

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Paper 0490/12  
Paper 1

## General comments

The level of religious specific knowledge shown by candidates was generally good and most candidates showed evidence of having studied the two religions they chose to answer questions on in reasonable depth. Some candidates showed a tendency to use Christian language and, occasionally, Christian concepts in other religious contexts and this is not an issue which occurred in other combinations.

Most candidates also showed familiarity with the command words and phrases used across the paper, applying their knowledge to the question asked. However, a minority of candidates seemed to lack practice in these more general exam skills, including time management and using the number of marks available for the question as an indicator for answer length and/or amount of time to spend on it. For example, some candidates penalised themselves by writing at enormous and unnecessary length on **parts (a) (i) and (a) (ii)**, only to run out of time without completing the required number of questions or producing cursory responses to **parts (b) and (c)**.

With regard to the part **c**, evaluation questions, the skill of thinking through to a considered conclusion, based on evidence and consideration of other ideas, was displayed unevenly, with some candidates able to demonstrate it on one question but not others or in relation to one of the two religions studied rather than both.

## Comments on specific questions

### *Section A – Christianity*

#### Question 1

- (a) (i) Most candidates defined ‘hierarchy’ in terms of levels of authority or responsibility, which were creditable. Only a minority explicitly connected the concept to the role and structures of Christian clergy.
- (ii) Responses made it clear that most candidates were aware of the connection between hierarchy and clergy, with a majority of candidates able to correctly identify and summarise the role of a member of the clergy. A broad range of responses was seen and credited, including the priest/pastor/minister as head of a specific congregation, the Pope as head of the Catholic church and bishops as head of a diocese. The question was concerned with the role being played by the individual so there was no need to elaborate on titles or church structures to gain full marks, although some candidates did so.
- (b) Many responses focused on describing different activities or structures rather than considering the importance of hierarchy to communities. There was also a lot of generic material which was creditable where it was correct in the context of Christianity – for example references to having respect for authority and the advantages of sharing practical tasks. However, Christianity-specific material, such as God being a God of order, or the connection between clergy and sacramental worship were less commonly identified or explored.
- (c) This was a well answered question with a majority of candidates able to consider the importance of both elements identified in the stimulus. Responses were often quite subtle and nuanced, reflecting on both the importance of faith as a personal, internal experience and the ways in which religious hierarchy might contribute to the growth and development of that faith.

## Question 2

- (a) (i) While most candidates were clearly aware of the concept of pilgrimage, the strongest responses identified pilgrimage as a journey, made significant by either the end point of that journey and/or by the purposes for which it is undertaken.
- (ii) This question saw a majority of inaccurate answers, with most candidates giving examples of sites a Christian pilgrim might visit in Jerusalem or Israel more broadly. Another common erroneous response was a description of Lourdes. Where correct material relevant to a pilgrimage to Rome was given, it tended to be both generalised and vague, limiting themselves to a reference to the Pope and perhaps the Vatican.
- (b) Many candidates were aware of a connection between Bethlehem and the life of Jesus but the specific connection of it as the place of his birth was often missing. Some responses considered the different stages of Jesus' life at some length, presenting everything up to and including the crucifixion as taking place in Bethlehem and then concluding that remembering the life of Jesus is the primary gain for a pilgrim in Bethlehem. Others suggested that he spent his childhood in Bethlehem and considered what might be gained from an opportunity to see where Jesus played and grew up. Those responses which did not take these approaches tended to be very generalised, explaining that faith and/or Christian community is strengthened by pilgrimage. Specific references to sites in Bethlehem were uncommon as was any explicit connection between the site of the incarnation and its importance to Christian beliefs.
- (c) Most candidates read the stimulus statement carefully and, as a result, most responses explored both individual and community in relation to the benefits of pilgrimage.

## Section B – Islam

### Question 3

- (a) (i) Many responses conflated salah with du'a prayers and wrote about performing the formal salah prayers at home. Many candidates who showed knowledge of the difference still included unnecessary information about salah in their response.
- (ii) This was a well answered question with most candidates being aware of the need to know the direction of Makkah and identifying a range of occasions when a compass would be helpful to determining this.
- (b) Most responses used the idea of being called to pray. A majority of candidates were also able to associate this with salah and formal prayers in the mosque, but only a minority linked this to the issue of importance with a consideration of salah as one of the five pillars of Islam. A similar minority identified the place of the adhan in birth rites. Very few responses went beyond the descriptive.
- (c) Many responses included a single view, supported in varying degrees with observations about the relative importance of public and private prayer. Some candidates interpreted the question as being wholly about public and private prayer. Another way in which responses drifted from the focus of the statement was to move into a discussion about the importance of an imam in general, which was not always related back to the issue of prayer.

### Question 4

- (a) (i) The wording of the question allowed a variety of answer styles to be credited and most candidates gained at least some of the available marks. Common responses identified Lailat ul-Qadr with the first revelation and gave some detail about that event, but others wrote about its spiritual significance to Muslims, or its place in the observance of Ramadan.
- (ii) Many responses went into far greater detail than was actually required by the question. A list of relevant points would have been a sufficient answer, but most candidates wrote quite detailed descriptions, packing in far more than was necessary for the four available marks. Responses that failed to gain all the available marks tended to do so by giving extraneous detail about other religious practices during Ramadan or about sawm as one of the five pillars.

- (b) Most candidates wrote only brief responses to this question, and the majority of them showed little Islam-specific knowledge about this aspect of practices associated with Ramadan. Most responses were general 'common-sense' responses about having to be extra vigilant and not slacking because the fast is nearly at an end. The stronger of these general responses included some material about preparation for Eid. A small number made the connection with Lailat ul-Qadr although few did so in much depth. Islamic practices during these ten days or beliefs associated with them were rarely mentioned.
- (c) A majority of candidates interpreted this question as being about the relative importance of the five pillars of Islam. This approach undoubtedly led to some relevant discussion but also, for some candidates, to a loss of focus on the question. Engagement with the issue of the importance of fasting in the contemporary world was less commonly seen but, when it did appear, led to some mature and reflective discussion.

### Section C – Judaism

#### Question 5

- (a) (i) Most candidates were able to give full and clear answers to this question. Where responses were incorrect it was because of a lack of knowledge about Judaism rather than any confusion about what was being asked for.
- (ii) While most candidates choosing this question had sufficient knowledge of Jewish artefacts to identify two by name, a significant minority either misread, or did not read the reference to use in the home, leading to answers which were not correct in the context of the question. There was also a minority of candidates who identified a cross or crucifix as a crucial artefact used in Jewish worship. The most common correct responses referred to the tallit and tefillin. Generic responses, such as candles and prayer books, were creditable but fewer in number than might have been expected.
- (b) The range of potentially relevant material for this question was vast and many candidates fell back on describing a range of different artefacts and symbols with most candidates conflating these two concepts entirely. The problem with the descriptive approach was that, while it showed off some correct and relevant knowledge, the explanation of importance was inevitably limited and often present only by implication through the account of what is symbolised or 'meant' by the specific artefact.
- (c) Most responses used the same examples given previously to support the view that artefacts can be useful. Alternative views were almost always presented as an opposite and tended to be less well supported and far less Judaism specific. References to children playing with artefacts or people being carried away in admiration of beautiful workmanship were common.

#### Question 6

- (a) (i) Most responses were restricted to preparations at home, and generally those of a practical nature. However, preparations of other kinds, including spiritual preparation, were credited when they appeared.
- (ii) This was a broad question with most candidates giving examples such as attending synagogue, resting and spending time with family, although there were some more specifically Jewish references to sharing challah and saying kiddush. The small number of candidates who did not gain marks had either misread the question to be about things which are avoided on Shabbat or they had confused Jewish and Christian practices.
- (b) Most responses answered this question well, relating Jewish practices on Shabbat to both stories of creation and to the mitzvot. The importance of rest was often a primary focus, but responses included a broad range of appropriate material.
- (c) Most responses were able to identify differences in the demands of the contemporary world to those when Judaism originated, and most candidates were able to construct these into differing perspectives on whether those demands should be accepted or resisted in the name of religion. However, many responses struggled to include explicit references to Judaism as required by the question.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Paper 0490/13  
Paper 1

## General comments

Some candidates found the part (c) questions challenging, especially in terms of the development of an argument, through justification, to a conclusion. The most common form of response was to list a few points on one or both sides of an argument, without weaving this into a discussion. It was also noticeable that many candidates did not appear to have read the stimuli in their entirety, focusing on a key term, rather than the sentence as a whole.

There were some apparent issues relating to exam skills, with a minority of candidates spending time and effort on parts (a)(i) and (ii) in excess of what would be indicated by the available marks and at the expense of more in depth answers for other sections.

## Comments on specific questions

### *Section A – Christianity*

#### Question 1

- (a) (i) This question was most simply answered with a list of items, but some candidates chose to give longer, more descriptive answers. Since the number of items was not specified in the question both approaches were creditable and able to gain all available marks, however, the latter approach led to responses which were generally far longer than necessary.
- (ii) Most candidates answered this question well. Any denominational approach was creditable, as were more general descriptions of how an altar is used. A lot of responses showed high levels of knowledge about communion and the role of the altar for this form of worship.
- (b) While most candidates were aware of the concept of thanksgiving and able to offer at least a basic explanation of why Christians offer it to God, the reference in the question to ‘services and prayers’ was commonly overlooked. Sometimes it was missing entirely, with the response focused solely on the concept of giving thanks with no references to when or how that might happen. Other examples simply conflated services and prayers into a single thing.
- (c) This was a well-answered question, with most candidates offering considered and reflective responses about the relative benefits to the individual of private and communal worship. The term ‘devotion’ given in the stimulus was generally interpreted as a synonym for worship, which focused the discussion into a fairly narrow area, but responses were still discursive in nature.

#### Question 2

- (a) (i) Most candidates had some relevant detail of the story of the Ascension. However, there were two common errors: some candidates confused the Ascension with the resurrection, and some described the whole story from the resurrection up to the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The latter did usually include some relevant information but wasted a lot of exam time on an extended answer where this was not needed.
- (ii) The idea of preparing for Easter seemed challenging for some candidates, resulting in some responses being about the festival itself. Some candidates identified Lent as being the primary period of preparation but were less able to describe what it involved, while others took a purely practical (and largely generalised) approach.

- (b) Most candidates had no difficulty identifying a Christian festival, but then didn't necessarily connect this with teachings about Christian beliefs. Most described the festival and the stronger responses related it to events in the Christian story, thereby giving at least an implied answer to the question.
- (c) Many candidates handled this question well. A common argument was that addressing problems of poverty could well be part of celebrations, with many candidates linking that to the two greatest commandments and their centrality for Christians. Some reflective answers pointed out that the stimulus is a false dichotomy, presenting an either/or choice where there is no need for one.

### **Section B – Islam**

#### **Question 3**

- (a) (i)(ii) While most candidates answered these questions well, there were a minority who were unable to distinguish between the nature and responsibilities of an imam's role and those of a Christian priest.
- (b) Many candidates were able to discuss the symbolic importance of writing in Islam and the idea of it as a tool given and used by Allah. However, few mentioned the prohibition on images of Allah or prophets in Islam
- (c) While most responses were able to offer arguments from various perspectives on the issue, the majority of them did not include any material or views specific to Islam.

#### **Question 4**

- (a) (i) Most candidates were able to correctly name two Muslim festivals.
- (ii) Most responses began with the observation that the fast is broken and then listed some generic forms of celebration. Id ul-Fitr and the specific Islamic customs associated with it were rarely mentioned.
- (b) This proved a challenging question in that most candidates seemed to know what the categories of exemption from hajj are but were unable to turn that into an explanation as to why those exemptions exist. Some candidates were able to offer observations about physical challenges and not causing undue financial hardship, but these were very much the minority.
- (c) Most candidates were able to offer reasons why non-Muslims might consider it wrong to sacrifice animals. This did take the discussion slightly away from the focus of the stimulus, but it also ensured that different perspectives were included.

### **Section C – Judaism**

#### **Question 5**

- (a) (i) A noticeable minority of candidates were unaware of the role of chazan. Common but erroneous responses presented them as comparable to a deacon in a Christian church. Those who were familiar with the term found this a straightforward question.
- (ii) While most candidates answered this question well, there were a minority who were unable to distinguish between the nature and responsibilities of a rabbi's role and those of a Christian priest.
- (b) Most candidates were able to successfully answer the question. There were a few responses that went into substantial depth about the philosophical reasons behind the prohibition on images, but this is not knowledge that would be expected at this level of study.
- (c) This question saw a real range of responses, with some reflective answers drawing on Jewish history, the role of the Temple and the significance of its loss. But there were also candidates who gave very general responses, and sometimes used Christian terms and ideas as if they were universal.

#### **Question 6**

- (a) (i)** Almost all candidates were able to connect Yad Vashem with the Holocaust and most expanded this with an account of what the Holocaust was rather than with the description of the memorial asked for by the question.
- (ii)** Most candidates were aware of the Western Wall and familiar with at least some common practices which take place there. The most common error for the minority who did not know about the significance of the Wall was to connect it to Yad Vashem, describing people as going there to remember the Shoah.
- (b)** A significant number of candidates seemed unaware of which festivals constitute the pilgrim festivals. Some candidates used their understanding of the concept of being a pilgrim to attempt an answer while others wrote generally about why festivals are important.
- (c)** This was another part **(c)** question where candidates proved able to have a discussion but without explicitly referencing Judaism or Jewish perspectives on the issue.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Paper 0490/22  
Paper 2

## Key messages

The majority of candidates showed that they had prepared well for the examination with excellent notes and guidance given by centres. In **part (a)** questions most candidates were able to select the correct areas of knowledge which is encouraging. Some elaboration of detail would allow access to higher levels for more candidates though many achieved higher levels in these questions.

In **part (b)** questions many selected the correct and relevant body of knowledge from the Syllabus. It is in the application of this knowledge that further development would allow candidates to access the higher levels. Understanding that the assessment objectives for these questions necessitates far more than simply describing will further enhance answers. The command word of 'explain' means that responses need to use information rather than to simply describe it. Candidates must demonstrate a good understanding of religious teachings and clearly demonstrate the relationship between belief and practice.

For **part (c)** questions, whilst a structure might be helpful, at times a formulaic approach can be restrictive. A personal opinion ought to be substantive, rather than being purely the reiteration of material already included in the response.

## General comments

The performance overall was good. Some candidates who knew a lot of information for **part (a)** questions should not feel that they have to write absolutely everything possible. Some did have to cut short subsequent answers as a result of doing this early on in the paper. Candidates have been well prepared and answers reflected the fact that candidates of all abilities were able to access the questions. A range of skills were displayed and this was particularly evident in **part (c)** questions which increasingly contained a variety of perspectives.

Some rubric infringements were in evidence which reduced the amount of time (and hence marks) that candidates had for an answer that was credited.

**Section A and Section B** (Christianity and Islam) were the most popular combination of questions. **Section C** (Judaism) attracted a significant number of candidates also.

## Comments on specific questions

### *Section A Christianity*

#### Question 1

- (a) Responses which were able to paraphrase the stories in the Gospels and could organise these in a sequential way, scored highly. Weaker responses needed to present a wider range of material rather than describing one or two events very briefly. The question narrowed down the content to 'in Bethlehem'. Candidates need not refer to events before or after this time.
- (b) Stronger responses highlighted the group they were going to focus on, gave an account of their role in the story and most importantly, explained why that group was important to the story. Most referred to the magi. Weaker responses often mentioned more than one group and merely described what that group did in the story.



- (c) Stronger response recognised that the teachings in the story of Christmas are shared by many, both religious and non-religious. Those with no belief still generally know the story. Excellent responses could draw out the aspects of the Christmas story which resonate with either Islam or Judaism. Weaker responses tended to focus on agreeing with the statement, citing beliefs such as 'Jesus loves all'.

### Question 2

- (a) Responses that dealt with both parts of this question scored more highly. An excellent feature would be to acknowledge that all of the commandments were summarised by Jesus in the Two Greatest Commandments. Weaker responses did not deal equally with both parts of the question. On occasion, only one part was addressed. Some responses simply wrote out the Ten Commandments.
- (b) Excellent responses wrote out the commandment and gave a detailed development and/or example of how obeying it might affect one's life. Weaker responses generally stated the commandment only and were unable to explain how it might affect the behaviour of a Christian. This question was not specifically about the Two Greatest Commandments.
- (c) Many responses suggested that the Ten Commandments are such common sense rules that they are clear enough, needing no further guidance. On the other hand, it could be suggested that due to the relative context of the commandments, they need guidance on how to apply them today. Some said that God gives guidance as do priests.

### Question 3

- (a) Stronger responses could give a wide variety of charitable acts, which covered physical, spiritual and emotional needs. Weaker responses could be improved by being more specific to Christianity as often generic acts of charity were described (donating clothes or making cakes). Tithing is one example of an improvement.
- (b) Responses that scored highly were those that could link Christian beliefs and teachings to the existence of missionary work. They might have used some of the information from **part (a)** but crucially explained why such activity is important such as spreading 'The Gospel'. Weaker responses repeated the charitable acts from **part (a)** as if they were exactly the same as the importance of missionary work.
- (c) Stronger responses suggested that being a good Christian involves having love for others, certain beliefs and kind actions. These may not be necessitated by being a member of a church. Some weaker responses misread the question. The question is asking about whether membership of a church allows one to be a good Christian, rather than a good person in general.

### Section B Islam

#### Question 4

- (a) Stronger responses knew specific detail regarding who helped Muhammad (pbuh), such as Abu Bakr **and** how they helped. Specific detail was needed for the higher levels. Most responses mentioned the cave that was covered with a spider's web, but weaker responses neglected to mention divine help.
- (b) Strong responses fully addressed the command word to this question. They briefly referred to Muhammad's (pbuh) persecution and then fully explained why this was the case. Explanations included that some said that Muhammad (pbuh) would not have been chosen by God and also that his opponents did not want to give up belief in idol worship. Weaker responses tended to only describe how Muhammad (pbuh) was persecuted.
- (c) Strong responses extended any reference to Muhammad (pbuh) into how Muslims should behave in society. They referred to concepts such as peace and compassion. Excellent responses suggested that a human being cannot be perfect. Weaker responses might refer to how Muslims behave today but this was not linked to the behaviour of Muhammad (pbuh).

#### Question 5



- (a) Strong responses described the beliefs in both prophets and angels with detail and elaboration, including the names of some prophets and angels as well as their roles. Weaker responses gave little description beyond the fact that Muslims do believe in them. Some referred to either one or the other.
- (b) Responses that were able to show the implications of believing in the unity of God scored highly. For example, believing in the unity of God means that nothing can rival God. This is important as it shows that God is the greatest. Weaker responses could not show why the belief in the unity of God is important and were limited to describing Tawhid.
- (c) Stronger responses were able to discuss more than one perspective *from a Muslim point of view*. One view is that Muslim birth ceremonies introduce the baby to a religion and that this has considerable benefits. Another perspective is to emphasise free-will in Islam and how Muslims hold this in balance with the duty to teach religion to the young. Some weaker responses focused only on free will and suggested that birth ceremonies negatively removed all free will. Generic responses could not access the higher level.

### Question 6

- (a) Responses that knew the difference between zakah and sadaqah were at an advantage. They were able to give a detailed description of what they are and how they are carried out. Weaker responses needed to expand on the statement that sadaqah are voluntary contributions.
- (b) Stronger responses were able to refer to key Muslim beliefs and teachings such as equality and concern for others. They used this to illustrate why a Muslim feels it is important to support the work of Muslim aid agencies. Weaker responses failed to address the question fully. Some described the work of a Muslim aid agency. This could be improved on by showing how Muslim teachings suggest it is the duty of a Muslim to support aid work. Some wrongly interpreted this question as why the work of Muslim aid organisations is important.
- (c) Many candidates discussed whether Muslims are equal rather than 'equally important in the sight of God'. Some stronger responses perceptively suggested that one's role within Islam and/or society could affect the level of importance attached to that person. Reference was also made to one's fate at the day of judgement. Weaker responses made the question into one that it was not and were unable to access the full range of marks.

### Section C Judaism

#### Question 7

- (a) Both parts of the question needed to be addressed for the higher marks. Therefore, stronger responses knew what the Mishnah is and gave detail concerning it. This could include it being passed on by word of mouth originally. Stronger responses also knew how the Mishnah is used as a source of authority by Jews today.
- (b) Stronger responses knew that the Talmud contains rabbinical discussion on the Mishnah and therefore gave its purpose. These responses showed how the Talmud helps Jews to understand laws and customs and draws out the practicalities of expected behaviour. Weaker responses were able to say a little about the Talmud but their responses were not directed towards the 'explain' command word.
- (c) A number of lines of argument were in evidence in stronger responses. One was that human beings cannot understand God and that scripture only give as much knowledge as God wants to give. Another perspective given was that God has always revealed through scripture, whether that is ambiguously or unambiguously, and God can be understood because of this. Weaker responses showed little awareness of the belief that God can be revealed in scripture. Responses could discuss whether God can be experienced through prayer. Some misinterpreted this question as asking whether studying the Jewish scriptures is a good thing to do.

#### Question 8

- (a) Some stronger responses described the work of an international Jewish relief aid agency. They elaborated on the variety of work carried out by this agency mentioning at least one thing that was specific to Judaism. However, many responses gave generic descriptions of possible work that an agency might carry out, making it indistinguishable from another religion or a secular organisation.
- (b) Some excellent responses were able to focus on the practicalities of observing the food laws. These included keeping kosher in a context which is not primarily Jewish. They also explained issues surrounding the separation of meat and dairy. Weaker responses tended to describe some of the food laws often with no reference to challenges faced.
- (c) Excellent responses included reference to Jewish teachings. Strong responses discussed the statement from more than one perspective, with one common theme being that kind actions will always bear fruit. Another favoured approach was to consider the range of actions that could be considered to be 'kind'. These could be direct action to help those in need as well as indirect actions such as helping the needy to help themselves. Weaker responses did little more than agree with the statement with no reference to Judaism.

### Question 9

- (a) Stronger responses gave tremendous breadth of religious responsibilities. Many were familiar with the role of the woman in festivals, especially Shabbat, as well as the woman's role in keeping a kosher home. Some weaker responses stereotyped the role of the woman in Judaism and did not deal with the *religious* responsibilities.
- (b) Stronger responses showed an understanding of the importance of family life and the home in Judaism. Responsibilities relating to parents were described with the importance of this being explained. The home as the essence of Jewish morality was also explained. Weaker responses gave more of a description of Jewish family life. Reference could have been made to the importance of the observance of festivals in the home as well as to the role of the family in choosing a marriage partner in some traditions.
- (c) Stronger responses understood the challenge of inter faith marriage. Points considered included possible conflict over the religion of children that might result from the marriage. Also, the challenge of conflict over religious practices was discussed. An excellent alternative could be to consider whether differences could be overcome by compromise. Weaker responses tended to only agree with the statement with most suggesting that one cannot help who one falls in love with or dealt with issues pre-marriage.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Paper 0490/23  
Paper 2

## Key messages

Most candidates showed that they had prepared and revised well. They used some excellent notes and took advantage of guidance given by centres. In **part (a)** questions most candidates were able to select the correct areas of knowledge. Many achieved higher levels in these questions, some with relative ease. Other candidates would be able to access the higher levels if they gave more than scant detail.

In **part (b)** questions the vast majority also selected the correct and relevant body of knowledge from the Syllabus. It is in the application of this knowledge that further development would allow candidates to access the higher levels. 'Explain' is generally the command word used in these questions and candidates need to tailor their responses accordingly. Understanding that the assessment objectives for these questions necessitates far more than simply describing will further enhance answers. Candidates must demonstrate a good understanding of religious teachings and clearly demonstrate the relationship between belief and practice.

**Part (c)** questions should be discussed from more than one perspective and many were versed in this technique. Stronger answers were not constrained by a formulaic response. A personal opinion ought to be substantive, rather than being purely the reiteration of material already included in the response.

## General comments

The performance overall was good. Candidates have been well prepared and answers reflected the fact that candidates of all abilities were able to access the questions. A range of skills were displayed which were evident across the part questions but to a varying degree.

A considerable number of rubric infringements were in evidence which reduced the amount of time (and hence marks) that candidates had for an answer that was credited. Also, candidates need not write absolutely everything they know about a topic in order to gain full marks.

**Section A and Section B** (Christianity and Islam) were the most popular combination of questions. **Section C** (Judaism) attracted slightly less candidates overall.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A Christianity**

#### **Question 1**

- (a) Stronger responses described not only some of the books or types of literature but also elaborated with other details such as the authority of the content. There were some interesting responses which adopted a thematic approach which is perfectly valid. It is useful to refer to books within each Testament along with a resume of the general theme within. Weaker responses gave lists of the names of books.
- (b) Stronger responses contained variety in the answer. A common feature was to refer to the importance of the New Testament as it contains information about the life of Jesus. This was the case for weaker answers also which tended to confine the response to that point. Answers that went further scored more highly. These included reference to the New Testament as a source of inspiration and a guide for Christian life.

- (c) Excellent responses could refer to the fact that some Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. Strong responses discussed the fact that the Old Testament contains the Ten Commandments which is an extremely useful set of guidance for Christians today. Weaker responses generally agreed with the statement saying that the Old Testament is part of the Bible. Use could also have been made of lessons or themes from the Old Testament which could guide Christians today.

### Question 2

- (a) Stronger responses were able to give a decent amount of information from one story alone, as the question asked. Most chose material from the Easter story but other events such as Jesus' temptation by the devil were known by some. Weaker responses merged stories into one without really drawing out the suffering aspect, which meant that the question was not fully addressed.
- (b) Including explanations of a variety of Christian beliefs enhanced responses as it added flair. One belief commonly referred to was that Jesus died so that sins could be forgiven. Another was to explain that human beings must be truly sorry in order to be forgiven. Excellent responses could also refer to the Lord's Prayer. Weaker responses were more of a description of the belief that God forgives sins.
- (c) Stronger responses discussed whether human beings can be perfect. Perceptive responses claimed that humans can strive to be perfect by following Jesus' example. Others suggested that only God can be perfect. Weaker responses generally gave the one perspective that perfection is impossible. Interesting discussion would have involved raising whether it is acceptable to command someone to do something which might be impossible.

### Question 3

- (a) Stronger responses chose an appropriate ceremony such as infant or believers' baptism, marriage or healing and gave an excellent level of detail in terms of what happens in the ceremony as well as the role of the Holy Spirit in the ceremony. Weaker responses could identify a ceremony but were less clear about the detail.
- (b) Many of the stronger responses drew from a variety of material regarding Christian beliefs about the work of the Holy Spirit. Some excellent responses referred to the Holy Spirit as a guide and as a source of comfort. Responses also explained how it is believed that the Holy Spirit can inspire people, bestowing charismatic gifts on them. Weaker responses could show awareness of the wider role of the Holy Spirit such as its working through the clergy and the church in general.
- (c) Responses that discussed the issue from a variety of perspectives with clarity scored more highly. One line of argument was that an answer to prayer might not always be instant and that God works in mysterious ways. Some disagreed with the statement suggesting that some are not 'true' prayers in the sense that they ask for irrelevant things or material gain. Weaker responses were able to refer to atrocities in the world and said that they are evidence for prayers not being answered. This is a useful point to make which could be made to be more relevant by linking it to Christianity or God's actions.

### Section B Islam

#### Question 4

- (a) Stronger responses were able to describe the account of the first revelation of the Qur'an, in the correct order with an appropriate level of detail. The detail should include specific references to words said and actions performed. Weaker responses knew some elements of the story and this gave only a glimmer of detail.
- (b) It is important to deal with both parts of this question for the higher marks. Stronger responses could explain that it is because Muhammad (pbuh) was chosen by God, that God blessed him and provided for him. Regarding protection, the strong explanations included the belief that God protected Muhammad (pbuh) as a reward for his determination and courage. Weaker responses tended to describe the fact that God did protect Muhammad (pbuh) rather than explaining why.

- (c) Some candidates found this a challenging question, although stronger responses were able to discuss this from more than one perspective. One such perspective was that the Makkans did understand the message of Muhammad (pbuh) but that they chose to ignore it. Another view was that due to the worship of idols in Makkah the Makkans were unfamiliar with the belief in one God. Weaker responses said that the Makkans indeed did not understand Muhammad's (pbuh) message. In general responses could have considered that the Makkans might have chosen not to listen to the message as they did not consider Muhammad (pbuh) to be a prophet.

### Question 5

- (a) Strong responses gave a good amount of detail for a range of customs. This level of knowledge was generally good across the cohort. Candidates did not need to include every custom for full marks but very many did. Flair could be added to responses if candidates could use terms such as Adhan and Iqamah. Some confused terms such as mohel from Jewish circumcision ceremonies.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify the Qur'an as a guide for Muslims and the benefits that brings. Some explained the belief that the Qur'an is the revealed word of God so using it would benefit one's life. Showing how Shariah law is based on the Qur'an would enhance responses as would a Qur'anic teaching that might be regarded as a good guide for life.
- (c) Some candidates found it a challenge to respond to the question in more than one way. Most were able to suggest that being Muslim is all encompassing, and so daily life should be all about following the religion. Less well discussed was the idea that some areas of life might need to be separated from religion in order to make objective decisions.

### Question 6

- (a) Responses which were specific to Muslim teachings scored more highly. This could include reference to specific verses from the Qur'an or by referring to education and/or specific methods of upbringing. This will allow responses to be less generic in nature which is what the majority of weaker responses gave in their answer.
- (b) The content of responses differed greatly. This can be accounted for by the different cultural settings that candidates live in. Greater awareness of how some Muslims may face challenges in different parts of the world would allow greater access to more marks. Reference could then be made to the practicalities of trying to follow Muslim teachings in different cultural settings. The question is asking candidates to refer back to the teachings about the care of children and the elderly. Responses could suggest that a change in working patterns for males and females, educational needs and other establishments that can care for the elderly might be borne in mind.
- (c) Responses to this were often too generic in nature, lacking reference to Islam. Candidates could consider whether change is a fact of life as well as whether change must be accepted. Reference to 'accepting change' ought to be made with reference to Muslim beliefs and practices. Some suggested that many Muslim beliefs and practices do not and cannot change whereas other things might not be as definitive.

### Section C Judaism

#### Question 7

- (a) Most knew the division of the Tenakh and also the names of some of the books therein. For the higher marks responses needed more detail such as the content or subject matter of some of the books. Those who did mentioned the Pentateuch and some of the key events within these books. Mention was also made of themes within Writings or some of the aims of the prophetic books.
- (b) Some weaker responses merely described what mitzvot are. Responses needed to explain that the mitzvot are G-d's wishes for His people. Strong responses explained that obeying the mitzvot shows that Jews recognise the importance of the Covenant. Connections to Bar and Bat Mitzvah and the obligation to take responsibility for following the mitzvot could be included.
- (c) This question is asking what Judaism is comprised of. Strong responses were able to discuss Judaism with reference to things other than obeying laws. This included that some consider

Judaism to be more about race rather than religion and that not all Jews follow all mitzvot. Weak responses found it difficult to go beyond any reference to obeying laws.

### Question 8

- (a) Detail was generally known well, and stronger responses were able to describe the ceremony from the time the baby was passed over by the mother until the end of the service. Responses could be enhanced by specific reference to the mohel and sandek, as well as mentioning blessings and/or the naming of the child.
- (b) Responses could build on the answer in the previous part question. Excellent responses explained the integral link between the Covenant made between Abraham and circumcision. Emphasis on the continuation of tradition would be a good inclusion. Many valiantly tried to emphasise the 'whole Jewish community' aspect too.
- (c) Stronger responses knew what traditional Jewish family life is like. They were able to show the benefits of such a family life. Other lines of argument suggested other strengths of Judaism, such as resilience and the keeping of commandments.

### Question 9

- (a) Responses needed to describe such things as the keeping of the mitzvot, three daily periods of prayer and the reading of the Torah. More emphasis could be put on the role and responsibilities of men within the home. This is a question where providing generic, often stereotypical responses regarding the roles and responsibilities of men, did not access the higher levels.
- (b) Awareness of the existence of different Jewish communities made for a stronger response. For example, some showed an understanding of Progressive Judaism's acceptance of female rabbis. Also, economic reasons featuring in the acceptance of changes to the traditional role of women are a useful feature. In general, referring to the wider acceptance of women's rights is a perfectly valid way to answer the question.
- (c) Many were able to discuss from more than one perspective. One argument was that wearing traditional clothing shows the solemnity or grandeur of an occasion, hence making it more special. Another argument was that it does not matter what one wears as long as the prayer is made with a pure heart. Some interpreted the 'traditional clothing' as 'older' clothing that had been passed down through generations. This was credited as one way of understanding the question.