question in Section B (attempt rate 16.0%), it appeared to be accessible to those who attempted it with a facility factor of 53.0.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- unpacked the significance of a wide variety of rituals which take place during Rosh Hashanah with detailed explanation of their significance, e.g. the use of challot, pomegranates and apples dipped in honey, the blowing of a shofar and the wearing of white.
- a number of practices were considered.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- ignored the rubric to examine the significance of the rituals of Rosh Hashanah and offered a description of everything they knew about Rosh Hashanah. This failure to comply with the demands of the question meant candidates disadvantaged themselves.
- referred to Yom Kippur instead of Rosh Hashanah.

**(b) ‘The regular acknowledgement of sins and penitence is an admission of failure on spiritual development.’ [AO2 15]**

This question had the second lowest mean score (7.4) and facility factor (49.3) for any of the part (b) questions, which suggests some candidates found this question challenging.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- showed a very good understanding of the term spiritual development and the meaning of this term was unpacked in the answer.

- identified the difference between sins and penitence and how this may impact on spiritual development.
- demonstrated some positive aspects of acknowledging sin and how penitence may be a force for good in developing spiritually.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- did not understand the term ‘spiritual development’ and although there was some evaluation of the first part of the question, with a focus on the ‘regular acknowledgement of sins and penitence as an issue for Jews’, only a minority were able to connect this to a failure in spiritual development.

**Q.5 (a) Explain how the Torah is a source of wisdom and authority. [AO1 15]**

This was by far the most popular Section B question (with an attempt percentage of 49.6%). Both the mean (8.4) and the facility factor (51.7) suggest that this question was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were able to make the connection to Torah as a source of wisdom, e.g. the way in which God communicates with Jews through the content of the Torah and its unique place as a source of authority for all Jews.
- were able to give a clear exposition of the importance of the Torah for Jews, especially as a source of authority, e.g. the central place of the Torah within the religion of Judaism as a source of guidance on how Jews are to live.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- made no reference to wisdom at all in the response and did not appear to recognise the term.
- a simple description of the construction of the Torah, including a description of the Ten Commandments.

**(b) ‘The Torah has become a religion icon.’  
Evaluate this view with reference to Judaism. [AO2 15]**

This question had the highest mean score (7.8) of any part (b) question and with a facility factor of 51.7 this suggest the question was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were able to identify the difference between the Torah and the Sefer Torah and where this was done, responses were of a much higher quality.
- clearly identified the iconic status of the Sefer Torah for many Jews with detailed description of how the Sefer Torah is treated with respect in a synagogue.
- correctly identified the reference to the forbidding of idols in the Ten Commandments.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- did not understand the term 'icon' and ignored this element of the question.
- a description was offered of how the Sefer Torah is treated in a synagogue with no reference to the evaluation element required in this question.

**Summary of key points**

- for part (a) (AO1) questions there may be a temptation to write down information around the topic without selecting the important points for that particular question. It is not necessarily the length of a response that counts, but always the quality of the response in relation to the demands of the question.
- arguments presented in the (b) parts (AO2) of the questions need to be adequately supported by evidence and reasoning. Better answers consisted of short paragraphs clearly linked to the statement, backed up with one or more pieces of evidence and a short explanation of how they supported the argument. Responses must show evidence of evaluation.
- candidates have developed their understanding of a diversity of opinion, but centres could continue to develop this further, particularly different strands of opinion within different Jewish traditions.
- candidates must be encouraged to use key and specialist terms throughout responses.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### 1D. An Introduction to the Study of Buddhism

##### General Comments

There was a further improvement in the standard of AO2 responses. In some cases, AO2 skills were stronger than AO1 skills. Stronger focused AO2 evaluation included references to Buddhism. However, some answers continue to be formulaic. As has been pointed out in previous reports, this limits independent thinking skills in the more able.

References to scholars and/or sources of wisdom were limited, with some evidence of deliberately invented quotations and misquoted sources. Candidates are advised to discuss the relevance of the quotations in their answer. Candidates need to be supported and challenged to engage with a more extensive range of background reading material within the widest possible context (articles, books, documentaries, video clips, etc). Some answers revealed a lack of understanding of the difference between citing and translating. Candidates need to be carefully guided and supported in knowing what, when and how to cite. They should appreciate why they are using other people's words, work and ideas and how these ideas can support their answers.

There remains an issue with candidates stereotyping Theravada as 'strict' or 'old fashioned' and Mahayana as 'modern', 'liberal', 'lenient' and 'relaxed.' Candidates should also recognise that daily practice is a key feature of all schools of Buddhism, and not just Theravada. One of the key misunderstandings seen in responses this year was a lack of understanding of the difference between 'teachings' and 'practices.' This led to some candidates failing to understand the focus of questions. For example, some answers included erroneous ideas about the concept of a soul in Buddhism. Candidates may need more support in understanding the concepts of anatta and samsara.

Centres are reminded that candidates need to follow all instructions on the exam paper, too many candidates did not write question numbers in their booklets or wrote the wrong question number down. This has a significant administrative impact on the marking of an online paper.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

###### Section A

**Q.1 (a) Explain the practice and meaning of going for refuge for different Buddhists. [AO1 15]**

This was a very popular question (an attempt percentage of 71.4%) providing a range of responses, but the mean mark of 7.5 was only the third highest for a part (a) type question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- included explanation of both 'practices' and 'meaning.'
- Included information on how taking refuge in each of the three jewels is of benefit to individuals and Buddhist communities.
- provided detailed explanation of the practices of going for refuge, e.g. daily chanting, hand gestures, bowing, prostrating, kneeling.
- explained the meaning of going for refuge for the lay and monastic sangha.
- successfully explained the meaning of the practice of going for refuge within different schools of Buddhism including within the Theravada and Mahayana traditions.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- mistakenly responded to this as 'the three jewels', rather than explaining the notion of 'going for refuge'.
- listed facts about the three refuges, rather than explaining the practices and their meaning, e.g. referring only to the act of chanting or hand gestures.
- were not able to explain all three refuges or identified them incorrectly e.g. confusing 'dharma' with 'dukkha'.
- thought 'going for refuge' was just practiced by monks and nuns.

**(b) 'The Buddha is the most important of the three refuges.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

This was a very popular question providing a range of responses. This question was generally higher scoring than the (a) part question with a mean mark of 7.8.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- evaluated effectively whether the Buddha is the most important of the three refuges.
- evaluated each of the three refuges noting the relative importance of each
- perceptively evaluated the interrelated connection between each refuge and made a valiant attempt at showing they have equal importance.
- gave arguments and counter arguments for why Buddhists go for refuge, and the benefits of going for refuge within Buddhism.
- included reference to Buddhist teachings within different schools of Buddhism.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- were superficial, simply stating why one refuge is better than the other.
- evaluated the three jewels rather than going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.
- did not differentiate between the practices of different Buddhists to show diversity.
- did not use evidence, examples, refer to scholars or sources of wisdom.
- did not reach a conclusion.

**Q.2 (a) Examine the features of two different traditions of meditation in Buddhism. [AO1 15]**

This was the lowest scoring part (a) question in terms of its facility factor (38.3), and mean (5.7), which suggest some candidates found this to be a challenging question. Most candidates choose to examine samatha, vipassana or zazen meditation. Few referred to metta bhavana.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- thoroughly explained the features of two different traditions of meditation such as 'zazen' and 'vipassana'.
- were focused and gave relevant examples along with some relevant scholarly references.
- were able to link practices to beliefs, e.g. when the focus on the three lakshanas during vipassana meditation.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- misinterpreted the question or gave a general description of meditation rather than explaining specific Buddhist traditions.
- misunderstood the term 'tradition' in this instance (as used in the specification) and thus limited their performance.
- confused the features of 'samatha' and 'vipassana' meditation and/or struggled with discussing the features of zazen.
- interpreted the question correctly, but gave very superficial answers e.g. suggested the monastic sangha as having more 'time' than other Buddhists in their lives to indicate the only reason why vipassana meditation is practiced mainly by the Sangha of the Theravada tradition.

**(b) 'Meditation is the most valuable practice for Buddhists.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

This was the lowest scoring part (b) question in terms of its facility factor (43.8), and the joint lowest in terms of its mean (6.6), which suggest some candidates found this to be a challenging question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- identified the importance of meditation within Buddhist traditions, noting that it was the way by which the Buddha was Awakened.
- correctly evaluated the issue using appropriate examples to show how meditation is the most important practice by comparing it with other practices, such as 'dana' and the 'three refuges'.
- evaluated how it might be more valuable to practice following the rules of the Patimokkha as a practice (for the monastic sangha).
- perceptively showed the large part meditation plays in the Eightfold Path, thus showing its value or showed that the other parts of the Eightfold Path must be followed in conjunction with meditation, so one has no value without the other.



***Features of weaker responses:***

- missed the point of the question completely.
- answered the question by only referring to meditation and did not evaluate the importance of meditation as a practice compared to other Buddhist practices.
- were not aware of the difference between beliefs and practices and discussed the importance of beliefs instead.
- offered few lines of reasoning e.g. simply suggesting that ‘all Buddhists meditate.
- did not develop references to other things that hold value, such as being kind to others.
- missed opportunities to refer directly to Buddhism, e.g. to link to the Eightfold Path or to discuss the Buddha’s practice of meditation.

**Section B**

**Q.3 (a) Explain the concepts of pratyasamutpada and rebirth. [AO1 15]**

This question was the second most popular question in Section B (15.2% attempt percentage). The mean for this question was the highest (8.0) of all the part (a) questions and the facility factor was also the highest of all the questions on the paper suggesting it was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- included thorough, excellent explanations of both pratyasamutpada and rebirth.
- included references to the Tibetan wheel of life, not in a purely descriptive way, but linking it to the concepts of rebirth and pratyasamutpada (in particular the 12 nidanas).
- explained dependent origination or the chain of causation.
- explained rebirth through the wheel of samsara and made the connection to teachings on the three lakshanas, especially anatta.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- lacked knowledge and understanding of the either pratyasamutpada or rebirth, which led candidates simply writing everything they knew about the wheel of life, karma or samsara without linking effectively to the concepts in the question.
- focused on explaining rebirth and made no connection to or explanation of pratyasamutpada.
- lacked understanding of what pratyasamutpada is and when candidates attempted to describe ‘becoming’ the response was not directly aimed at the question.
- confused pratyasamutpada with karma or even the Patimokkha.
- only focussed on the wheel of life, with no real explanation of meanings behind things or linking back to the question.

- (b) **‘The concept of rebirth seems unrealistic in the modern world.’  
Evaluate this view with reference to Buddhism. [AO2 15]**

This was the joint lowest scoring in terms of its mean (6.6), with a facility factor of 44.2, which suggests some candidates found this to be a challenging question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- focussed on the question as set, included references to the idea that the modern world can have a belief in rebirth and that many people believe in the concept of karma.
- argued that society today is more secular and therefore any notion of life after death is outdated.
- referred to the atheistic nature of Buddhism as a line of reasoning.
- were able to link this to the concept of pratityasamutpada being continuous and connected to everything; or made synoptic links to dana and punya and rebirth; or to the Eightfold Path and how it encourages ethical behaviour in the modern world.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- did not 'evaluate this view with reference to Buddhism'.
- became a list of points 'for' and 'against' religion.
- argued that the concept of rebirth is seen as 'old fashioned' or 'outdated' rather than 'unrealistic'.
- did not use metaphors or examples from sources of wisdom.
- gave Christian responses to rebirth, without focusing on Buddhism, or comparing the similarities of rebirth into the realm of the gods with Christian heaven unsuccessfully.

- Q.4 (a) Explain the events leading to the Buddha’s Awakening/Enlightenment. [AO1 15]**

This was the most popular question answered in Section B. (a 71.3% attempt rate). The mean for this question was the second highest (87.9) of all the part (a) questions and the facility factor was also the second highest of all the questions on the paper suggesting it was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- gave detailed explanations of the events, for example, with reference to the four sights, what the Buddha discovered as a result of witnessing them and then how that affected his future views and actions.
- made effective references to the Buddha setting out to find answers to the meaning of life, his development of the three marks of existence and finding the middle way through the acetic practices and Four Sights being a turning point.
- included detail regarding the four watches of the night, drawing out the meaning of events within them and accurately explaining the significance of the Awakening/Enlightenment.

- made appropriate references to the Pali Canon and the words of the Buddha himself, or to scholars such as Cush, which added to the discussion in a meaningful way.
- made good use of specialist language.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- described rather than explained the events, which also became a basic re-telling of the events leading up to the Buddha's enlightenment and of the enlightenment itself.
- lacked explanations about the significance of each event.
- very few sources of wisdom were referenced and discussed in relation to the question.
- demonstrated a lack of specialist vocabulary.
- lacked relevant examples to support the response.

- (b) **'The Awakening/Enlightenment of the Buddha is the most significant feature of Buddhism.'** Evaluate this view. [AO2 15].

The mean for this question was the second highest (7.3) of all the part (b) questions and the facility factor (48.8) was also the second highest of all the part (b) questions on the paper suggesting it was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- gave valid reasons for the Awakening/Enlightenment being the most significant feature of Buddhism, stating that the entire religion depended on it.
- made links to the existence of Buddhism in the world today to illustrate the significance of the Buddha's Enlightenment.
- noted that Buddhists ascribe differing levels of importance to the Buddha which has implications for how they viewed the Awakening/Enlightenment.
- evaluated the impact of Enlightenment on Buddhism as a whole, explaining its significance to Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists well e.g. Enlightenment being the goal which Buddhists strive to reach; all events are important; other Buddhas are as important within the Mahayana tradition.
- discussed other features and gave valid reasons for them being more significant for example other features of the Buddha's life such as the Four Sights

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to be too descriptive (AO1) with very little evaluation.
- did not understand what the term 'significant feature' meant.
- did not refer to the Buddha's Enlightenment and did not connect it to subsequent teachings to show its significance.
- referred to the 'dharma' as the most important feature of Buddhism, but were unable to explain their reasoning effectively.
- only gave a few points 'for' or 'against' the statement.
- tried to discuss any other features of Buddhism that could be the 'most significant' but put forward weak arguments and conclusions.

**Q.5 (a) Explain how the dasa sila (ten precepts) are applied within the Buddhist community. [AO1 15]**

This was the least popular question in Section B (13.1% attempt rate), it also had one of the lowest mean scores (7.3), despite having a facility factor of 48.8.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- explained all ten precepts and showed that there is more than one interpretation of them.
- understood the reasons why these precepts are present within Buddhism, such as promoting positive karma or keeping order in the sangha.
- provided practical examples of both how the precepts were followed and the consequences of breaking each precept.
- evidenced the difference between the 'lay' and 'monastic' precepts.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- responded superficially and did not engage the word 'applied' within the question and simply listed some or all of the ten precepts without engaging with their meaning to Buddhists, and how they are applied within the Buddhist community.
- used only a few of the dasa sila as examples.
- focused too much on explaining the Patimokkha, rather than on the dasa sila specifically.

**(b) 'The sangha could not survive without rules.' Evaluate this view with reference to Buddhism. [AO2 15]**

This question was misunderstood by many candidates. This was the joint lowest scoring in terms of its mean (6.6), with a facility factor of 44.3, which suggests some candidates found this to be a challenging question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- showed good knowledge and understanding in commenting on the need for rules in order to regulate the Sangha. These answers were correctly linked to the Sangha's survival with candidates explaining the needs for rules due to the Buddha appointing no successor.
- referred to the importance of the sangha safeguarding the dharma which contributed to its survival.
- extended the discussion beyond the dasa sila and evaluated the importance of rules within both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- focused on the survival of Buddhism as a religion rather than the survival of the sangha.
- included simplistic statements outlining the 'pros' and 'cons' of having rules in general rather than the necessity of rules within the sangha.

- whether the community could survive without rules was rarely mentioned.
- used limited lines of reasoning and did not consider why rules might not be important for the survival of Buddhism.

### **Summary of key points**

- Stronger candidates read each question carefully and made sure they have addressed all aspects of the question.
- The best responses understood the command word at the start of each question and responded appropriately to it.
- The best responses were thorough, organised, logical and made good use of specialist vocabulary.
- Stronger responses make good use of the views of scholars and sources of wisdom to support their reasoning.
- Candidates could be encouraged to give a more meaningful insight to modern day Buddhism in Wales and the diversity of Buddhism in the wider world in their responses.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

#### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

### 1E. An Introduction to the Study of Hinduism

#### General Comments

It was pleasing to see that centres are becoming more and more familiar with the demands of the new specification. The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the range of bands.

There were some excellent responses which clearly showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate, extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms.

However, it is imperative that centres focus on the detail of the specification content. It also seems that some of the weaknesses found in the previous specification have been transferred to the new. Candidates need to focus on the question set and answer the demands of that question. Some failed to do this and answered on a related concept or teaching. Others did not read the question carefully enough especially in part (b) and therefore did not address the issues raised by that question. However, generally the evaluative questions were well structured.

On an administrative note, with the move to online marking it is crucial that candidates place their Question number and part attempted in the box provided on the front of the paper.

Some candidates were also for not putting the number of the question at the beginning of the answer and not using (a) and (b) within the answer. It was then very difficult in some cases to see where part (a) finished and part (b) began.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Section A

**Q.1 (a) 'Explain the concept of varna and different ways in which it affects the lives of Hindus.'** [AO1 15]

This was a very popular choice with the majority of candidates (83.5%) electing to answer this question over question 2. The facility factor (71.3) and the mean mark (10.1) suggests this question was accessible to candidates and reflected the fact that this topic is well taught in centres.

#### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- the question itself asked for two specific aspects: an explanation of the concept of varna and the different ways in which it affects the lives of Hindus. Strong responses focused clearly on these two elements providing thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of the concept.

- began with the meaning and origins of varna.
- cited the scriptural foundations of varna such as the Rig Vedic hymn of Purusha. Sukta, and then clearly outlined the varnadharma of the four castes.
- included reference to the Dalits.
- clearly demonstrated understanding that Dalits are outside of the varna system.
- used technical religious vocabulary.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to briefly mention the four varnas and to then focus predominantly upon the Dalits.
- lacked the clarity that the Dalits are outside of the varnas and hence missing the focus of the set question.
- there was some confusion as to the position and dharmas of each varna.

- (b) 'Varna is not relevant in today's world.'  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

The facility factor (67.0) and the mean mark (10.0) suggest this question was accessible to candidates. The main weakness in the responses to this question was that some candidates focused not on the relevance of varna, but whether or not it can be justified, which is of course a different question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- provided a variety of valid arguments relating to the question. These included the prominence of varna status and associated dharmas in rural areas over urban areas, its divine origins and its practical benefits to society.
- focused on the discriminatory nature of varna relating most dramatically to lower castes.
- demonstrated confident and critical analysis of the issue, with perceptive evaluation of the arguments presented.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- provided basic and limited argument and evaluation, with repetition of one or two ideas mainly that it is unfair.
- did not link the view above to the views of modern society.

- Q.2 (a) Explain the concept of ashrama and different ways in which it affects the lives of Hindus.**

**[AO1 15]**

The facility factor (55.6) and the mean mark (8.3) suggest this question was accessible to candidates. Although only 17.3% of candidates attempted this question.

This was a generally well answered question and reflected the quality of teaching on this topic in centres. Candidates had obviously been well prepared. This question itself, asked for two specific aspects: an explanation of the concept of ahimsa and different ways in which it affects the lives of Hindus.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- offered clear explanations of the four ashramas and their associated ashramadharmas.
- used extensive technical vocabulary with accuracy and confidence.
- explained the dharmas of student, householder, retired and renouncer, offering a variety of examples for each stage.
- had excellent depth and/or breadth.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- only a brief overview of the four ashramas without really explaining how they affected the lives of Hindus.

- (b) 'Hinduism is a religion of duty.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

Only 17.3% of candidates attempted this question. The facility factor (51.6) suggests this question was accessible to candidates, but it had the lowest mean score (7.7) of any of the part (b) questions.

There were some strong responses to this question, however many struggled with its focus on 'religion of duty'.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- referred to Sanatana Dharma and Varnashramadharmas to justify agreement with the given statement.
- alternative arguments presented included Hinduism as a religion of belief not duty.
- There was evidence of thoughtful and perceptive analysis of the issue.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- attempted to re-word the question into one they preferred, arguing that instead Hinduism is a religion of festivals or ahimsa for example.
- whilst such responses could be credited to a degree such responses lost the focus of the question set and as a result, they had limited relevancy.
- little evidence of evaluation was to be found in such responses.

**Section B**

- Q.3 (a) Explain the spiritual significance of Durga Puja.**

**[AO1 15]**

This was the second most popular choice question in Section B, but its mean mark of (7.6) was the lowest of any part (a) question and it was generally not well answered.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- focused on the question set and explained clearly the importance of worshipping the mother goddess, the concept of Shakti, and the value of festival celebrations.



- good use of technical vocabulary was evident in these responses.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- missed the focus on spiritual significance and simply described the celebrations of the festival and/or myths behind it.
- were limited in terms of content and relevancy. They were more of a GCSE type response than what is expected at AS level. It is imperative that candidates understand that at this level, simply describing a festival limits their level of achievement.

- (b) **'Durga is the most important deity in Hinduism.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

This evaluation was generally answered better than Q3 (a) scoring a higher mean mark of 9.6, which was the second highest mean mark for any of the part (b) questions. The facility factor of 64.1 also suggests this was an accessible question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were able to argue for the importance of Durga with reference to her origins and role, Shakti, what she provides to Hindus, and the variety of her presentations.
- showed a variety of alternative deities argued to be more important, such as members of the Trimurti, avatars of Vishnu as well as other goddesses.
- referenced the preferences of Shaivites or Vishnavites.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- were able to list many Hindu deities but could not give reasons for them being the most important deity in Hinduism.
- argued for the importance of various deities, but ignored the word 'most' and therefore lost the focus of the question.

- Q.4 (a) Explain the significance of belief in karma and reincarnation in achieving moksha.**

**[AO1 15]**

This was a very popular question, with the vast majority of candidates electing to answer this question from Section B (54.7%). Generally, it was well answered, the scoring the second highest mean mark (8.8) for any of the part (a) questions. The facility factor of 58.4 also suggests this was an accessible question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- discussed both significance of the concepts of karma and reincarnation in detail and clearly linked them with achieving moksha.
- demonstrated excellent depth and/or breadth and referenced sanchita, prarabdha and agami karma and included analogies to illustrate their arguments.

***A feature of weaker responses:***

- focused only on explaining karma and reincarnation without linking them in any way to attaining Moksha.
- (b) **‘The next life is far more important than the present life.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

Whilst this was a popular question (an attempt rate of 53.9%) and the facility factor of 53.6 suggests this was an accessible question, the mean mark of 8.0 was the fourth lowest of any of the part (b) questions on the paper.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- candidates argued persuasively that this life is more important than the next by utilising various arguments, e.g. in this life that opportunities exist to build good karma through varnashramadharm for example, funeral rites conducted properly will affect the next life, and moksha provides good motivation.
- other arguments for the next life being more important were considered, such as the fact that the two lives are fundamentally linked in a cyclical relationship and that everything done in this life is for the purpose of achieving moksha.

***A feature of weaker responses:***

- responses were able to present some valid arguments, but did not support them with any relevant evidence or reasoning.

- Q.5 (a) **Examine the role of the Ramayana and Mahabharata in Hindu daily life.**  
[AO1 15]

Whilst this was not a popular question (an attempt rate of 13.2%), the facility factor of 58.8 suggests this was an accessible question and the mean mark of 8.8 was the second highest of any of the part (a) questions on the paper.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- focused on both texts and made clear links with Hindu daily life.
- teachings and role models such as Rama, Krishna and Sita were clearly explained, with supporting references to or quotes from the texts themselves.

***A feature of weaker responses:***

- simply re-told the stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata and were therefore limited in their scope and relevancy to the question set.

- (b) **‘The Vedas are the most important Hindu texts.’**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 15]

Whilst this was not a popular question (an attempt rate of 13.2%), the facility factor of 57.5 suggests this was an accessible question and the mean mark of 8.6 was the second highest of any of the part (b) questions on the paper.

***Features of stronger answers:***

- were able to provide valid arguments for the Vedas being the most important Hindu text, offering reasons such as it being shruti literature and hence, timeless and divinely ordained.
- suggested a variety of other texts as being of greater importance, such as the Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagavad Gita.
- evidence of purposeful analysis and some evaluation in many answers e.g. whether it is possible to evaluate the importance of one sacred text against the other.

***Features of weaker answers:***

- failed to give supporting evidence or reasons for the arguments provided, e.g. there was no real support for the argument that the Mahabharata is more important than the Vedas.

**Summary of key points**

- Candidates need to focus on the question set and answer the demands of that question.
- In questions where two specific concepts or practices are asked for candidates need to try to give a balanced answer which focuses equally on both.
- Arguments presented in the (b) parts of the questions need to be adequately supported by evidence and reasoning.
- It is imperative that centres focus on the detail of the specification content.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2019**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**1F. An Introduction to the Study of Sikhism**

**General Comments**

It was pleasing to see that centres are becoming more and more familiar with the demands of the new specification. There were some excellent responses which clearly showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate, extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms. However, it is imperative that centres focus on the detail of the specification content.

The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the range of bands. It also seems that some of the weaknesses found in the previous specification have been transferred to the new. In the questions that ask for an explanation there is a tendency for some candidates to list information and the answers therefore become descriptive in nature. They need to understand the importance of demonstrating that they understand these facts, and explain why they are important. Candidates need to focus on the question set and answer the demands of that question. Some failed to do this and answered on a related concept or teaching. Others did not read the question carefully enough especially in part (b) and therefore did not address the issues raised by that question. However generally the evaluative AO2 questions were well structured. There were fewer simple and superficial comments of the kind 'I believe...', 'I think.', 'I agree/disagree'. Many of the candidates had also distanced themselves from the 'for' and 'against' discussion and showed evidence of explaining and developing the discussion as they worked through their answers.

On an administrative note, with the move to online marking it is crucial that candidates place their Question number and part attempted *in the box provided* on the front of the paper.

Some candidates were also for not putting the number of the question at the beginning of the answer and not using (a) and (b) within the answer. It was then very difficult in some cases to see where part (a) finished and part (b) began.

Spelling, punctuation, and expression generally ranged from satisfactory to very good. Candidates need to be praised for the general standard of writing and encouraged to remain aware of the importance of accuracy of language and expression.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### Section A

- Q.1 (a) Outline the different contributions of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh to the development of Sikhism. [AO1 15]**

This was a very popular choice with the majority of candidates (79.3%) electing to answer this question over question 2. The facility factor (69.7) and the mean mark (10.5) suggests this question was accessible to candidates and reflected the fact that this topic is well taught in centres.

Generally, it was well answered and reflected the fact that this topic is well taught and discussed in centres.

#### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- addressed the question directly with sound knowledge and understanding of the life and contribution of both Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.
- the events in their lives were strongly linked to how they developed aspects of Sikhism e.g. Guru Nanak's experience in God's court leading to his teaching on equality and Guru Gobind Singh and the formation of the Khalsa.
- gave specific and detailed examples to support the information presented.

#### ***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to be descriptive in nature – listing the events in Guru Nanak's life without any real examination of how they contributed to the development of Sikhism.
- were limited in scope and there was a lack of evidence and examples to support the information presented.

- (b) 'There would be no Sikh Khalsa without Guru Gobind Singh.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

Whilst this was a very popular choice (an attempt rate of 74.1%) and the facility factor of 50.5 suggests this question was accessible to candidates, some obviously found it challenging as it only achieved the fourth highest mean score (7.6).

#### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- responses were well developed focusing entirely on the issue raised by the question, were well supported, challenged and evaluated.
- showed very good knowledge and understanding of the unique contribution of Guru Gobind Singh to the formation of the Khalsa and this was used to create coherent and well supported arguments.
- were balanced in their evaluation and avoided the for and against way of answering which is not suitable for this question and could refer to how the Khalsa was formed due to the influence of various factors in Sikhism.
- referred to Guru Gobind Singh developing an idea which was put forward by previous Gurus.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- lacked analysis and evaluation of the issue. Arguments and views presented were not supported by evidence and examples.
- were imbalanced due to the 'for' v 'against' format used.

**Q.2 (a) Outline the different ways in which the Guru Granth Sahib is used in Sikh worship and daily life. [AO1 15]**

This was not a popular question in Section A (an attempt rate of 20.7%), the facility factor of 46.1 and the lowest mean for a part (a) question on the paper (6.9) suggests that some candidates found this question challenging.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- showed knowledge and understanding of the different ways the Guru Granth Sahib is used by Sikhs not only in worship but also as part of their daily lives e.g. read every day, receiving of hukam.
- referred to its use in the Gurdwara being central to Sikh worship and how it is used in all rites of passage. They also referred to the fact that no Sikh ceremony is complete unless it is performed in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib.
- were also able to explain the role of the Guru Granth Sahib in the daily life of Sikhs as a guide.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- were imbalanced and focused too much on worship without any real reference to daily life.
- tended to be descriptive in nature and there was little understanding of the importance of the role of the Guru Granth Sahib.

**(b) 'The Guru Granth Sahib is more relevant than any living human guru for Sikhs today.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

The facility factor of 34.90 and the lowest mean for a part (b) question on the paper (5.2) suggests that some candidates found this question challenging.

The responses to this question were generally disappointing and a number of candidates failed to understand the focus of the question – whether siting authority in the word of God rather than in fallible human beings is more relevant for Sikhs today. Unfortunately, some candidates compared the importance of the Guru Granth Sahib with the other historic Gurus of Sikhism and for example discussed whether it was more important than Guru Nanak or Guru Gobind Singh. This meant they were not addressing the question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- referred to human leaders following their own agenda and being influenced by a number of factors which are not religious such as the political and social context to justify agreement with the given statement.

- alternative arguments presented included a book written in the past cannot give relevant guidance on modern issues.
- there was evidence of thoughtful and perceptive analysis of the issue, e.g. the relationship between the content of the Guru Granth Sahib and the human gurus that preceded it.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- misinterpreted the question, little evaluation was to be found in such responses and there was a considerable lack of evidence to support the views given.

**Section B**

**Q.3 (a) Explain how practices in the gurdwara express Sikh identity. [AO1 15]**

This was the most popular choice question in Section B (an attempt rate of 39.7%). A facility factor of 52.8 and a mean mark of 7.9 suggest this question was relatively accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- focused on the question set and explained clearly how practices such as sitting on the floor and the langar express Sikh identity.
- There was effective and coherent use of specific examples and evidence.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- missed the focus on Sikh identity and simply described the practices of the gurdwara. As such, responses were limited in terms of content and relevancy. They were more of a GCSE type response than what is expected at AS level. It is imperative that candidates understand that by simply describing the Gurdwara they limit their level of achievement.

**(b) ‘The gurdwara has more of a social role than a religious one.’ Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

A facility factor of 49.7 and a mean mark of 7.5 suggest this question was relatively accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were well developed focusing entirely on the issue raised by the question, were well supported, challenged and evaluated. They referred to the social aspects of the gurdwara and its importance to the Sikh community especially in places such as Britain.
- were also able to show the religious significance and importance of the gurdwara in terms of worship, sewa and langar.
- were able to evaluate how the social and religious are often inter-related and that social aspects can be an expression of religious aspects.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- lacked challenge and evaluation of the issue and contained a number of repetitions of the same point mainly listing how the gurdwara is used by the Sikh community.
- tended to be no more than a list of points for and against without any real development of the arguments.
- no consideration of the relationship between the religious and social aspects.

**Q.4 (a) Examine the Sikh concepts of rebirth and mukti. [AO1 15]**

A facility factor of 58.2 and a mean mark of 8.7 (the second highest mean mark in a part (a) question on the paper) suggests this question was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- showed knowledge and understanding of both of these concepts in detail and clearly linked them together.
- demonstrated excellent depth and/or breadth and referenced the teaching of Guru Arjan and the Guru Granth Sahib.
- referred to what makes a Sikh Gurmukh and Manmukh.

***A feature of weaker responses:***

- were imbalanced and focused only on one of the concepts in detail.

**(b) 'The most important teaching for Sikhs today is the teaching on mukti.' [AO2 15]**

A facility factor of 60.0 and a mean mark of 9.0 (the third highest mean mark in a part (b) question on the paper) suggests this question was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were able to refer confidently and accurately to the different aspects of the Sikh teaching on mukti. They were able to show clearly the importance of the teaching on mukti e.g. it is the final goal of life for Sikhs and the reason why Sikhs work hard at developing positive human qualities.
- referred to other important Sikh teachings e.g. the teaching on God and equality. The responses contained thoughtful argument and a clear conclusion.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- were able to present some valid arguments but did not support them with any relevant evidence or reasoning.
- listed a number of other teachings within Sikhism as being more important without any attempt to explain why.



**Q.5 (a) Examine the Sikh concept of Dharam Yudh (just war). [AO1 15]**

This was the least popular question in Section B with an attempt percentage of 19.0%. Despite its lack of popularity, it has the highest mean (9.0 marks) score of any part (a) question on the paper and a facility factor of 60.0. Both of which suggest the question was accessible to those candidates who attempted it.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- showed thorough knowledge and understanding of the concept. They gave the literal meaning of the words Dharam Yudh and of the background to the concept.
- contained an understanding of the influence of the concept on Sikh lifestyle and the relationship between it and other beliefs and concepts in Sikhism such as Sant Sipahi.

***A feature of weaker responses:***

- answers showed very limited knowledge of the topic and digressed into wider areas such as the founding of the khalsa and the wearing of the 5ks.

**(b) 'War can never be justified in religious terms.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 15]**

This question has the second highest mean (9.2 marks) score of any part (b) question on the paper and a facility factor of 61.1. Both of which suggest the question was accessible to those candidates who attempted it.

***Features of stronger answers:***

- presented strong arguments to support the view that Sikhism does not have a tradition of absolute pacifism.
- evaluated the concept in the context of its development in a time of persecution and aggression.
- were also able to contrast this with the gentle qualities developed through Sikh values and practices such as equality, sewa and langar.
- contained thoughtful arguments and a clear conclusion.

***Features of weaker answers:***

- were very superficial in terms of knowledge and understanding of the topic and as such the evaluation was very basic and the arguments presented very weak and lacking evidence in support.

### **Summary of key points**

- Candidates need to focus on the question set and answer the demands of that question.
- Candidates at this level need to do more than simply 'describe' to attain the higher bands in AO1 questions.
- Arguments presented in the AO2 questions need to be adequately supported by evidence and reasoning.
- It is imperative that centres focus on the detail of the specification content.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### UNIT 2: SECTION A - AN INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION AND ETHICS

##### General Comments

Both questions on the paper this year elicited some very strong responses from candidates, although Question 1 was by far the most popular question. Most candidates appeared to balance their time well between the AO1 and AO2 parts of the question and the quality of AO2 responses appeared to have risen again, with candidates making good use of evaluative language to demonstrate their lines of argument.

In both English and Welsh language responses candidates made very effective use of key ethical language. A feature of weaker answers was a lack of this technical vocabulary along with the use of terms such as 'okay' and 'rubbish' rather than more formal academic language. A significant number of candidates wasted time by writing out the exam questions, which should be discouraged.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Section A

##### Q.1 (a) Examine the primary and secondary precepts in Aquinas' Natural Law. [AO1 15]

This was by far the most popular question in Section A, with 77.9% of candidates attempting this question. Its mean mark of 14.3 and facility factor of 47.5 appear to show that this question was fairly accessible to candidates.

Candidates had clearly been well prepared for this question and most were able to write accurate responses

##### *Features of stronger responses:*

- either explaining the primary and secondary precepts of Natural Law in detail making use of examples to illustrate both, possibly with reference to the principle of double effect,
- or setting the precepts in context by explaining Natural Law theory in broader terms, linking the other aspects of the theory, such as internal/external acts and real/apparent goods clearly to the precepts. Both approaches were seen as worthy of credit.
- wrote clear, concise introductions demonstrating good understanding of Natural Law as a whole and showing how the precepts were derived.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- introductions were often overly long and irrelevant. In this type of response, the other aspects of Natural Law theory were not linked to the precepts and candidates often struggled to move beyond a list of primary and secondary precepts, sometimes confusing the precepts with other aspects such as the virtues or types of law.
- mixed up ethics with philosophy and tried to explain the Cosmological argument.

**(b) 'Natural Law has more strengths than weaknesses.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

This question's mean mark of 13.9 and facility factor of 46.4 appear to show that this question was fairly accessible to candidates.

A range of good arguments were raised in answer to this question, demonstrating sound understanding of the main strengths and weaknesses of Natural Law.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- demonstrated sound understanding of the main strengths and weaknesses of Natural Law including the lack of flexibility on one side, and the universal nature of the theory on the other.
- were able to illustrate these points with effective examples from both the New Testament and medical ethics in particular.
- contrasted the Natural Law approach with that of other ethical theories.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- often saw Natural Law as equivalent to Divine Command Theory, failing to recognise the role of reason.
- had erroneous views about the application of Natural Law, stating that, for example, it bans war, self-defence and all abortion, or that it sees adultery, rape and surrogacy as positive ways to reproduce.

**Q.2 (a) Explain Ethical Egoism.**

**[AO1 15]**

This was by far the least popular question in Section A, with 20.4% of candidates attempting this question. Its mean mark of 10.1 and facility factor of 33.8 appear to show that this question was challenging for some candidates.

However, some excellent responses were seen. There was a distinct difference seen between responses where the candidate had clearly made an active choice to answer this question and was well-prepared, and responses where the candidate had very little knowledge of the topic at all.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- tended to cover the general background of Ethical Egoism before moving on to look at the work of Stirner in more detail.
- made good reference to the work of Ayn Rand.

- contrasted the theory with altruism and could make clear comparisons between ethical and psychological egoism.
- good examples were used to illustrate how Ethical Egoism could work in practice. Could also explain aspects of Stirner's thought in detail, including the concepts of 'ownness', 'spooks' and 'union of egoists.'

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to be critical of ethical egoism and were usually confused with psychological egoism.
- seemed to see Stirner's 'union of egoists' as some form of trade union and others believed that he advocated a totalitarian state.

**(b) 'Following Ethical Egoism inevitably leads to moral evil.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 15]**

This question's mean mark of 11.5 and facility factor of 38.2 appear to show that this question was challenging for some candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- some good examples of how other ethical theories were equally likely to lead to moral evil.
- correctly identified Ethical Egoism as being at odds with more altruistic approaches
- were usually then able to argue for the benefits of Ethical Egoism, including the way in which it fits with human nature and its long term approach which would benefit communities.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- often linked ethical egoism to a range of different movements including terrorists and the Nazis without any effective justification.
- stated points from the specification against the theory without really being able to unpack or illustrate these, such as that Ethical Egoism encourages bigotry.
- failed to address the question and did not consider moral evil at all.
- mixed up ethics with philosophy and wrote answers comparing moral and natural evil, trying to link Ethical Egoism to the theodicies.

**Summary of key points**

- Better responses maintained a focus on the question throughout the essay – lengthy irrelevant introductions should be avoided.
- Good understanding of technical vocabulary is key to a strong answer.
- Candidates should aim to understand how the different aspects of each theory studied relate to one another.
- Centres could focus on supporting candidates to develop a range of sensible, realistic examples and applications of each theory.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2019**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**

**UNIT 2: SECTION B - AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**

**General Comments**

Candidates are making considerable use of the resources available to support the specification and this is enhancing their understanding and their responses.

There is clear evidence of some excellent teaching which is enthusing candidates to respond as they have done. Candidates have generally been prepared well to meet the demands of the paper.

However, there is evidence that some candidates are not always familiar with the meaning of a particular word from the specification in the question. This then prevents them from relating the information they have learnt to the particular demands of the question set. It is important that all candidates are aware of the required vocabulary.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Section B**

**Q.3 (a) Explain how Irenaean type theodicies provide a response to the problem of evil. [A01 30]**

This was the most popular question in Section B, with 58.8% of candidates attempting this question. Its mean mark of 11.9 and facility factor of 39.6 appear to show that some candidates found this question challenging.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- really used Irenaean type theodicies in relation to the actual question and were able to suggest how such theodicies may deal with different types of evil, such as moral, natural and animal suffering.
- suggested that such theodicies provide a response to the problem of evil due to the fact that the world was made imperfectly. This showed good awareness of the starting point of Irenaean type theodicies.
- made it clear that such theodicies retain the characteristics of the God of Classical Theism. That God has the power to create a perfect world, but chose not to, is an important point to grasp.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- demonstrated some confusion with Augustinian type theodicies.
- often completely missed the idea that for Irenaean type theodicies it is vital that humans have free will and that the blame ultimately rests upon them.

- made the suggestion that as God made the world imperfectly, then God was completely to blame for the existence of evil.
- the implications of salvation for all was omitted, that is that it justifies temporary suffering.
- used terms such as 'epistemic distance' with no understanding or explanation which is of little use.

**(b) 'Irenaean type theodicies are still credible in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.'**  
**Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

56.1% of candidates attempted this question. Its mean mark of 13.2 and facility factor of 44.2 appear to show that generally candidates performed better in Q3(b) than they did on Q3(a).

Most responses made an attempt to give more than one point of view. The skill of being able to adapt revised material to certain question types is key to such questions.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- used evaluative information to meet the *particular* demands of the question. That is, they did look at points about these theodicies that enabled them to discuss whether such theodicies are still believable today.
- referred to the theodicies being able to be related to Evolution, with development occurring.
- there was a debate surrounding the reliance on the text of Genesis and its interpretation.
- others made the point that heaven for all does not fit into the sense of justice in today's society.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- simply gave a string of 'strengths and weaknesses' of these theodicies. Whilst this is the body of information to be drawn upon, the question set involved the candidates being able to sift through in order to use relevant material. Many examiners noted 'but the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?'
- there was some confusion with Augustinian type theodicies.

**4. (a) Examine William James' four characteristics of mystical experience. [AO1 30]**

35.4% of candidates attempted this question. Its mean mark of 9.5 and facility factor of 31.8 appear to show that this question was challenging for some candidates.

Most responses were able to identify of at least three of his four characteristics.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- gave an explanation of mystical experience making reference to the fact that there are many categorisations.

- were able to identify all four characteristics and also provide appropriate exemplification of them. This developed the characteristics and made them considerably more dynamic.
- made use of work studied on St Teresa of Avila for example.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- the explanations given were very brief, indeed some, especially transiency (even in otherwise good answers) were often incorrectly explained as being something that did not have a very long effect.
- very many candidates marred a rather good answer by confusing transiency with transcendency. These answers lacked cross-referencing to other work or examples and lasted for only a sentence or two.
- by far the biggest error which cost candidates dearly, is that answers often referred to four types of religious experiences and wrote solely about visions and conversions.

**(b) 'James' four characteristics adequately define mystical experience.'**  
**Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

32.3% of candidates attempted this question. Its mean mark of 9.2 and facility factor of 30.8 appear to show that this question was challenging for some candidates.

Most responses made an attempt to give more than one point of view.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- an ability to give different viewpoints.
- were able to suggest that the four characteristics are inadequate as not all mystical experiences are ineffable. This was accompanied by an example.
- another line of reasoning was that some experiences do take rather longer than that which transiency suggests. Indeed, some mystical experiences may be considered as being 'active' in the sense that the experient had yearned for the experience making them more than passive observers.
- a minority were able to suggest that his four characteristics do not adequately deal with the unity or oneness that may be felt as a result of mystical experience.
- some made use of material from the work of Rudolf Otto in order to evaluate 'adequacy'.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- struggled with the concept of 'adequate'. With this inability came some very weak answers which really got no further than making some very bland points about James' characteristics.
- answered the question without any idea of what the characteristics are.
- attempted to change the question to be about the "validity of mystical experiences" and referred to Freud and Franks-Davis, but to no avail.



### **Summary of key points**

- Candidates need to be familiar with trigger words.
- Candidates need to realise the material studied needs to be adapted in order to be relevant for evaluation (AO2) questions.
- A balanced learning of the entire specification will allow candidates to access a wider variety of questions.
- Use a variety of textbooks and other resources.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2019**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**3A: A STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY**

**General Comments**

The examination paper did not raise any concerns and so fulfilled its aim of setting appropriate questions in a fair and accessible manner. The full range of marks were employed to the answers provided. The following report will more naturally focus on obvious areas of improvement and does not negate the excellent attempts shown by many candidates.

With a move to online marking it is crucial that:

- candidates place their question number in the margin of the paper.
- if they add something later on in the answer paper to an earlier question a clear repetition of the question number in the margin will ensure its attachment is clearly linked to the rest of their answer.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Section A**

**Q.1 Examine Christian attitudes towards wealth. [AO1 30]**

This was the most popular Section A question with an attempt rate of 86.7%. The facility factor of 46.1 suggests it was a relatively accessible question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- wrote in a clear AO1 style.
- adopted a whole range of approaches were appropriately adopted included respect of ownership as in eighth commandment, the role of TV evangelists, Parable of Dives and Lazarus, Parable of the Talents (Wesley's Make, Save, Give), we all need money, God never said do not have money, Jesus purging the Temple, etc.
- some also referred to the idea that wealth is not just financial, but can be a wealth of happiness, beauty, love which can be just if not more valuable than wealth of money.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- Section A, as the exam paper clearly states are questions that test your knowledge and understanding of religion and belief (AO1). Weaker responses were too frequently written as this section demanded an AO2 answer. This was particularly illustrated in the frequency of superfluous conclusions.

- made up or misattributed biblical quotations, i.e. Jesus did not say ‘money is the root of all evil’ but St. Paul wrote it.
- made a list of certain people and/or ideas stated, but not provided any depth of understanding, e.g.:
  - mention of the Rich Young Man without any reference to the fact that he went away sad as Jesus told him to give everything away;
  - the Good Samaritan mentioned, but missing the essential part that he gave his own money to the innkeeper in order to look after the Jew and promised more if necessary;
  - Zacchaeus being told by Jesus to give half his fortune away is wrong, he volunteered to give half his money to the poor plus repayment of any money wrongly taken;
  - asceticism with no examination of what the word means.

**Q.2 Examine the beliefs and practices of the Charismatic Movement. [AO1 30]**

The attempt rate for this question was 13.3%. The low mean score (8.7) and facility factor of 29.0, suggest that those who did attempt this question found it challenging.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- none were in evidence.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- where answered there was again the problem of writing as if this were an AO2 question this rendering much, if not all, of the response as irrelevant.
- some gave historical accounts of the Charismatic Movement with occasional, if any, reference to beliefs and practices.
- demographics concerning where the Charismatic Movement is seen at its strongest in the world were also employed without reference to beliefs or practices.

**Section B**

**Q.3 ‘The kerygmata are of no value for Christians today.’  
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was the third most popular question in this section of the paper. The fact that it had the second highest mean for any question in this section along with a facility factor of 46.8 suggest it was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- adopted a more mature evaluative style rather than just arguing ‘for’ and ‘against’, followed by conclusion.
- included an analysis of common themes to be found across denominations today, such as the creeds, the Canon of scripture, questions of the kerygmata being outdated or even false.
- referred to Calvin’s assimilation theory against Bultmann’s idea of demythology.
- used arguments like “the early church needed the kerygmata as aspects of faith, but these are not needed today (such as miracles)”.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- they attempted to answer a different question to that set, preferring historical accuracy.
- wrote conclusions that essentially re-wrote the answer rather than a summary with a possible final concluding statement.
- attempted to widen the question from the kerygmata to the whole of the Bible.
- gave one sided style answers agreeing with the statement with little, if no challenge to it.

**Q.4 'A committed Christian must be a religious pluralist.'  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the second most popular question in this section of the paper. It had the third highest mean for any question in this section (13.0). Its facility factor of 43.3 suggests it was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- intertwined exclusivism with inclusivism and pluralism in an effective evaluation of the question.
- various Biblical passages employed to great effect e.g. Old Testament passages but with recognition that they could have changed in the New Testament and yet Jesus said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through me'.
- provided a conclusion that addressed the question and formulated an answer.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some made the claim that Jesus was 'reincarnated'.
- referred to parts of the Old Testament, particularly with 'exclusivism' as if they were Christian *per se* rather than any appreciation that they could indeed be used alongside a question of whether they were still valid to Christianity, or whether the Christian faith ensured / required a new dispensation.
- could not quote fully or accurately often misquoting what Jesus actually said, which was "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except by me."
- provided Biblical references without an indication of their meaning or the quotation.

**Q.5 'In Christianity, men and women are equal.'  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This proved to be the most popular Section B question with an attempt rate of 86.7%. The fact that it had the highest mean for any question in this section along with a facility factor of 51.3 suggest it was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- evaluated the statement rather than delivered an AO1 style answer on what everybody has to say about feminism.
- used scholars to great effect e.g. Daley, Ruether, McFague and analysed and evaluated their views.

- a variety of individual thinking of the subject was displayed e.g. comparison of female Christians (even non-faith women living in a Christian land) whose lives are liberated and protected illustrating an equality with men not found in e.g. Islam, Hinduism.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some answered this question as if it was an AO1 question.
- others essentially presented a one-sided answer of 'no' to the question set.
- some concerning elements of what might be called 'tabloid theology' or 'fake news':
  - St. Paul's writing was that women be quiet in church not in life as too frequently claimed.
  - that women clergy in the Church in Wales or Church of England get paid less than men.
  - female or male clergy do not have maternity/paternity leave (they may not in the past along with every other woman and man, but this claim was written as if it was today)
  - senior leadership roles not open to women due to 'lack of experience' is a dated argument with 2/6 bishops in Church in Wales being women.
  - the Church of England has a positive discrimination policy to appoint women bishops.
  - furthermore, the positive discrimination extends to the appointments made into the House of Lords. Previously such appointments were based on longevity of service as a diocesan bishop i.e. the longest serving, it will now be all appointed diocesan female bishops immediately enter the House of Lords until they equate 50% of the Lords Spiritual.
- if any of the above was placed in accurate historical circumstances and then the transfer to present day reality shown then candidates could have been offering an evaluation.
- there was no reference to the concept that ordination can be considered a gift, not a right for both sexes.
- little analysis of what Daley or Ruether claim and whether it is still relevant e.g. there are more women mentioned in the Bible than Eve and Mary and Mary is a role model for MEN as well as for women in the Christian life.
- no mention of the fact that the second most common prayer in Christianity is focused on the Virgin Mary – The Angelus – said three or four times a day everyday (except Eastertide when Regina Caeli – Queen of Heaven).

**Q.6 'The political and ethical foundations of liberation theology are more important than its religious foundation.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

The attempt rate for this question was 21.9%. The relatively low mean score (11.6) and facility factor of 38.7, suggest that those who did attempt this question found it quite challenging.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- correctly pitched the political versus the ethical and evaluated the question effectively.
- constructed an interplay within the ethical part of the argument to include: spiritual poverty, voluntary poverty with then religious poverty.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- who wrote a historical AO1 type answer.
- outlined the political and the religious aspects of liberation theology (again AO1,) but without analysis or evaluation (AO2).
- confused in the meaning of either the phrase 'ethical' or 'religious' or both.

**Summary of key points**

- Section A revealed stronger candidates who had prepared their subject material and were consequently prepared to address whatever question came in that subject area. For the majority this proved to be about Q1 wealth, and their accessibility to the question permitted some extensive answers.
- Section A - weaker candidates were essentially unprepared and either wrote what they could about wealth on the spot or opted for Q2 on the Charismatic Movement, but essentially, all too frequently, answered a different question that they had seemingly prepared for.
- In terms of maximising potential with reference to AO1 candidates should omit long introductions saying what they are going to say without actually saying it. Time and writing is far better spent by a short introduction if considered absolutely necessary. Likewise, a conclusion, or a second re-write of the essay are not required for AO1 and gains no credit unless something new is included.
- AO2 questions were typically longer and generally gained a higher mark or level by most candidates. Again, however, in terms of maximising potential there is no need of an introductory paragraph. Too frequently responses veered to a one-sided answer. The higher band responses were those that were analytical and evaluative and contain a conclusion, preferably one that comes to a logical final decision, possibly with a clarifying point to reinforce that decision.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2019**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**3B: A STUDY OF ISLAM**

**General Comments**

This paper was a small entry and, overall, was well answered. It was very positive to see that all questions were attempted demonstrating both accessibility and the opportunity to showcase the depth and breadth of knowledge, understanding, critical analysis and evaluation skills developed by candidates.

The AO1 answers in Section A often displayed impressive detail and knowledge and understanding about the specific nature of the questions set.

The AO2 questions in Section B had much more of a balanced approach and there was evident a marked difference in the development of much more a evaluative style in handling the evidence and examples for the AO2 skills of critical analysis and evaluation.

It is still the case that weaker answers tended to spend a lot of time explaining what is effectively AO1 material, rather than using it as a point of reflection and evaluation in AO2 questions, and then adding an evaluative summary.

There was a good range of marks awarded in this Option but particularly more Band 3-5 answers.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Section A**

**Q.1 Explain how scientific views about the origins of the universe might challenge Islamic beliefs. [AO1 30]**

This question was answered well, although it was the least popular question in this section (31.3% attempt rate). The mean score of 19.3 and high facility factor of 64.4 suggest that those who did answer this question found it accessible.

Most responses went along the line of discussing scientific ideas and then clarifying how this challenged traditional Islamic view. However, many answers discussed the scientific views in light of the contemporary developments in Islamic thought, demonstrating clearly that there is diversity within Islam. In other words, these candidates interpreted the question as *how far* scientific views about the origins of the universe might challenge Islamic beliefs. This was an acceptable interpretation of the question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- excellent grasp of the different implications of scientific theories in relation to religious belief.
- sound knowledge of Islamic beliefs about the origins of the universe.
- good knowledge of different scientific views about the origins of the universe.
- made good use of Qur'anic references and to the views of Islamic scholars.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- responses had a tendency to simply give reference to the Big Bang and how an atheistic understanding of this is not Islamic!
- could not see that challenge did not necessarily mean incompatibility.
- a basic viewpoint that Islam sees creation and science as poles apart.
- lack of awareness of different Islamic viewpoints about the nature of the challenge scientific views about the origins of the universe bring.

**Q.2 Examine the importance of family life in Islam.**

**[AO1 30]**

This was by far the most popular question (attempt rate 70.9%) and, as expected, there were varying approaches and degrees of success. All candidates were able to present some ideas on Islamic family life. The mean score of 17.6 and facility factor of 58.8 suggest that those who attempted this question found it accessible.

Some responses explained the role of socialisation and others went into detail about Muhammad's family life as an ideal model.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- appreciated the wider role of family life in relation to Islam as a religion as opposed to the Islamic views about the family.
- displayed a more holistic approach, relating family life to the community, the strength of the family in the society (microcosmic and macrocosmic Ummah) and also part of the worldwide Ummah united by Islam. A great range of examples beyond the simple identifications of the roles of husband and wife within marriage e.g. Muhammad as role model, extended family, importance of family at key points in life/religious ceremonies etc.
- included reference to the importance of life cycle celebrations – especially marriage - regular worship and special religious occasions and the role and importance of family life in relation to these.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to explain in a very basic way the roles of each family member (husband, wife, child etc.) in the family and describe general family traditions.
- lacked the range of examples to link directly with other aspects of Islam.
- described some family traditions rather than saying how this is important within Islam.



## Section B

**Q.3** 'The Islamic term jihad is totally misunderstood today.'  
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

This was a very popular question with an attempt rate of 79.1%. The mean score of 18.1 and facility factor of 60.4 suggest that those who attempted this question found it accessible.

There was a tendency with this question to give generic explanations of the various forms of jihad rather than focusing on the demand of the question.

### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- awareness of the various different understandings and applications of the term jihad, both lesser and greater.
- balanced evaluation of the impact of the media and lesser jihad in relation to Islamophobia.
- pointed out that it was not all about misunderstanding jihad but more how it is misrepresented by a small minority, albeit an influential minority in the case of the media.
- there were many references to modern jihad for social justice although very few discussed different interpretations of jihad within different Islamic branches.
- used the strict criteria and evidence from comparisons to a dated just war theory for a particular historical context and with very specific guidelines and then contrasted this with totally unrelated acts of terror.
- developed the idea that Islam is taught in schools etc. and that Muslims themselves understand jihad so there should be no issue.
- linked a misunderstanding to the injustice of Islamophobia.

### ***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to discuss various terrorist acts in detail and pointing out how this was not Islamic teaching.
- lacked awareness of the historical context behind Muhammad's application of lesser jihad.
- lacked understanding of the specific types of greater jihad.
- lacked awareness of the specific conditions for lesser jihad that would make it virtually impossible to apply today.

**Q.4** 'Islam is not compatible with democracy.'  
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

This was the third most popular question in this section with an attempt rate of 36.6%. The mean score of 18.4 and facility factor of 61.2 suggest that those who attempted this question found it accessible.

Those that did answer were generally very good and used the model of Muhammad in Madinah to compare and contrast with Islamic countries with a religious influence, Islamic countries with a more secular legal and social base and also how that model could work in a completely secular society.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- a range of countries used as examples e.g. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Great Britain.
- accurate understanding of democracy.
- good references to Shari'a and how it expresses in different countries.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to agree that Islam cannot be compatible, due to absolute submission to Allah – implying Shari'a.
- a lack of examples used to illustrate different understandings of Islam.
- a lack of examples from around the world.

**Q.5 'Islam is a totally united religion.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the second most popular question in this section with an attempt rate of 64.2%. The mean score of 16.3 and facility factor of 54.2 suggest that those who attempted this question found it accessible.

This question was also not as popular as questions 3 and 6.

Most responses centred on the differences between Shia and Sunni with various degrees of evaluation. Most discussed how Muslims share the same foundation of belief and are therefore united. Very few included scholarly ideas.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- explored differences globally within Islam.
- explored differences in terms of Islamic groups.
- appreciated the variety that exists within Islamic groups.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- focused on the Shi'a / Sunni division.
- general and vague comparisons made.
- lack of examples and evidence from global Islam.

**Q.6 'Sufism demonstrates that there can be a personal mystical union with God in Islam.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the least popular question in this section with an attempt rate of 20.1%. The mean score of 19.4 and facility factor of 64.8 suggest that those who attempted this question found it very accessible.

Most answers started with an explanation of Sufism to varying degrees of relevance. Some selected the critical aspects to use in relation to the specific demands of the question. Answers discussed Rumi and included a general discussion on union with God and the varying ways in which this could be achieved in Sufism in contrast to traditional notions of the transcendence of God.

This question did include references to the ideas of Saints and Shaykh, with more scholarly interpretations than the other questions. Very few responses included reference to some links with the feminine aspects.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- a good knowledge of Sufism but able to focus on the devotional aspects.
- examples used to support the claims of 'personal mystical union'.
- an awareness of the contentious nature of the statement in line with traditional teachings about God in Islam.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some responses were a little confused with a general theme of Sufism rather than answering the demands of the question.
- lacked the depth of knowledge of the relevant Sufi devotional practices.
- did not appreciate that 'personal mystical union' could be interpreted in a variety of ways.

**Summary of key points**

- There appears to be a further improvement this year in terms of the quality of AO1 content and the skills of critical analysis and evaluation for AO2.
- In particular, there was obviously a much stronger knowledge based on the answers which referred to the diversity within Islam. This was evident mainly from Q1 and the AO2 optional questions in Section B.
- The main message to centres is that those candidates that want to showcase their skills are able to do so effectively, but that they do by adhering closely to the specific focus and demands of the question and using a very wide range of evidence and examples.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2019**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**3C: A STUDY OF JUDAISM**

**General Comments**

It is evident from candidates' responses that all questions on the paper were accessible and answers covered the full range of responses. Where responses were good, candidates made reference to views of scholars/schools of thought as well as sacred texts and sources of wisdom with accuracy and relevance.

It is also noticeable that the standard of responses to Section B questions has improved, with fewer candidates failing to recognise the difference between knowledge and understanding (AO1) and analysis and evaluation (AO2). There has also been an improvement in the accurate use of the views of scholars/schools of thought in responses to Section B questions.

However, candidates should continue to be reminded to pay close attention to the specific wording of each question, as answers from the lower bands invariably failed to address the question set.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Section A**

**Q.1 Explain Maimonides' significance in the history of Jewish studies. [AO1 30]**

This question was attempted by 26.7% of candidates. The facility factor of 45.3 and the mean of 13.6 suggest this question was fairly accessible to candidates. The responses showed that there is generally a good knowledge and understanding of Maimonides' significance in the history of Jewish studies.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- Maimonides' three most significant works: The Thirteen Principles of Faith, The Mishneh Torah and The Guide for the Perplexed were explained in detail in order to illustrate his important contribution to Jewish studies.
- specific examples of Maimonides' philosophic stance were used to good effect, as was his contribution to the debate concerning an understanding of the creation text of Genesis 1.
- the ways in which his contributions still influence current-day Jewish practices and beliefs were also included as evidence of his significance.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- although references were made to the works of Maimonides, the importance of them was not drawn out.
- a minority of candidates lost the focus of the question and proceeded to make a comparison between Maimonides and Rashi by discussing which of the two scholars they believed to be the most significant in the history of Jewish studies.
- some candidates offered a biography of Maimonides' life with only a passing reference to his significance in the history of Jewish studies.

**Q.2 Examine challenges for Jewish communities in Britain in relation to kashrut (purity) and dress. [AO1 30]**

This was the most popular question in Section A, with an attempt percentage of 72.4%. Whilst a number of candidates produced very good answers, many failed to accurately address the focus of the question, hence the mean of this question being 12.7.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- both strands of the question were dealt with accurately showing a thorough understanding of the challenges arising from kashrut and dress in British society.
- the challenges of keeping the requirements of kashrut were explained in depth and included issues such as the lack of kosher food shops in many areas; the diminishing numbers of Jewish butchers; the difficulties for Jewish children who attend secular schools; the expense of hiring a shomer to supervise non-Jewish kitchens at celebratory events; the fact that such requirements highlight the fact that Jews are different from others in society leading in some cases to isolation and discrimination.
- some candidates took a wider view of the term 'purity' and also identified the difficulties of attending the mikveh with any regularity.
- the challenges of dress codes were ably exemplified with reference to Hasidic Jews and the potential which this has to isolate and separate them from wider secular society, as well as making them the focus of discrimination.
- the requirement for modest dress for women amongst some Jewish denominations was also discussed as a challenge, in that it could be seen to be out of line concerning attitudes to women in general in contemporary British society.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- there was a tendency to lose focus of the fact that the question was about 'challenges' with many candidates not addressing this at all, and instead writing generally about Jewish food laws and dress codes.
- some candidates adopted an AO2 type response by arguing that not all Jews face challenges, and proceeded to discuss and highlight Reform Judaism's approach to the food laws for example; in some cases, only one strand out of the two required by the question was examined.

## Section B

- Q.3 'Midrash provides a precise method of interpreting the Jewish scriptures.'**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 30]

This was the fourth most popular question in this section (attempt rate of 31.9%). Whilst the mean for this question (12.8) was the lowest for this section there were however a number of very good responses to this question which showed a very good understanding of the issue.

### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- the four principal methods of midrashic interpretation were each analysed in turn with judgements made regarding their precision or otherwise.
- stronger candidates skilfully weighed up the relative importance of each of the four methods of midrashic interpretation.
- halakhah and aggadah were compared, and relevant examples from scripture were incorporated into the analysis.
- criticisms of the use of midrash from scholars/schools of thought were used successfully in order to oppose the statement.

### ***Features of weaker responses:***

- some responses offered no more than a list along with a brief explanation of the principal methods of midrash, and thus the focus of the statement on 'precision' was not addressed.
- responses lacked reference to examples from midrash.
- halakhah and aggadah were not mentioned.
- a minority of candidates confused midrash with the Mishnah.

- Q.4 'The links between Zionism and Judaism are strong.'**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 30]

This was the most popular question in section B, with an attempt rate of 71.5%. The mean for this question (12.8) was the lowest in this section and the facility factor of 42.5 suggests that some candidates found this question challenging.

### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- the fact that the term 'Zionism' is understood in a variety of ways even within Judaism was highlighted.
- the difference in motive between political Zionism and religious Zionism was evaluated successfully.
- the contribution of the Mizrahi party was analysed and evaluated.
- the differences of opinion about the return to Israel and re-establishment of the Promised Land within Judaism itself was used as an argument.
- good use was made of scriptural evidence to support any arguments made.

### ***Features of weaker responses:***

- confusion regarding the meaning of the term 'Zionism'.
- some candidates gave an account of the history of political Zionism without any relevant evaluation.

**Q.5 'Hasidism divides Judaism.'**  
**Evaluate this view.** [AO2 30]

There was a wide range of responses to this question. It was the third most popular question in this section (an attempt rate of 33.6%) but has the second highest mean score (14.0) in this section.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- evidence of distinctive practices within Hasidism as well as opposition from the Vilna Gaon were used to show that it did indeed bring about division at its inception.
- its standing in contemporary Judaism was used to show that it has since come to represent one of the truest forms of Judaism.
- other Jewish groups, such as Reform Judaism for example, were cited as being the ones who divided Judaism.
- consideration was made of the fact that division should perhaps not be seen as a negative thing, as Hasidism brought vitality back to the faith at a time of difficulty for the Jewish faith in Europe.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- a tendency to become no more than an historical account of the establishment of the Hasidic movement under its leader the Baal Shem Tov.
- confusion between the Hasidic movement and other groups within Judaism.

**Q.6 'Pikuach nefesh is totally compatible with embryo research.'**  
**Evaluate this view with reference to Judaism.** [AO2 30]

This was a popular question in section B (an attempt rate of 56.9%) and one which produced a number of very good, confident responses, achieving the highest mean score of 16.1 for this section.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- the concept of pikuach nefesh was clearly understood in relation to embryo research;
- candidates were able to discuss embryo research in detail from a variety of Jewish perspectives;
- views of scholars such as Rabbis Bleich and Tendler were used to good effect;
- the *extent* to which pikuach nefesh is compatible with embryo research was considered;
- objections and counter-arguments were raised based upon halakhic terms.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- merely gave an overview of Jewish views about the sanctity of life.
- failed to note the fact that the evaluation was to be undertaken 'with reference to Judaism' and instead gave general views about new medical technology.
- in some cases, the views and work of Professor Clare Blackburn were offered in error as evidence of Jewish beliefs concerning pikuach nefesh and embryo research.

## **Summary of key points**

- The inclusion of accurate references to sacred texts and sources of wisdom where relevant are significant features of stronger responses.
- Candidates need to pay close attention to the specific wording of each question so that opportunities are not lost to achieve marks within the higher bands.
- In AO2 responses, the inclusion of views of scholars, especially those who have different/opposing arguments relating to the debate, are features of stronger responses.
- An ability to reflect the diversity which is to be found within Judaism is to be encouraged, and this can be especially useful in AO2 responses.
- Jewish contributions to debates connected with embryo research for example continue to evolve, and candidates are to be encouraged to follow up new Jewish responses as they arise.



**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2019**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**3D: A STUDY OF BUDDHISM**

**General Comments**

Answers in Section B were generally of a higher standard than Section A answers.

In Section A candidates erroneously 'evaluated' in questions that had asked them to 'examine'. For example, they analysed the authenticity of Pure Land and Nichiren rather than examining the history of the development of these schools. As such, they were answering questions differently to those asked. Although 'examine' questions do ask candidates to comment on why the facts and issues identified are important, they do not ask for arguments and counter-arguments.

There was evidence of candidates' ability to deploy a wide range of sources of wisdom. That said, there was still some evidence of randomly inserting the names of scholars and falsely attributing statements or ideas to them.

Weaker candidates tended to include all information relating to the Buddhist term in the question whether relevant or not. Stronger answers showed real independence of thought and informed sophistication in answers, drawing on material across the specification.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Section A**

**Q.1 Examine the historical development of Pure Land and Nichiren Buddhism in Japan. [AO1 30]**

This question had an attempt rate of 40.0%, The relatively low mean (12.7) and facility factor (42.4) suggests answers to this question were inconsistent. The main issue was that the majority of candidates wrote extensively about the beliefs and practices of both Pure Land and Nichiren Buddhism, but failed to appreciate that the main requirement of the question was the historical development of both traditions. There were only a few excellent answers to this question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- focused on aspects of the historical development, namely the contribution of Honen, Shinran and Nichiren during the Kamakura period.
- identified the role of the notion of mappo in the development of these traditions.
- referred to the Tendai tradition, the founded figures becoming disillusioned with corruption on Mt Hiei etc.
- some referred to the strength of these traditions in the contemporary world.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- misunderstood the question and wrote about Pure Land, Nichiren, and Zen.
- argued about the legitimacy of these traditions and did not lay out their historical development.
- the discussion on Pure Land tended to be more extensive, but the discussion on Nichiren was fairly consistently much weaker.

**Q.2 Examine the development of the Mindfulness Movement with reference to Buddhism. [AO1 30]**

This was the most popular question in this section with an attempt rate of 57.6%. The relatively low mean (13.7) and facility factor (45.5) suggests answers to this question were inconsistent. As with Q1 the answers ranged from satisfactory to good with only a few excellent answers. The outstanding issue with this question was that many candidates discussed mindfulness as a concept rather than the development of the Mindfulness Movement. Furthermore, many answers 'debated' the legitimacy of the practice of mindfulness as a form of Buddhism (AO2) rather than examined its development.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- recognized the links between the Mindfulness Movement and Buddhism (the eightfold path, the practice of meditation, addressing of suffering).
- were able to outline its contribution to various programmes within schools, health services, and commercial enterprises.
- some mentioned Slavoj Žižek. This was sometimes creditable, but occasionally slipped into AO2.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to focus only on Thich Nhat Hanh's socially engaged Buddhism and the importance of his mindfulness training (which was creditable, but limited).
- failed to recognize the contribution of others (such as Jon Kabat Zinn) and the extension of mindfulness into many areas of contemporary life.
- some answers failed to achieve marks in the higher levels because they did not refer at all to Buddhism.
- several who had mentioned Žižek had not fully grasped his argument.

**Section B**

**Q.3 'Buddhism is a form of atheism.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was the most popular question in this Section with an attempt percentage of 68.6%. The facility factor of 63.0 and the mean of 18.9 suggest this question was very accessible to candidates. Most candidates were able to answer this question satisfactorily.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- demonstrated a good understanding of terms associated with this question and were able to draw on key areas from Buddhism to support arguments successfully.

- argued that the fact that Buddhism has no God makes it atheistic.
- linked the practical nature of Buddhism and its avoidance of metaphysical speculation to atheism, whilst also presenting elements they considered 'religious' e.g. cosmologies, bodhisattvas, yidams, etc.
- referred to the Parable of the Poisoned Arrow or the Kalama Sutta.
- appropriate references were made to Stephen Batchelor and the Batchelor vs. Brazier debate.

***A feature of weaker responses:***

- tended to become answers to the question 'Is Buddhism as religion?' rather than the question set.
- failed to identify any controversy in applying the term atheism to Buddhism
- Equated atheism with non-theism

**Q.4 'Buddhism's openness to other religions means it is in danger of losing its own identity.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the second most popular question in Section B, with an attempt rate of 56.2%. The facility factor of 54.2 and the mean of 16.3 suggest this question was fairly accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- discussed the evidence for openness within Buddhism (e.g. Upali, Dalai Lama).
- argued that that this leads Batchelor to question its identity and status as a religion.
- argued that openness can lead not so much to the loss of identity but more to misunderstanding Buddhism.
- argued that Buddhism's openness leads to it collapsing into a form of secularism.
- argued that the danger to identity comes not from other religions, but rather from within i.e. development of the numerous Buddhist traditions from Tibetan to Japanese to Western forms of Buddhism compromises authentic Buddhism i.e. Theravada Tradition. (The weakness of this is that it uncritically privileges Theravada).
- referred to the Kalama Sutta and 'test the teachings', the rock edicts of Asoka, and interfaith dialogue.
- Showed awareness of examples of Buddhism that are not open to other religions – e.g. the teachings of Nichiren and modern examples such as anti-Muslim nationalism in Myanmar.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- lack of awareness of examples of Buddhism that are not open to other religions.
- vagueness in answers – failure to define or critically engage with terms.
- Lack of engagement with the notion of identity and its importance or otherwise in Buddhism.

**Q.5 'Commitment to social justice is essential to Buddhism.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the least popular question in this section with an attempt rate of 26.3%. This question had the highest mean score across the paper (19.2) and also the highest facility factor (64.1), which suggests this question was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- offered valid discussion of Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama, Joanna Macey and ecological issues, and made reference to karma, metta, and tanha as important Buddhist concepts when discussing social justice.
- made reference to socially engaged Buddhism within the Welsh context where appropriate e.g. Ken Jones and his book *New Social Face of Buddhism*.
- when some obviously good responses failed to reach Band 5, it was usually because the argument was one-sided, and did not explore the case that social justice is a source of attachment and a distraction from the path to awakening.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- a significant number of answers interpreted social justice as referring to feminism only. Candidates need to expand their bank of examples of social injustice.
- Failed to see any controversy. The tended to assert that social justice was essential, but gave weak reasoning, and failed to credit arguments against.

**Q.6 'Buddhism is popular in Britain because of the secular nature of society.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the third most popular question in this section (attempt rate 48.1%). The facility factor of 55.8 and the mean of 16.7 suggest this question was fairly accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- questioned the assumptions in the statement that British society is secular.
- questioned the assumption in the statement that Buddhism is popular.
- brought elements of Buddhism (such as non-theism, compatibility with science, the appeal of meditation, Buddhist aesthetics etc) into conversation with the values of secular society.
- offered alternative arguments for Buddhism's popularity such as colonial contact etc.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- failure to make the link between the two critical aspects of the question i.e., popularity and the secular nature of society.
- merely offering an account of the growth of Buddhism in Britain.
- merely offering narratives of Buddhism's popularity and failing to engage with the term 'secular'.

## Summary of key points

- Candidates must read the question carefully and respond to the command word. They should avoid trying to answer an imagined AO2 question in section A.
- Handwriting was very poor to the point of being difficult to decipher in too many cases. This needs to be investigated by centres ahead of the exam.
- Spelling, grammar, and punctuation were adequate to good in most instances, but in some cases were detrimental to the meaning of the answer.
- Welsh medium candidates demonstrated an improved standard of writing; but should continue to develop and build on their use of specialist vocabulary, spelling grammar and punctuation.
- Care should be taken when deploying sources of wisdom to ensure accuracy and appropriateness. Inaccurate name-dropping is transparent and ineffective.
- Candidates should not be satisfied with a 'on the one hand/on the other hand' approach to answering questions, but to see questions as an opportunity to make more nuanced cases and to demonstrate their learning and engagement with sources.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2019**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**3E: A STUDY OF HINDUISM**

**General Comments**

The examination paper included a range of questions from the specification's themes, with good coverage of topics which gave a fair choice to candidates. The paper was accessible to candidates. However, some weaknesses seem to be with us annually, such as some candidates choosing to 'describe' instead of 'explaining' while other candidates failed to answer the question as set or did not read the question carefully enough.

There were a number of answers where there were no paragraphs whatsoever. It was as if the candidates were so desperate to write down everything they knew, that they forgot the basic rules of essay writing. This made marking very hard as it was difficult to focus on the different points or arguments being made. This was especially the case with the AO1 essays on the Q2 the bhakti movement. The importance of paragraphing is something that needs to be reinforced within centres. Poor handwriting also continues to be a major issue, this is exacerbated by the failure to write in paragraphs.

Specific arguments are not always obvious in some AO2 responses – candidates are still simply writing everything they know and tacking on a rather vague viewpoint at the end.

Some excellent examples of candidates referring to scholarly opinion or writers such as Flood and Jamison were seen, with effective use of quotes that did relate to the answer. Some good synoptic links were also made without any of the 'forced' nature of doing so that was evident last year.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Section A**

**Q.1 Examine the challenges of being a Hindu in Britain. [AO1 30]**

This was the most popular question within Section A, with an attempt percentage of 73.5%. The facility factor of 56.5 and the mean of 17.0 suggest this question was accessible to candidates. However, some only offered a limited response to this question.

The major issue here was that too many candidates spent too much of the essay giving background detail on the origins of the Hindu community rather than focussing on the challenges of living as a Hindu in Britain.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- responses focused clearly upon 'challenges' and explained in detail a number of different challenges such as varna, discrimination, gender roles, etc.

- responses were well supported with case studies and evidence.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- explained benefits in addition to challenges and as such relevancy to the set question was limited.
- lacked specific detail of challenges with many writing extensively about working hours and temple restrictions.
- could discuss the obvious issues relating to dress, food and places of worship, but failed to go into detail on the issues relating to living in a secular country.
- demonstrating understanding of the challenges was often missed –responses simply described them.

**2. Explain the origin and background of the Bhakti movement. [AO1 30]**

Whilst this was the least popular question within Section A, with an attempt percentage of 27.2%, the facility factor of 64.2 and the mean of 19.3 suggest this question was an accessible to candidates. However, some only offered a limited response to this question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- explained the origins and background clearly with references to medieval Hindu society, Muslim rule, and poet saints.
- made links with the social developments of the movement linked to women and the lower castes and Dalits.
- thorough knowledge and understanding of the topic were shown through the development of the ideas of Bhakti movement with reference to caste and equality, beliefs and practices, and specific reference to Hindu sects.
- demonstrated excellent depth and/or breadth in their response.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- made little or no reference to the origins and background of the Bhakti Movement, instead wrote at length about the Shaivite, Aghori and Vishnavite sects. This led to a basic and limited response.
- some wrote about the different sects within the Bhakti movement and devoted only a small part of their response to its origins.

**Section B**

**Q.3 'ISKCON is very different from 'traditional' Hinduism.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was the most popular question within Section B, with an attempt percentage of 69.4%. The facility factor of 56.5 and the mean of 17.0 suggest this question was accessible to candidates. However, some only offered a limited response to this question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- presented well balanced arguments comparing ISKCON to traditional Hinduism.
- these included shared roots and value of scripture, shared beliefs and practices, shared aims of achieving moksha, etc.

- differences included the proselytising nature of ISKCON, its worship of Krishna as the supreme personality of the God-head, its rejection of the caste system, and the personal views of Prabhupada that Hinduism was a degraded form of Sanatana Dharma.
- responses demonstrated confident and critical analysis with perceptive evaluation of the issue e.g. what constitutes as being 'traditional' within Hinduism, since Hinduism is a very diverse religion.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- simply just wrote a history of the founder and early years of the movement without addressing the question or formulating any kind of argument in response to the statement.
- there was an obsession amongst some with naming all the celebrity followers of ISKCON.
- relied upon detailed descriptions of the biography of Prabhupada or the impact of George Harrison, failing to address the question set. In such responses, there was little or no attempt at evaluation. Some rather weak comparisons were made with Hinduism with limited discussion of the differences. It was surprising how few quoted Prabhupada and his views on the distinctive nature of ISKCON.

**4. 'The Upanishads are still important today.'**

**Evaluate this view with reference to Hinduism.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the second most popular question in Section B, with an attempt rate of 64.0%. The facility factor of 62.7 and the mean of 18.8 suggest this question was accessible to candidates.

Many candidates were desperate to write all they knew about the Upanishads within the framework of their response, often becoming far too descriptive as a result (AO1) and missing the evaluative nature (AO2) of the question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- presented clear arguments for and against the Upanishads still being important today, with effective analysis and evaluation of viewpoints.
- arguments for their importance today included the fact that they contain the teachings of the gurus, and jnana, that they convey essential teachings about Brahman and Atman and the meditative path.
- alternative views presented included the esoteric nature of the texts and the need for a guru, and other texts such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata which convey more practical and relevant guidance for today.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- had very long introductions on the nature and origin of the Upanishads with a tenuous link to an argument relating to the question.
- the issue of why they are regarded as being the most important was often missed, as they simply wrote about the main teachings of the texts.
- devoted too much to other texts and as such, held little relevancy to the set question, arguing for the Ramayana or Bhagavad Gita being of more importance. This was not the focus of the set question.
- there was little attempt at evaluation in such responses.



**Q.5 'Gandhi's achievements were more political than religious.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

***Features of stronger responses:***

- offered arguments for both Gandhi's political and religious achievement and were able to evaluate which were significant.
- political arguments included swaraj or home-rule, distinctly Indian discourse of politics, his advocacy of Indian education, and his approach to industry.
- religious achievements included his political use of ahimsa in his satyagraha movement, his universalism as seen in the Sarvodaya movement and his fight of better treatment of women and Dalits, and his views on the varna system.
- some argued that his achievements were actually more social than either political or religious.
- offered confident and critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- offered limited argument focusing predominantly on Gandhi's approach to the Dalits or offering descriptions of the Salt March.
- analysis was limited and evaluation inconsistent.

**Q.6 'It is impossible to understand Brahman as nirguna.'**  
**Evaluate this view with reference to Hinduism.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the least popular question in Section B, with an attempt rate of 9.5%. However, this question had the highest mean of any question on the paper (21.8) and a facility factor of 72.6, suggesting those who attempted it found it to be very accessible.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- presented balanced arguments pitting Brahman Nirguna against Brahman Saguna.
- arguments agreeing that it is impossible to understand Brahman as Nirguna included the beliefs and practices of Vaishnavites and Shaivites and their devotions to a personal god;
- focussed upon the avatars of Vishnu in ISKCON.
- were able to argue that bhakti and daily puja are based on personal relationships.
- alternative arguments focused upon the syllable OM and the ideas of Vedanta, reflected through jnana yoga.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- explored one or two ideas, but the arguments lacked analysis and evaluation.
- there was also confusion between Nirguna and Saguna Brahman.

### **Summary of key points**

- Candidates should take care to read the questions carefully and notice the key foci of each one to ensure they answer the set question.
- Candidates should be clear as to the requirements of AO1 and AO2 questions.
- Candidates should justify their arguments, providing reasons or evidence to support their view; and to offer some evaluation of them.
- The views of scholars or schools of thought should be used appropriately.
- Candidates should use specialist technical vocabulary extensively and accurately.
- Where relevant, candidates should make synoptic links with Philosophy and Ethics topics

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2019**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**3F: A STUDY OF SIKHISM**

**General Comments**

The examination paper included a range of questions from the specification's themes, with good coverage of topics which gave a fair choice to candidates. The paper was accessible to candidates.

Generally, the overall standard was good, although a number of papers were poor. There were also many excellent papers at the top end of the mark range which showed great depth of knowledge and understanding.

However, some weaknesses seem to be with us annually, such as some candidates choosing to 'describe' instead of 'explaining'. Other candidates also failed to answer the question as set or did not read the question carefully enough.

There were a number of answers where there were no paragraphs whatsoever. It was as if the candidates were so desperate to write down everything they knew, that they forgot the basic rules of essay writing. This made marking very hard as it was difficult to focus on the different points or arguments being made. The importance of paragraphing is something that needs to be reinforced within centres. Poor handwriting also continues to be a major issue, this is exacerbated by the failure to write in paragraphs.

Specific arguments are not always obvious in the AO2 answers – candidates are still simply writing everything they know and tacking on a rather vague viewpoint at the end.

There were some excellent examples of candidates referring to scholarly opinion or writers. Some good synoptic links were made without any of the 'forced' nature of doing so that was evident last year.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Section A**

**1. Examine the origin of the Sikh community in Britain. [AO1 30]**

This was the most popular question within Section A, with an attempt percentage of 64.9%. The facility factor of 51.9 and mean of 15.6 suggest this question was fairly accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- contained thorough knowledge and understanding of the chronological origin and growth of the Sikh community in Britain.

- were able to explain the context in which Sikhs came to Britain and the reasons why they settled in certain parts of the country e.g. as economic migrants from the Punjab they went to the traditional industrial areas such as Lancashire and the East and West Midlands.
- were also able to give a coherent and balanced overview including the present situation.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- showed very limited knowledge of the topic and did not address the question in any detail.
- others listed certain events in the history of the Sikh community in Britain without any real development or examination.
- described Sikh practices in Britain today.

**2. Examine Sikh teaching on IVF. [AO1 30]**

This was the least popular question within Section A, with an attempt percentage of 35.1%. Its facility factor of 58.7 and mean of 17.6 suggest this question was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- showed thorough knowledge and understanding of the field of IVF and Sikh teaching on the issue.
- were able to compare and contrast different teachings such as the great value that Sikhism places on having children with the teaching that infertility might be the will of God.
- quoted from the Guru Granth Sahib and the views of scholars such as D. S. Chahal and W. O. Cole.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- tended to be very limited in scope and found it difficult to give specific teaching.
- failed to consider alternative teachings and how they could sometimes conflict with each other.

**Section B**

**Q.3 'Maharaja Ranjit Singh's empire was not religious.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was the third most popular question in this section, with an attempt rate of 47.4%.

Its facility factor of 56.3 and mean of 16.9 suggest this question was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were well structured and there was a clear attempt to present good argument.
- focused clearly on the features, both political and religious, of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's empire.

- showed good knowledge and understanding e.g. not treating Sikhs as a privileged class and making the highest posts in his government open to Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus. This led to a thoughtful evaluation of whether it could be considered religious or not.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- were too general in nature and had no real knowledge and understanding of the way Ranjit Singh ruled and organised his empire.
- any evaluation whether it was religious or not, was therefore superficial without any specific references as support.

**Q.4 'Sikhism is a religion shaped by persecution.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the third most popular question within Section B, with an attempt percentage of 47.4%. Its facility factor of 56.3 and mean of 16.9 suggest this question was accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- showed good understanding of Sikh history and the influence of persecution in shaping the religion.
- made good reference to the history of the Gurus and how persecution had a profound effect on Sikhism e.g. the formation of the Khalsa and the development of the concepts of Sant- Sipahi and Dharam Yudh.
- there were also informed references to more recent persecutions such as operation Bluestar.
- also presented the counter-argument that Sikhism is a religion shaped by its beliefs and practices e.g. belief in God and the practice of sewa.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- were very superficial in nature and although they referred to persecution and martyrdom there was no real understanding of how they influenced Sikhism.

**Q.5 'The concept of miri and piri are irrelevant in the 21st century.'**

**Evaluate this view with reference to Sikhism.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the least popular question within Section B, with an attempt percentage of 26.3%. Its facility factor of 48.7 and mean of 14.6 suggest this question was fairly accessible to candidates.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- focussed on the issue of 'relevance'.
- demonstrated excellent understanding of both concepts which refer to the temporal and spiritual aspects of life.
- arguments presented were clearly supported by evidence and references to sources of wisdom and scholarly thought.
- referred to theological, social and moral arguments e.g. reference was made to their relationship with sewa and Kirat Karo.
- valid counter arguments were presented such as that these are very high ideals which are too difficult for most ordinary Sikhs to follow in everyday life.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- did not focus on relevance or Sikh teaching.
- the arguments presented were superficial and lacking in support in terms of evidence and reasoning.

**Q.6 'The Japji of Guru Nanak is the most important statement of faith in Sikhism.'**  
**Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was the most popular question within Section B, with an attempt percentage of 71.9%. The facility factor of 58.9 and mean of 17.7 suggest this question was accessible to candidates. This was generally a well answered question.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- showed very good knowledge and understanding of the Japji and could refer confidently to the statements of faith contained in it such as how to re-connect with God and the importance of the five stages of prayer.
- argued that the Japji is indeed a summary of the Guru Granth Sahib. Arguments were supported by evidence and quotations from sources of wisdom. Valid counterarguments included that the Japji is only an elaboration of the Mul Mantra.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- had no real knowledge or understanding of the Japji of Guru Nanak and therefore the evaluation was very superficial in nature.

**Summary of key points**

- Candidates should take care to read the questions carefully and notice the key foci of each in order ensure they answer the question set.
- Candidates should be clear about the different demands of the AO1 and AO2 questions.
- Candidates should justify their arguments, providing reasons or evidence to support their view; and to offer some evaluation of them.
- The views of scholars or schools of thought should be used appropriately.
- Candidates should use specialist technical vocabulary extensively and accurately.
- Where relevant, candidates should make synoptic links with Philosophy and Ethics topics.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

#### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

### 4: A STUDY OF RELIGION AND ETHICS

#### General Comments

Overall the answers on this paper covered the full range of assessment bands, with good responses demonstrating accurate understanding of the areas of ethics assessed and making highly effective use of the work of scholars they had studied.

Specialist vocabulary was often used highly effectively, and most responses were either written clearly or type-written, thus avoiding issues with legibility. There are some candidates who still struggle to grasp the requirements of the AO2 questions, providing just knowledge and understanding with few points of argument and little focus on the question. There is a tendency to treat evaluation essays as 'compare' questions rather than explicitly evaluating different lines of argument.

It is encouraging to see candidates making reference to religious scriptures in order to support their points across the range of questions, however, these must be accurate and in context if they are to gain credit.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Section A

**Q.1 Explain the arguments of the philosopher John Locke and the psychologist Ivan Pavlov in support of hard determinism. [AO1 30]**

This was the more popular of the question in this section, with an attempt rate of 67.8%. The facility factor of 45.8 and mean of 13.7 suggest this question was fairly accessible to candidates. The vast majority of candidates clearly understood the demands of the question.

#### ***Features of stronger responses:***

- provided a balanced account of the required scholars and were able to set their ideas in the context of hard determinism as a whole.
- for Locke, good responses included clear explanations of the idea of universal causation and freedom as an illusion, usually with the locked room analogy as an illustration of this.
- for Pavlov, good responses showed a detailed account of his ideas regarding classical conditioning and indicated the implications of his experiments with dogs in terms of application to human beings. Candidates often linked this to Watson's development of Pavlov's ideas through experiments with humans.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- either described the examples and analogies related to each philosopher without discussing their implications in terms of determinism, or confused determinism with predestination.
- a significant number of Welsh medium scripts made no reference to Locke's locked room analogy at all.

**Q.2 Explain the arguments of the philosopher Jean Paul Sartre and the psychologist Carl Rogers in support of libertarianism. [AO1 30]**

Although less popular than Question 1, with an attempt rate of 30.7%, this question seemed equally accessible to candidates with the full range of responses seen. The facility factor of 47.7 and mean of 14.3, suggest this question was fairly accessible to candidates. However, there were more superficial answers seen here than with Question 1.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- began with an account of libertarianism in general before moving on to the specific scholars.
- for Sartre, good responses were able to explain how freedom is made possible by the lack of a creator God, and to use the technical terms 'pour-soi' and 'en-soi' correctly in explaining human free will.
- candidates were able to examine Sartre's concept of 'bad faith', often making use of his example of the waiter, and to explore the idea of freedom as both a gift and a curse.
- for Rogers, good responses explained his ideas about the role of conditioning and the environment needed for self-actualisation in detail.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- were only able to deal with one of the two scholars or struggled to explain the views of the named scholars at all, falling back on generic points about free will.
- a significant number of candidates, particularly in Welsh medium scripts, wrote entirely about religious views of free will, making reference to Pelagius and Arminius.

**Section B**

**Q.3 'Moral terms are nothing more than expressions of human emotions.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was the third most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 48.0%. The facility factor of 48.6 and mean of 14.3, suggest this question was fairly accessible to candidates.

Most candidates recognised that this was a question referring to metaethics and were able to draw on the theories studied to evaluate the view in the question. Many were able to outline the main principles of Emotivism, although there is still a tendency amongst some candidates to regard Emotivism as a normative theory and to evaluate its use as such, rather than focusing on the meaning of ethical language. This appeared to be an issue for a number of Welsh medium responses, where the question was not popular



***Features of stronger responses:***

- were able to contrast Emotivism with other meta-ethical approaches, staying directly engaged with the question and using these other approaches to support or reject Ayer's approach.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- the presentation of other ethical approaches tended to be descriptive and the implications for the question itself were ignored. There was also some confusion in weaker scripts between Emotivism and Intuitionism.

**Q.4 'Finnis' Natural Law is a practical ethical approach for contemporary society.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was the second most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 54.1%. The facility factor of 49.2 and mean of 14.8, suggest this question was fairly accessible to candidates.

Most responses showed an awareness of the Aristotelian origins of Natural Law and the fact that Finnis' version is a re-working of Aquinas' theory. Most were able to identify the basic goods and requirements of practical reason and discussions often centred around the practicality of these in contemporary society. Some used the application of the theory to capital punishment and/or immigration to illustrate its practicality, however more often candidates who took this approach simply explained the application of the theory rather than answering the question set.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- responses considered the role of religion in Finnis' thinking, often arguing that this had a broader appeal than Aquinas' narrower focus.
- made reference to Finnis' views about heterosexual marriage and were able to discuss the issues relating to his thinking in the context of contemporary society.
- were also seen which used meta-ethical theories such as Emotivism or Intuitionism to question the basis of Finnis' theory.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- were often very confused, for example, citing 'flexibility' as a strength before criticising the theory for failing to give a definite answer to moral issues.
- did not recognise that the basic goods are given equal importance and that actions cannot directly harm a basic good.
- many also asserted that Finnis' theory is 'outdated' without giving any justification.

**Q.5 'The strengths of Proportionalism, as an ethical theory, clearly outweigh its weaknesses.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was the least popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 26.4%. The facility factor of 48.6 and mean of 14.6, suggest this question was fairly accessible to candidates.

Many responses to this question had a sound grasp of general strengths and weaknesses of Proportionalism, with the most popular points being its rejection by the Roman Catholic church as a weakness (with reference to the encyclical *Veritatis Splendour*) and the ability to deal with exceptional circumstances in a more compassionate way than Natural Law as a strength.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- made reference to the proportionate approach seen in the work of Aquinas and regarded Proportionalism as an attempt to apply this approach in a consistent way.
- often used capital punishment and immigration as examples to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses.
- compared the approach of Proportionalism with that of Situation Ethics and often made strong evaluative points.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- saw Proportionalism as synonymous with Situation Ethics and failed to recognise it as an adaptation of Natural Law. Common arguments in this type of response alluded to Proportionalism being overly time-consuming.
- They failed to recognise that a proportionate response would only replace the principles of Natural Law in exceptional circumstances.
- drifted away from the focus of the question and simply explained the application of the theory.
- there remains considerable confusion over the specialist language relating to Proportionalism.

**Q.6 'Religious believers should accept the theory of predestination.'  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 69.3%. The facility factor of 51.3 and mean of 15.4, suggest this question was accessible to candidates.

This was the most popular question in Section B and elicited a wide range of responses. Most answers to this question were of a better quality than those seen to questions on this theme in the previous exam series. A greater number of responses engaged with the question rather than simply comparing the views of scholars.

Overall, centres would be advised to focus on the implications of both free will and predestination for ethical behaviour when preparing candidates for this paper.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- often considered the biblical support for predestination compared with free will and were able to make accurate reference to scripture in their arguments.
- key terms were used accurately in most responses and good answers discussed the implications of belief in predestination for individual moral responsibility and for the nature of God, as well as considering the impact on belief in miracles and the value of prayer.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- struggled to move beyond a comparison of different views, often including non-religious ideas about determinism/free will and citing these as religious approaches.
- often saw free will and predestination as mutually exclusive and failed to recognise the Augustinian concept that our free choices are tainted by sin and the fallen nature of humans.
- Generally did not make links between Augustine's views about predestination and his views about evil, which resulted in some inaccurate claims about God's responsibility for evil.

**Summary of key points**

- Better responses recognised the different demands of AO1 and AO2 questions and approached these questions in different ways, but with a clear focus on the question.
- Candidates should move beyond simple comparison or application of theories in AO2 responses.
- Accurate knowledge of sacred texts and the views of scholars is essential to access the higher bands.
- Evaluative points should be underpinned with accurate knowledge and understanding of each theory so that inaccurate generalisations can be avoided.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

#### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

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

#### General Comments

Candidates are making considerable use of the available resources for this Unit. This is enhancing understanding and answers. There is clear evidence of some excellent teaching which is enthusing candidates to respond as they have done.

Some elements of the paper varied in terms of the range of answers. There are areas of the specification that will, no doubt, continue to develop over the coming years.

Candidates have been prepared well to meet the demands of the paper and thankfully there were few rubric issues in the main. It is apparent that candidates are able to choose a diverse range of questions and some material from other units is being used within an answer which is most encouraging. Some use of AS material is also in evidence, in particular in relation to the problem of evil and religious experience.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Section A

#### Q.1 Examine the understanding of religious language as mythical. [AO1 30]

This was the least popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 30.1%. The facility factor of 39.0 and mean of 11.7, suggest this question was a challenging one for candidates.

Most responses were able to give a definition of a myth and an example of one.

#### *Features of stronger responses:*

- these looked at the concept of myth from the specific point of view of religious language. A variety of definitions of myth were given.
- the purposes of myths within religious language, in terms of transmitting ethical and social values for example, gave the responses considerably more substance. This was often done by referring to various religious myths and using these to illustrate such things as God's power.
- some identified overlap between myth, symbol and metaphor. A variety of themes were included, such as heroic myths, with pertinent examples from religious traditions.
- some excellent inclusions of scholarly contributions were a delight to read.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- were generally restricted to outlining some religious myths.
- little or no interpretation of these myths was given, hence no meaning in terms of their purpose was possible to elicit.
- some themes within myths were present, but there was no reason given as to why religion might utilise these themes.

**Q.2 Examine reasons New Atheists give for rejecting religion. [AO1 30]**

This was the most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 69.2%. The facility factor of 46.3 and mean of 13.9, suggest this question was fairly accessible to candidates.

Most knew that New Atheism included the views of Dawkins.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- these responses structured their answer to correspond to the points noted in the Specification. These included such things as religious belief having an ‘infantile world-view’ and ‘impeding scientific progress.’ Building up arguments based upon these categories is a relatively simple, yet effective way of teaching and learning all of the topics.
- there was some mention of ‘the four horsemen’ most notably Dawkins. Centres could further develop the inclusion of specific reasons for rejecting religion given by other New Atheists. This would contribute to further improvement. Some good use was made of contemporary events to highlight the nature of the New Atheist challenge.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- some answers referred to little more than the problem of evil. Whilst this is relevant use of AS material and is a reason given by New Atheists for rejecting religion, this question demands more than this. New Atheism presents a far wider challenge to religious belief.
- some paid no more than lip-service to the names of New Atheists.
- a common error was to conflate a number of points so that the main parts of the reasons for rejection of religion were merged.

**Section B**

**Q.3 ‘Empirical approaches prove that Jung’s views on religion are wrong.’ Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was the third most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 40.5%. The facility factor of 36.3 and mean of 10.9, suggest this question was challenging for candidates.

Most were able to say something about Jung’s views on religion. Real evaluation was sadly lacking in many scripts.

**Features of stronger responses:**

- these should define what ‘empirical approaches’ are.
- recognised that stating Jung’s views on religion is merely a stepping-stone to the actual question. Answers could include some of the following points: Jung claimed to be an empiricist as his studies drew on direct observation, which can be analysed.
- others said that his work on visions and dreams are personal and subjective and are therefore not empirical.
- in defence of Jung’s position, he would claim that interpretation is involved in any (academic) field and anyway, he was looking at the reality of the experience for the subject.

**Features of weaker responses:**

- most seemed to be oblivious to what ‘empirical approaches’ are, hence missing the whole focus of the question.
- responses tended to give irrelevant AO1 information.
- the question is not a ‘pure’ evaluation of Jung’s views on religion but, as the Specification notes, has a particular line of thinking, which was missed by weaker candidates.

**4. ‘It is impossible for miracles to happen.’  
Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 72.2%. The facility factor of 55.4 and mean of 16.6, suggest this question was accessible to candidates.

Most responses were able to identify more than one line of reasoning.

**Features of stronger responses:**

- used both general arguments in favour of the impossibility/possibility of miracles and also specific points raised by scholars in the Specification.
- used the views of Hume and the reasons he gave for the weight of evidence being in favour of the laws of nature holding were understood. It should be noted that Hume said that the occurrence of miracles is improbable rather than impossible. For future reference, Centres should further develop particular arguments raised by, in particular, Swinburne, whose contributions were less prevalent.
- some referred to the testimony to miracles in holy books.
- others questioned the authenticity of miracles, at times drawing on AS work.

**Features of weaker responses:**

- showed little or no awareness of scholarly contributions.
- those that referred to Holland often mistakenly thought that he was suggesting that an event is either a coincidence or a miracle.
- interpretation of an event is a line of reasoning that was not developed nor was the question as to whether God can intervene to perform miracles.

**Q.5 'The views of Logical Positivism are convincing.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the least popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 35.1%. The facility factor of 53.5 and mean of 16.0, suggest this question was accessible to candidates who attempted it.

Most responses could give a basic overview of Logical Positivism and could make a suggestion as to whether their views are convincing or unconvincing.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- maintained a structured adherence to the demands of the Specification.
- included reference to such ideas as the Verification Principle itself not being analytic or synthetic, as well as suggesting that the strong Verification Principle would eliminate meaningful statements from history.
- encouraging aspects included the correct use of scholars noted in the specification, linked to the question as opposed to 'stories' cited by these scholars.
- some candidates quite legitimately made use of non-cognitive theories of religious language, such as analogy in order to show the unconvincing aspects of Logical Positivism.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- gave no more than a basic evaluation of about two points and made no creditworthy reference to scholarly contributions.
- if scholars were mentioned it was often just a retelling of the partisan and the stranger, for example.
- no link was made between the story and its usefulness to this evaluation.
- others unfortunately only gave explanations of Ayer and/or Flew.

**6. 'Language games fail to resolve the problem of understanding religious language.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the second most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 49.3%. The facility factor of 45.0 and mean of 13.5, suggest this question was fairly accessible.

Most responses seemed to understand part of the concept of language games.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- used an evaluation of language games in order to determine whether this non-cognitive concept alleviates the inherent problems of religious language. Reference to some of the inherent problems is useful, if these were then pitted against language games' attempt at a resolution.
- The most widely used line of reasoning was that which said that a problem of religious language is that it cannot be verified. Language games solves that problem as religious language is not in the empirical game.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- attempted to turn this question into one about only the strengths and weaknesses of language games. Whilst this material is relevant to draw upon, candidates need to use it in order to meet the specific demands of this question.

**Summary of key points**

- Candidates need to be familiar with trigger/command words.
- Material studied needs to be adapted in order to be relevant for the Section B evaluation questions.
- A balanced learning of the entire specification will allow for a more widespread choice of questions.
- Candidates should be encouraged to use a variety of textbooks and other resources.



**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
**Summer 2019**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**6: TEXTUAL STUDIES (NEW TESTAMENT)**

**General Comments**

The examination paper did not raise any concerns and so fulfilled its aim of setting appropriate questions in a fair and accessible manner. The full range of marks were employed to the answers provided. The following report will more naturally focus on obvious areas of improvement and does not negate the excellent attempts shown by many candidates.

With a move to online marking it is crucial that:

- candidates place their question number in the margin of the paper.
- if they add something later on in the answer paper to an earlier question a clear repetition of the question number in the margin will ensure its attachment is clearly linked to the rest of their answer.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Section A**

**Q.1 Examine characteristics of Jesus' miracles. [AO1 30]**

This was the most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 87.8%. The facility factor of 51.3 and mean of 15.4, suggest this question was fairly accessible.

Almost without exception all candidates accessed the five types of miracle classification.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were able to take all five types of miracles and give one or more examples of each i.e. in addition to the specification miracles alone. Within each the candidate weaved an answer that for each type of miracle to illustrate the characteristics revealed in them.
- others were able to accurately associate the various miracles with various characteristics that could be determined by them e.g. showed Jesus' divinity, some required faith while others did not, some produced faith while others did not.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- there was one sub set of the answer i.e. either five types of miracles listed without the miracles, or miracles listed without the type and / or various degrees of illustration.

- pure narrations of miracles provided a very limited response with little attempt to address the question.

**Q.2 Examine the categorisation of the Book of Revelation as apocalyptic with reference to Richard Bauckham. [AO1 30]**

This was the least popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 12.2%. The facility factor of 63.3 and mean of 19.0, suggest this question was very accessible to those small number of candidates who chose it.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- a few approached this question with confidence in the learning they had acquired in this subject area and their ability to represent it in an AO1 style. In so doing they provided information about Bauckham's ideas on: prophecy, apocalyptic and letter and provided quotes / examples of each.
- some candidates went beyond the scholarship of Bauckham and represented appropriate information without slipping into AO2 style.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- could only identify less than the three aspects of Bauckham or having identified them could write little more than a simple exemplar for each.

**Section B**

**Q.3 'The parables of Jesus have theological value today.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

This was the most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 68.8%. The facility factor of 51.8 and mean of 15.5, suggest this question was fairly accessible.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- approached the issue from the basis of 'theological value'.
- some took various parables and gave reasoning as to why there were or were not of theological value today.
- others took a thematic approach e.g. a consideration of science, 'sitz im leben', Jesus' own intentions and applied parables as examples.
- some were so confident that they used parables in addition to those set out in specification and these were incorporated into their response, e.g. the wise and foolish virgins, the hidden treasure, etc.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- fewer areas were addressed whether by parable or thematic approach.
- introduced their answer with a declaration that they would show how they did / did not believe parables had theological value today and indeed wrote a one sided essay.
- parables were simply retold with only a final comment addressing the question.

**Q.4 'The miracles of Jesus have no historical validity.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was third popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 48.8%. The facility factor of 47.8 and mean of 14.3, suggest this question was fairly accessible.

Most candidates approached this through a 'for' and 'against' answer, centred around the use of scholars.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- referred to Erhman, Bultmann, Hulme and Swinburne with examples of miracles in order to examine the pros and cons of each exemplar.
- gave more than a one-sided argument. Provided a clear and effective conclusion often with a final 'punchline' argument.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- in spite of the very nature of the AO2 questions, some responses were introduced with a declaration that they would show how they did / did not believe miracles had historical validity and indeed wrote a one-sided essay or almost one-sided answer from either perspective.
- it was rare for students to mention the fact that for Christians the greatest miracle was Jesus' resurrection and it became the very basis of Christianity itself, and then examine its historical validity.

**Q.5 '1 Peter is unique as a New Testament letter.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the least popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 31.7%. The facility factor of 43.8 and mean of 13.2, suggest this question appeared somewhat challenging to the small number of candidates who attempted it.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- were those who evaluated the from more than one point of view and especially where scholars were introduced on different sides of the debate and there was a conclusion.
- examined the various aspects that could be utilised e.g. themes of suffering and submission, the letter's opening and authorship, its focus on the Hebrew Scriptures / being fulfilled.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- in spite of the nature of the AO2 questions candidates introduced their answer with a declaration that they would show how the did / did not believe miracles had historical validity and indeed wrote a one-sided essay or almost one-sided answer from either perspective.
- those who focused on authorship rather than addressed the actual question set.

**Q.6 'Violence in apocalyptic literature poses an ethical problem.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

This was the second most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 51.2%. The facility factor of 43.8 and mean of 17.7, suggest this question was accessible.

***Features of stronger responses:***

- Those that focused on the ethical rights or wrongs of the violence in apocalyptic literature.
- Referred to scholars such as e.g. Luther, David Barr, etc. and / or considered themes such as the coercive nature of God's violence, questions of predestination and free will, issues of language versus reality and 'sitz im leben' validating the violence or making it worse, whether evil wins due to a supposed omnibenevolent God's use of violence.
- debated the issue and came to a judgement in conclusion.

***Features of weaker responses:***

- re-told various violent passage from the apocalyptic literature with little or no recourse to the ethical nature of it from both perspectives if even from one.

**Summary of key points**

- Generally, in Section A, candidates had prepared their subject material and were able to use it in a thorough and constructive way to answer to questions set. This exemplifies both good learning and revision.
- In Section A Q1 weaker candidates resorted to re-telling the miracles in great detail (not always accurately) with a sentence or two comment. Weaker candidates had chosen Q2 in preference to Q1, but were in no real position to answer it with accurate material.
- In terms of maximising potential with reference to AO1 candidates should omit long introductions saying what they are going to say without actually saying it. Time and writing is far better spent by writing a short introduction, if considered absolutely necessary. Likewise, no conclusion, or a second re-write of the essay is required for AO1 and gains no credit unless something new is included.
- AO2 questions were typically longer and generally gained a higher mark or level by most candidates. Again, however, in terms of maximising potential there is no need of an introductory paragraph. These answers often veered towards, or just fell short of, a one-sided answer. A conclusion that draws a conclusion to the question set (which side of the argument is most persuasive?) illustrates best practice, and in itself is usually indicative of the higher band responses, which were both analytical and evaluative.



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