



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCSE
RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 2:
CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM**

SUMMER 2019

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UNIT 2: CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

General Comments

The paper was accessible to all candidates and the full range of marks were awarded across the paper. There was little evidence of comprehensive and excellent responses and candidates achieving the very highest band marks were a minority. Candidates achieved marks on the paper in a variety of ways; some answers were stronger in the Christian and Philosophy areas and others in the specific section of the paper requiring knowledge of Islam. Most candidate responses were bunched towards the middle and lower band range of marks: they demonstrated knowledge of the religion of Islam but, in most papers at this point, knowledge might be described as 'thin'. There was evidence of a significant number of candidates not engaging with the examination paper and, as a result, some of the responses of these candidates were very brief. Where responses were very brief, candidates disadvantaged themselves in terms of achieving any range of higher marks. Disappointingly, there was evidence of a significant number of candidates not even attempting to answer questions.

Comments on individual questions/sections

PART A – Core Beliefs, Teachings and Practices – Christianity

- Q.1**
- (a)** Most candidates were able to give some form of definition of the key concept.
 - (b)** There were some outstanding answers in response to this question. A detailed description of Christian beliefs was offered and well supported with Biblical references. A significant number of candidates responded with a varied collection of opinions and mistaken views about reincarnation and rebirth.
 - (c)** Some excellent responses unpacked in detail the significance of the Christian place of worship offering a range of reasons. Detailed responses offered examples as part of the response and these examples were used to support explanations. Where candidates simply listed activities which take place in a church or chapel without any explanation higher band marks were not awarded. The rubric demand of the question was to ask for explanation and not simple description. Some responses were brief, using less than half of the available space, where candidates offered very short answers and disadvantaged themselves. It was pleasing to note some candidates were clearly aware of different Christian traditions and how places of worship are used in different ways.
 - (d)** The more able candidates were able to analyse and evaluate the significance of the Bible's teachings for a life of faith. Many candidates struggled with offering a coherent argument for how Christians should live their lives for God. Many candidates confused and muddled themselves in their responses and gave the impression they did not know the Ten Commandments originated from the Bible. There were many brief responses.

PART A – Core Beliefs, Teachings and Practices – Islam

- Q.2**
- (a)** Many of the candidates used the wording of the definition provided in the WJEC guide of teaching resources. Some candidates confused the terms burka and hijab.
 - (b)** The question required a description of the Muslim teachings about Adam. Responses were often very brief and lacked any detail. Many candidates simply repeated the same point in a variety of ways: Adam was the first man and first prophet.
 - (c)** The best explanations explored a variety of ways in which Muslims might celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr giving detailed descriptions of how Muslims celebrate this festival but importantly including an explanation as part of the response. Some candidates gave very brief responses with little detail. A minority of candidates referenced the response to the context of Wales, although some candidates included reference to celebrations of Eid-ul-Fitr in Cardiff.
 - (d)** Candidates engaged with this question in a number of ways. This was the opportunity for candidates to write in an extended way and a disappointingly large number of candidates gave very brief responses. Some candidates did not focus on the demands of the particular question and ignored part of the question so there was no mention or reference to ‘all Muslims’. No credit was given for reference to atheist, humanist or Christian perspectives offered in response to this question, which had a clear focus only on the religion of Islam. There were some excellent responses using analysis and evaluation to reach the highest band marks, with the inclusion of a range of specialist terms used appropriately and adeptly.

PART B – Religious Responses to Ethical Themes

- Q.3**
- (a)** Most candidates knew this key concept and were able to offer a meaning of the term.
 - (b)** There were a significant number of candidates achieving only middle bands marks on this response. Answers were frequently generic, failing to distinguish different attitudes to same sex relationships within different Christian traditions. Some of the religious teaching offered to support the description of Christian attitudes were incorrect and the quotation of ‘love your neighbour’ was taken out of context and incorrectly used. Some candidates ignored the rubric and gave a response based on Christian and Muslim attitudes. Where the response was jumbled up using the two faiths, the content of the best part was awarded credit.
 - (c)** In this question candidates were required to provide an explanation of the attitudes of Christianity and Islam to the use of contraception. The lower band responses did not include any diversity within the explanations and gave generic responses.
 - (d)** Some candidates gave responses based on stereotypical views of the perceived domestic roles of men and women which had no relevance to the question. The candidates who accessed the higher band marks rooted their responses in a discussion based around the roles of men and women in worship. There was evidence of some excellent analysis and evaluation but the use of religious language was generally very limited.

- Q.4**
- (a)** Candidates were able to give an adequate definition of the key concept.
 - (b)** The focus on the question was the use of wealth and many candidates were able to focus their responses on either of the two world religions. The higher band responses based on the Christian religion were often supported with biblical references and an exposition of Christian charity. In responses based on Islam, some description of how zakah is used was included.
 - (c)** Candidates struggled a little with this question and responses were often generic. Many candidates used the quotation 'love your neighbour' and references to the Good Samaritan.
 - (d)** It is possible that some candidates were running short of time but a significant number of candidates either completed a very short response to this question or failed to attempt to provide a response. Answers were often quite generic and lacked reference to what religious beliefs might be freely expressed.

Summary of key points

- To enhance the standard of work, candidates should use a range of key and specialist terms throughout all answers to demonstrate knowledge of the specification and the religion of Islam.
- Candidates should respond to the specific demands of the question; in 'b' questions candidates are required to give only a description whereas in 'c' questions candidates are required to give an explanation. In 'c' responses where candidates write descriptively without any explanation candidates will not be able to access the higher band marks; often an added 'because' with further information will change a response which is highly descriptive in to an explanation. In the description question candidates must endeavour to include accurate content.
- Reference to sources of authority, which may include relevant quotations from the Qur'an, should be made when appropriate.
- In 2(d) questions candidates must engage with an evaluative discussion of the statement to access the higher band marks. It is important candidates focus on the religion of Islam in responses and offer analysis and evaluation in their responses based on a discussion of the full statement.



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