RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/12

Worship, Beliefs, Scriptures and Sacred Places

Key messages

- Candidates are reminded to focus on the question asked. This includes understanding the demand of the command word used within it.
- Candidates are reminded that **part (a)** questions only require short answer responses
- For the **part (c)** (evaluation) questions, it is important to include more than one viewpoint and to include a clear judgment
- It is important that all responses refer to the specific religion of each section.

General comments

The paper had a new structure this year, with three questions offered in each section instead of two, meaning candidates had a choice of question within each religion chosen. There seemed to be a good understanding of the rubric for the most part, with few candidates attempting more than the required number of questions. It was more common for candidates to leave one of the sections of a chosen question unattempted.

Christianity (***Section A***) was the most popular choice of religion overall. There seemed to be a common disparity in the level of understanding of the two religions chosen. The level of knowledge demonstrated in the Judaism section was often weaker than that of the other religions. It was also more likely to show confusion with Christianity than responses in the Islam section. There was also some conflation of concepts from different religions.

Generic material that is equally true of any of the religions on the paper can be both relevant and creditable. However, responses which consist wholly of this kind of material, with no reference to the specific religion asked about in the question are likely to be limited.

Exam skills such as 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 are important. For **part (a)** questions, many responses were significantly longer than necessary despite the command words implying that only short answers were needed. By contrast, the **(b)** and **(c) part** questions relate to depth, detail and application of knowledge to the question that has been asked.

Evaluation **part (c)** questions require discussion, in the form of a consideration of different perspectives on the issue raised in the question, including views and material specific to the religion specified in the question. A clear judgement in relation to the issue is also required.

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Comments on specific questions

Section A – Christianity

Question 1

(a) (i) Most responses were successful. Common correct responses named liturgical and non-liturgical worship, hymn singing and communion. The question required specific forms of worship to be named, meaning that general category terms such as 'public' and 'private' or 'communal' and 'individual' were not creditable responses.

(ii) This was well answered. A majority of candidates were able to identify the chalice and paten as a plate and a cup or goblet. The most common form of development was then to connect them to the sharing of bread and wine. Some responses mixed the two up – identifying the chalice as the plate and vice versa, but as long as responses gave a correct account of their use, this was credited. Other successful responses gave a general description of the chalice and paten as artefacts used in holy communion to enable the sharing of wine and bread as the body and blood of Christ.

(b) Many responses demonstrated a range of knowledge about what the Bible is, why it is important and different ways it might be used. Most responses were limited as they tended to be descriptive and were not focused on the question asked. Clear reference to private worship was unusual, although this was a key term in the question; where it was addressed it was often described in detail without clear reference to the Bible.

(c) Approaches to this question ranged from discussion about statues as teaching aids, reminders of Gods work in the world and/or supports for faith to consideration of whether there is a duty to make places of worship clearly identifiable and/or beautiful, the dangers of idol worship and the risk of distraction from what is really important during worship. Most responses were discursive with different views clearly identified and supported. However, many had no kind of conclusion or judgement on the issue, which is a key element of evaluation. A noticeable minority of candidates appeared to misread the word 'statues' as 'statuses', leading to responses about leadership roles in the church.

Question 2

(a) (i) This question was fairly well answered. The most common responses were the ascension and the resurrection, but a range of answers was seen from events immediately afterwards, such as earthquakes and tearing the curtain in the Temple, to more distant ones like Pentecost. Where incorrect responses were given, they tended to be in the form of events in Jesus lifetime, but some gave the Second Coming and/or the Last Judgement, which have not yet taken place and so could not be credited.

(ii) This was another well answered question. While the question could be answered adequately without naming people, most candidates chose to give a name and then a statement about that person's part in the life of Jesus. Mary was the most commonly identified, but there was greater variety in the second person chosen including Jospeh, Peter, Simon of Cyrene, Judas, and Pontius Pilate. There was some repetition, such as identifying 'Mother Mary', and then unnecessarily repeating that she was Jesus' mother. Incorrect responses included God, Satan, and the Angel Gabriel; these were not credited as the question specified 'people'. Paul was also seen in some responses but could not be credited as they did not meet prior to Jesus' death on the cross. Some responses described the role of people like the disciples and/or the magi. Since the role was the focus of the question these could be effective, but two distinct roles needed to be identified and developed sufficiently for this as the question also specifies the roles of two people.

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(b) A majority of responses recognised the concept of God the Father as a part of the Trinity and offered some description of this concept. This often included detail about the role of each part of the Trinity; only some of this was relevant to the question which was focused on the importance of God the Father in Christianity. Some responses addressed the question more directly by setting out Christian beliefs about the role of a father in general terms, about God as their father and also as the father of Christ and about the connection between being the creator and being the father. Connections between this and the importance of the belief were usually left implicit.

(c) The most common responses were descriptive, setting out the concept of the Trinity as a whole and details about each person of the Trinity. In some instances, this was a repetition of the **part (b)** response. Most responses included some reference to important but for some this was presented in a universal way, implying all Christians agree on the matter, this made discussion somewhat limited. There were responses that showed awareness of non-Trinitarian Christian traditions and/or which considered the relationship of the Trinity to concepts of monotheism and the requirement to worship only one God.

Question 3

(a) (i) This was a well answered question. Common answers included spiritual renewal, coming closer to God, strengthening faith and connecting with Christian history.

(ii) A noticeable minority of candidates seemed unfamiliar with the term 'the Way of the Cross', writing about the cross as a symbol in general terms or suggesting that the cross on which Christ was crucified is preserved in Jerusalem. Effective responses took two forms: those which described the stations of the cross as a contemporary pilgrimage route winding through modern Jerusalem and those who related the term to the past, describing Jesus' progress towards his crucifixion. Some responses used both approaches, and it was quite common to write more than was needed.

(b) This was not a well-answered question for the most part. Many responses were generic giving general reasons for going on a pilgrimage without any reference to Rome, to the significance of Rome in world history or to its appeal for art enthusiasts. Equally common were responses that misidentified Rome as the place where Jesus was born, tried and/or crucified, where he carried out his ministry and where he appeared to the disciples after his resurrection. Some responses sited Lourdes in Rome. Correct knowledge of the connection between Christianity and Rome was often limited to identifying it as the home of the Pope/site of the Vatican.

(c) Most answers were discursive, contrasting physical and spiritual challenges associated with pilgrimage. Many responses werfe very generic and could have been equally relevant for any religion on the paper. This question seemed to give rise to more explicit judgements on the issue than other **(c)-part** questions in this section.

Section B – Islam

Question 4

(a) (i) Effective responses demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the term 'caliph'. There were very few responses giving incorrect names of people, although some did give the names of prophets. A considerable number of candidates did not appear familiar with the term 'caliph', with responses consisting of a somewhat random selection of Islamic terms.

(ii) As with **(a)(i)** above, where the key term 'sawm' was correctly identified, this produced effective responses. Successful responses identified 'sawm' as meaning 'fasting', and most responses then went on to identify things that are avoided during the fasting period. A minority of responses confused sawm with salah.

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(b) Many responses to this question consisted of a descriptive account of Muhammad's life from the First Revelation to the flight to Madinah. This did generally include some material about what form the persecutions took, but the reasons why they occurred (which was the focus of the question) were not explored in depth; in a lot of responses this was only addressed with a passing reference to Muhammad (pbuh) preaching Islam. Better developed responses considered the polytheist tradition of Makkah at that time and the connections between religion and secular power. There were also responses which demonstrated little relevant knowledge, including describing Muhammad (pbuh) as being killed for his faith and also those who described him persecuting other people**.**

(c) The idea of restrictions in this question appeared challenging for some, leading to descriptions of the Qur'an and its contents without any discussion of the significance of the rules within it for Muslim life. Some better responses recognised why some rules might look like restrictions or limitations, and considered whether Muslims would experience them in that way. Some of these discussions did move away from the question of the significance of the restrictions in favour of interrogating that use of that term.

Question 5

(a) (i) A majority of responses named places that are part of the Hajj, although not all of them correctly named Mina. Many responses correctly mentioned that the stones are thrown at pillars or at Shaytan.

(ii) This was a generally well answered question with most responses identifying fatigue, extreme heat, risk of injury or disease, challenging terrain, and long distances. Some included financial concerns and the expenses of travel which were not credited as physical challenges. There were also a few responses detailing exemptions from fasting.

(b) Some responses deployed a good range of knowledge of Islam in response to this question, observing that the Hajj is not complete without it and referencing the last sermon and judgement day. Some also included Adam and Eve. Many of these responses went beyond description, connecting these ideas to broader religious concepts in order to explain the significance of the Stand. There were also responses which demonstrated little or no knowledge of what the Stand is. Some were general making reference to Arafat as a place Muhammad (pbuh) went and to all parts of the Hajj being what God wants. Others had no relevant material at all – a few described a large lectern.

(c) Most responses showed understanding of what ihram means and were able to link this with being in a pure state during. It was also common to identify other important aspects of Hajj, including the Stand. Not all responses turned this into an explicit discussion, but those that did so generally explored whether any single aspect can be more important than others when all are compulsory.

Question 6

(a) (i) Confusing the mihrab with the minbar was quite common. Some said that the mihrab is a compass, which was not credited, but could successfully identify the need to face Makkah for prayer. Others gave only a single statement about showing the direction for prayer, which limited their answer.

(ii) This was well answered, with a broad range of artefacts seen across the responses. Where there were errors, it was most commonly giving a feature of the mosque building instead of an artefact.

(b) The most common approach to this question was to describe the Qur'an itself, with some adding a final sentence saying that this demonstrates why it should be treated well, even though the reasons were rarely explicitly identified. Other responses described how it is treated, referencing the need to wash hands and keep it in a high place, but often without giving reasons why this should be so.

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(c) This was a well answered question with candidates demonstrating knowledge of the different ways a mosque can be used and showing some ability to distinguish use for worship from other uses.

Section C – Judaism

Question 7

(a) (i) While some candidates correctly identified challah bread, a significant number either gave unleavened bread/matzoh or the Host/communion wafer used in Christian worship.

(ii) Many candidates gave descriptions of the tallit and how it is used, but this is not what the question asked for. Responses that addressed the symbolism were not common and very few gave more than a connection between the tzitzit and the number of mitzvot.

(b) Most responses were able to say that the Ner Tamid is a light which represents the presence of G-d, and some explicitly described it as an ever-burning light, emphasising that connection. Some were also able to expand on links with the Temple and with the idea of the Jewish people being a light to all nations. A few responses drifted into more Christian perspective, connecting the light with an eternal life in heaven and/or with Jesus as the light of the world.

(c) This question saw a majority of very generic responses, considering public worship in general terms such as bringing communities together and learning from one another or considering personal preferences for praying in private. A lot of Christian material was also present, with references to the presence of the Holy Spirit during communal worship, witnessing, evangelising and the need for public confession. A few response were more focused on Judaism and were able to use the concept of minyan and occasions when it is required, or to consider traditions which locate worship in the home, such as shabbat.

Question 8

(a) (i) The majority of correct responses mentioned the Western Wall, the idea of education and prayers for the restoration/return of the temple. Confusion with Yad Vashem was common, with reference to eternal flames of remembrance and collecting witness testimonies. Some responses implied that the Temple still exists, or that it is synonymous with a synagogue.

(ii) Many responses demonstrated good knowledge of sites at Yad Vashem, most commonly the children's memorial and the Hall of Remembrance. Some responses gave descriptions that did not go with the name they specified but this did not greatly impact success in most cases as there was no requirement in the question to name the site described. Some weaker responses conflated Yad Vashem with the Temple Mount and/or the Western Wall.

(b) Most responses to this question were very brief and many implied a lack of familiarity with the term 'shoah'. Many answers simply stated 'because shoah is their word for it' and moved on to the next question. Some demonstrated knowledge about the Holocaust without reference to the term 'shoah'. There were a few excellent responses that considered the origins of the respective terms, the different meanings associated with those and the need to listen to the voices of those most affected. Other responses considered the issue in more general terms relating to loss and sensitivity towards those who have suffered.

(c) This question produced a lot of very generic answers, using ideas such as the practicalities of travel, cost and time off work, which are neither irrelevant nor incorrect, but which also did not tackle Jewish ideas about pilgrimage. Some responses included knowledge about the pilgrim festivals and/or a discussion about the role of pilgrimage in the past compared to the modern world with the Temple no longer in existence.

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Question 9

(a) (i) This was a well answered question with almost all responses gaining full credit.

(ii) This was another well answered question. Where responses where limited, this was most commonly because of a repetition such as saying that G-d is omnipotent and all powerful.

(b) The most common approach was to describe the contents of the Torah, which implies revelation. The depth and detail of this description varied, as did the extent to which the material identified related to revelation, which was the focus of the question). Some responses did explicitly address revelation through Moses, including both the Pentateuch and the giving of the Ten Commandments.

(c) Judaism specific understanding of the term 'negative mitzvot' was not always clear. Some responses discussed negative and positive without elaborating on what they actually meant but presuming that positive was good and negative bad. Many effective responses did include a judgement on the issue, usually that all mitzvot come from G-d and so are significant. There were responses that differentiated between things that have to be done and things that have to be avoided, and these generally yielded a better discussion, although often arriving at the same conclusion.

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/13

Worship, Beliefs, Scriptures and Sacred Places

Key messages

- Candidates are reminded to focus on the question asked. This includes understanding the demand of the command word used within it.
- Candidates are reminded that **part (a)** questions only require short answer responses
- For the **part (c)** (evaluation) questions, it is important to include more than one viewpoint and to include a clear judgment
- It is important that all responses refer to the specific religion of each section.

General comments

The paper had a new structure this year, with three questions offered in each section instead of two, meaning candidates had a choice of question within each religion chosen. There seemed to be a good understanding of the rubric for the most part, with few candidates attempting more than the required number of questions. It was more common for candidates to leave one of the sections of a chosen question unattempted.

Christianity (***Section A***) was the section chosen least often. There seemed to be a common disparity in the level of understanding of the two religions chosen. There was also some conflation of concepts from different religions.

Generic material that is equally true of any of the religions on the paper can be both relevant and creditable. However, responses which consist wholly of this kind of material, with no reference to the specific religion asked about in the question are likely to be limited.

Exam skills such as 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 are important. For **part (a)** questions, many responses were significantly longer than necessary despite the command words implying that only short answers were needed. By contrast, the **(b)** and **(c) part** questions relate to depth, detail and application of knowledge to the question that has been asked.

Evaluation **part (c)** questions require discussion, in the form of a consideration of different perspectives on the issue raised in the question, including views and material specific to the religion specified in the question. A clear judgement in relation to the issue is also required.

Comments on specific questions

Section A – Christianity

Question 1

(a) (i) Some responses to this were very generic, such as ‘churches’ or ‘historical sites’. There was also a confusion between Jerusalem and Rome - with the site of the crucifixion being given as a response – and with Lourdes and Rome, seen both in response to this question and to **(a)(ii)**.

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(ii) The confusion of Lourdes with Rome from **(a)(i)** was also seen here with papal audiences being given as a ritual that might happen at Lourdes. Other responses avoided this error but described the miracle of St Bernadette's visions instead of a current ritual performed at the site.

(b) This was not very well answered. While most responses correctly associated the concept of a papal audience with Catholicism, very few showed clear knowledge of what a papal audience is, and those that did showed limited understanding of why they might be important.

(c) Most responses to this were wholly generic, giving reasons that are equally applicable to all the religions covered by the syllabus. This is not irrelevant and gained some credit but, as noted above, the question requires reference to Christian specific material in order to be more effective.

Question 2

Question 2 was the least popular question in this section.

(a) (i) Some responses identified what a pulpit is, but not what it is used for. Others attempted neither part of this question.

(ii) Most responses correctly connected baptistry with the rite of baptism and were able to give some descriptive information about that. Many answers were limited as they needed more material.

(b) Responses to this question tended to be very short, usually offering an example of a specific form of Christian worship; most of these were relevant as examples of possible acts of devotion but understanding of that key phrase from the question was not generally made clear. Weaker answers remained wholly descriptive.

(c) **Part (c)** was left unattempted by most candidates choosing to attempt **Question 2**. Those who did attempt it showed limited understanding of the concept of 'artefacts'.

Question 3

(a) (i) Candidates who chose this question answered it well. Other did not attempt this part despite choosing **Question 3**.

(ii) Responses showed some knowledge of the idea that Jesus was accused of a crime and of some of the people who were involved in those accusations and in the trying of them. Some answers conflated the trials with the crucifixion, giving more deal on the latter which was not relevant to answering the question asked.

(b) Responses to this question tended to consist of description of the contents and sometimes the structure of the Bible. This is not what the question asked about and much of it was irrelevant. The relevant material which was included was often part of the description rather than presented as an explanation of the Bible's authority for Christians.

(c) Most candidates seemed familiar with the Ten Commandments. Many weaker answers did not focus on the the reference to 'restrictions' in the question, with the result that any discussion was focused on a different question to the one that was asked.

Section B – Islam

Question 4

(a) (i) This was well answered. The dome and the prayer hall were the most commonly given answers, but a range of other correct responses was seen. The most common reason for limited answers was to only name one feature. There were a few responses that confused activities within the mosque, such as the khutbah, with features present in the building.

(ii) This was well answered with a range of different approaches. The most common response was to describe the sequence of movements, and this sometimes went into much greater detail than was needed to answer the question. Some responses simply identified rak'ahs as required, sequential movements and then developed this with detail such as the different requirements of rak'ahs for

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different prayer times, the contents of prayer, niyyah and the role of the imam in demonstrating rak'ahs as the leader of prayer.

(b) There were some good responses which drew on the practices of the Prophet (pbuh), and the benefits of constantly remembering God to explicitly address the significance of the practice of dhikr. There were also responses which described dhikr in some detail but gave less in the way of explanation of its significance as an act of devotion. Other responses were more generalised, which would be relevant for a question about any form of prayer or meditation; these answers gained some credit, but since this approach did not entail a clear demonstration of understanding what dhikr actually is they tended to be limited.

(c) There was a range of different but equally valid responses to this question. Some focused primarily on the concept of imam as it exists in the Sunni tradition and discussed different aspects of that role including leading prayer, teaching others, and work in the community. This was sometimes contrasted with beliefs relating to equality or considered in relation to the different needs of Muslim communities within their wider context, such as being a minority within an area. Others contrasted Sunni and Shi'ah understandings of the role and title. Others contrasted the imam in Shi'a Islam with the Sunni understanding of the role and title. A few considered different Shi'ah understandings, contrasting the use and understanding of the term in the context of performing prayers (imam) with the concept of a divinely guided spiritual leader (imam) and different beliefs about who can/does have that divine guidance. While a great deal of knowledge was displayed by some candidates, there was a need for more application of that to an evaluative discussion in order to reach a conclusion on the question asked.

Question 5

(a) (i) Almost all responses were successful for this question.

(ii) Almost all responses were successful for this question. Weaker responses commonly outlined only one of the Six Articles of Faith rather than the two required by the question.

(b) The majority of responses were effective, showing the contrast between Abu Bakr Ali and 'Ali, drawing out details in relation to Abu Bakr's leadership experience and 'Ali as representative of the bloodline of the Prophet (pbuh). Some then gave a descriptive account of all four Rightly Guided Caliphs while others focused on the election of Abu Bakr and surrounding events. The different views were generally ascribed correctly to Sunni and Shi'ah respectively. Weaker responses focused on prophethood rather than community leadership, explaining that Muhammad (pbuh) was the last prophet and therefore cannot have a successor; this was not what the question asked for.

(c) While there were some responses that did not demonstrate knowledge of Shahadah, most were able to describe it as one of the pillars and relating to a declaration of faith. The question required a consideration of this concept in relation to Muslim life, and many responses identified different times when it would be recited, such as birth, death, part of salah prayers and the way in which a person becomes a Muslim. Discussion of its importance was sometimes left implicit in the fact that it is said multiple times a day and/or at important life events. Better responses made this more explicit. The most common approach to an alternative argument was to consider the existence and importance of other pillars.

Question 6

(a) (i) There was a range of responses seen for this question. While some clearly named Safa and Marwa, others named different hills or mountains – Arafat and Sinai, most commonly – and some gave what appeared to be random choices of technical terms from their study of Islam.

(ii) Many responses to this question were limited. Some confusion was seen in relation to the idea of historic importance, with some responses consisting entirely of the role of Madinah in the Hajj. There was also some conflation with Makkah, giving events from the Prophet's earlier life there as examples of important events in Madinah.

(b) Many responses to this question were of a limited and partial nature. Almost all recognised that 'Umrah is a short period and is not compulsory, and many responses stopped there. Some responses that attempted further development showed confusion about which parts of the Hajj are

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also part of 'Umrah. There were also responses which gave similarities as well as differences, which was not required by the question.

(c) Responses to this question were often quite generic, despite candidates demonstrating knowledge about the physical challenges of the Hajj in their answers to **part b**. Other responses gave detailed descriptions of what is involved in the Hajj but without identifying the specifically physical challenges. Discussion of the question asked was often quite limited – many responses gave the judgement that all aspects of pilgrimage are equally important without either justifying or challenging this beyond description of pilgrimage in Islam.

Section C – Judaism

Question 7

(a) (i) Most responses were generic, relating to remembering the dead in any context. Some candidates seemed to be under the impression that Yad Vashem refers to a grave, but this did not prevent some of the actions identified in this context from also being correct in the context of Yad Vashem. A small number of responses either conflated Yad Vashem with the Western Wall or assumed that the former contains the latter; these responses were less likely to include any correct material.

(ii) Most responses gained some credit, although there was some conflation of spiritual and physical goals.

(b) Many responses to this question set out material to one of the things named in the question – either the Ark or the ner tamid – but not to both; although a question of this kind does not require and equally in depth treatment of both elements it is necessary to make reference to both in order to fully answer the question, so this did limit those responses.

(c) The majority of responses to this question were generic and/or more sociological than related to Judaism. Development was often limited so that responses were made up of a number of statements – remembering being painful, remembering can prevent future atrocities – without discursive consideration. Recognition of the length of time that has passed since the Second World War was sometimes lacking, with victims remembering their personal suffering being identified but not the significance for the Jewish religion or community as those events pass from living memory.

Question 8

(a) (i) Most responses identified the Sefer Torah but did not fully answer the question. Some named the Bimah or gave a description of a table on which the scroll can be laid. There were some that suggested a lectern or a pulpit, and others did not give a second answer at all.

(ii) This was a well answered question. Most responses gave a description of the Shabbat evening meal, lighting the candles and sharing challah. Some included the preparations prior to that, such as cleaning the house.

(b) Many responses to this question were brief and generic, and some inlcuded non-Jewish reasons such as the presence of the Holy Spirit when two or three are gathered. Answers often seemed vague and suggested that communal worship was seen as being what religion is rather than as a practice for which there will be reasons.

(c) Some responses referenced Tallit and/or Teffilin and linked this to the question at least in a descriptive way. Many appeared unfamiliar with the term 'ritual dress' – references to a literal dress, worn by all Jews and meeting what were in essence the requirements of modesty set out by Islam were quite common. Discussion was usually either in the general terms of contrasting worshipping 'properly' with being comfortable or it attempted to contrast Orthodox and Reform views, but this was often done with limited understanding of those differences.

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Question 9

(a) (i) While most responses gained some credit, there were some common confusions – omnipresent was often defined as omniscient. Some responses gave essentially the same answer twice, for example saying it means all powerful and able to do anything at all.

(ii) This was well answered with many successful responses.

(b) Many responses seemed to focus on how the Torah is used by Jews, rather than considering its role in shaping moral principles. The assumption that Orthodox and Reform must have different attitudes to things seemed to cause some confusion rather than clarification, since there would be more likely to be shared views than radically different ones in this context.

(c) This question was not well answered for the most part, with many responses either misunderstanding or not focusing on the word 'just'. Some of these wrote about how believing in G-d might affect daily life, others considered whether Jews only believe in G-d or also believe in other things. Neither of these approaches addressed what the question asked about.

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/22

Festivals, Fasts, Family Life and Social Action

Key messages

- It is important that candidates follow the rubric
- Candidates are reminded that **part (a)** questions only require short answer responses
- Candidates are reminded to focus on the question asked
- For the **part (c)** (evaluation) questions, it is important to include more than one viewpoint and to include a clear judgment
- It is important that all responses refer to the specific religion of each section.

General comments

This was the first series of the revised syllabus.

A significant number of rubric errors were seen; mostly in the form of candidates answering only some parts of a question. A few candidates answered only three questions, and very few answered more than the questions required by the rubric.

Most candidates answered from ***Section A*** (Christianity), with the section being slightly more popular than ***Section C*** (Judaism).

Responses in ***Sections A*** and ***B*** were generally better than those in ***Section C.*** In ***Section C***, giving Christian responses was a common error, most notably referring to the role of Jesus, attending church and bread and wine used in festivals.

Responses to **part (a)** questions were fairly good overall. Candidates are reminded to address the specific command word of a question. Many responses were significantly longer than necessary despite the command words implying that only short answers were needed.

It is important that candidates address the precise question asked. For **part (b)** questions, many responses included generic material, and some candidates wrote everything they knew about a topic. Better answers were more specifically related to the question and the religion studied.

For **part (c)** responses a full range was seen. Most responses tended to be rather brief or lacked a judgement. Many considered different points of view as instructed but needed to evaluate more / give a judgment to improve their responses. Some better answers set out the judgement at the beginning and then justified it. Others attempted a judgement in a conclusion. Many weaker responses lacked specific religious content and were more generalised.

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Comments on specific questions

Section A – Christianity

Question 1

(a) (i) This was generally well answered. The most common responses were to protect the child from evil and to help take care of them. Many responses gave, in essence, the same promise twice. Usually this was along the lines of bringing them up to be a good Christian and bringing them up to follow the ways of God. Most of the wording offered related to the actual baptismal promises made in a generic way, but credit was given for the sense of the whole rather than for precision wording. A few weaker responses mentioned promising to renounce or resist the devil.

(ii) A range of responses was seen for this question. Most recognised that believers' baptism involves a free choice made by an adult/person capable of deciding for themselves. Water and oil were commonly mentioned as was the involvement of a priest. Better responses referred to total immersion, to wash away sin, being reborn and the example of Jesus. Some responses were very general and did not specifically address the idea of a believer's baptism as distinct from an infant baptism. A notable error was to not offer two key features with development or exemplification, as the question asked, but instead to offer four key features. There were also a few responses that mixed up believer's baptism with infant baptism.

(b) The idea of being a full member of a church community was not often well explored. Most referred to general benefits of being part of a church, but typically they did not distinguish between things that anyone who goes to a church is able to do and those that a full member of a church can do, which would be the benefit. Better responses were more specific and explained the importance of being able to receive the Eucharist, to strengthen their faith and to be able to minister in some way to others joining the church community. Some referred to positions within the Church as a Priest/Minister or part of the various management committees. Most responses were generally descriptive and often generic, focusing on the idea of belonging and community, which could apply to any religion; reference to specific religious knowledge such as salvation, access to the sacraments and even shared belief was uncommon.

(c) This question rarely elicited sufficient discussion, appearing to confuse candidates with regard to an issue on which to judge, which was relative/comparative significance. Even reference to the meaning of a specific practice or its relative importance to the family, the deceased themselves or the church community was rare. Candidates commonly answered this question in quite a generic way, often referring to whether a body is buried or cremated, and whether the funeral takes place in a person's home or in the church. This limited the amount of specific religious knowledge demonstrated, responses more generally described different funeral rituals, not always distinctively Christian, rather than discussing and evaluating their significance.

Question 2

(a) (i) This question was generally well answered, with many successful responses. The most common responses were speaking in tongues, a rush of wind and fire appearing on the disciples' heads. A few gave incorrect responses, most commonly a dove descending, a bright light and voice from heaven.

(ii) Effective responses demonstrated detailed knowledge of the Biblical account describing the crowd gathering, people being able to understand the apostles, thinking they were drunk etc. Different understandings of 'speaking in tongues' were also demonstrated with some candidates describing it as unknown or divine language and others as speaking the language of other nations. Common errors were to describe mission work beyond 'straight after', some referred to Paul rather than Peter. 'Tongues of fire' were sometimes a cause for confusion, with responses saying that the disciples spoke in tongues of fire rather than referencing the two things separately.

(b) This was generally answered quite well with most responses making some reference to remembrance of Jesus' death because of salvation and developed this idea. Better answers went on to develop the importance of the resurrection, its significance as evidence of God's power, fulfilment of prophecy, forgiveness of sins/restored relationship with God and the promise of eternal life for believers. Some good answers linked this to Easter and Eucharist. Most candidates were able to address both Jesus' death and resurrection; generally, the resurrection was explained in

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more detail, with more focus on salvation than the sacrifice. Weaker responses described how Christians remember these things rather than why they do, with some responses being wholly descriptive of how they are remembered, and with a few simply describing the events.

(c) This question generally elicited some discussion of more than one view. Many weaker responses were quite generic, and many were heavily reliant on descriptive lists of what is done to observe Easter. A common error was not moving beyond describing different Easter celebrations to develop how these celebrations might not show the true meaning of Easter, often with generic mentions of the Easter Bunny, chocolate eggs, social media and watching film on TV. Better responses argued that celebrations still show the true meaning of Easter and developed the idea with reference to their meaning, linked to Christianity. Specific reference to specifically Christian celebrations, both in the past and the modern world were rare. Final judgements tended to be brief and largely unsupported or not attempted.

Question 3

(a) (i) This was well answered, with many successful responses giving specific examples of things that might be donated such as food and money, or two general examples such as financial aid and volunteering work. Some partly successful answers gave general point about donations with a specific example from that category of actions. A few candidates suggested sharing the gospel and prayer as forms of giving.

(ii) This was a well answered question with most candidates correctly identified agape as a form of love, with unconditional and selfless being the most common developments. Connections to the love of God, the love demonstrated by Jesus and the Two Greatest Commandments were also common. Some responses were more generic referencing merely love or kindness, some incorrectly described love in a more traditional romantic or family way, but the majority did demonstrate knowledge that it was something to do with loving your neighbour/ showing concern for others.

(b) A full range of responses was seen for this question. There were few successful answers and many weaker, generic responses. There was a widespread confusion of stewardship with caring for others and mission explained in many responses. There were also many general points applicable to stewardship – such as being commanded by God, pleasing God, duty as a Christian, albeit tied to an incorrect understanding of the question. Fewer candidates knew what was meant by being ‘a steward of the Earth’ and successfully explained why a Christian might want to be a steward of the Earth. These responses were developed well with references to God’s instructions in Genesis and current examples of good practice/conservation, sometimes linked to the benefits of this to fellow humans.

(c) This was one of the better answered **part (c)** questions, eliciting discussion of different, mainly complementary points of view which many explored and developed. Many responses included relevant knowledge of Christianity, commonly love thy neighbour, some contrasted this with a non-Christian ‘everyone for themselves’ attitude to life, and some argued that it’s hard to care for somebody if they are a bad person, which is a more generic view. A significant number of effective responses included some kind of conclusion with a judgment for this question. Weaker answers did not include any judgement.

Section B – Islam

Question 4

(a) (i) This was very well answered. The most common correct responses were children, the elderly, the sick, pregnant women, with travellers and women on their period being slightly less common.

(ii) This was another well answered question with many successful responses, often writing more than was required. Commonly mentioned was feasting, new clothes, family and friends gathering and thanking God. While there were some responses that confused ‘Id al-Fitr with ‘Id al-Adha, these answers tended to be generic and included prayers at the mosque, feasting and charitable donations, which were correct for either festival.

(b) A range of answers was seen for this question. Most candidates were able to identify the significance of festivals and develop the response in some way, with better responses referring to

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the significance to the community of Muslims and the demonstration of care/brotherhood. Some gave examples from the festivals and others referred to the example of the Prophet (pbuh). Weaker responses often described how Muslim communities observe festivals rather than their significance. Others did not address the significance to communities, referring to individuals and to how or why they celebrated festivals. A few interpreted festivals in such broad terms they explained why it is important to Muslims to be Muslim, including not only fasts, which are in the same section as festivals, but also funerals, weddings, civil protests, going to work and in a few cases even Christian baptism.

(c) A range of answers was seen for this question. Most candidates were able to make at least one argument about why fasting is important for the Muslim who fasts accompanied by the observation that, since some do not have to/cannot fast, it cannot be the only important thing a Muslim has to do. Better answers examined the benefits for those who fast and compared them to how those who do not fast could contribute in other ways. Some were able to consider the benefits to the ummah and/or the wider world of Muslims carrying out their fast. Others believed that fasting Muslims could fast on behalf of others. Some responses examined reasons for not fasting, the desire to fast in the future and ways of being part of the current rituals. For evaluation, some candidates were able to identify that for the Muslim who does not fast they can still reap the benefits of fasting behaviour in terms of involving themselves in other rituals at this time. Many better responses could have been improved further by adding an explicit judgment.

Question 5

(a) (i) This was very well answered, with most responses mentioning washing the body and wrapping in (white) cloth. Some wrote in more detail than was required.

(ii) This was not well answered. The most common error was to describe funeral rites and almost continue from **(a)(i)** with more detail. There were some who confused other religions and wrote about Brit Milah and/or Christian baptism. Successful answers identified the term as the process by which a woman has a right to initiate divorce and were able to correctly outline this process.

(b) This was a generally well answered response with most candidates showing knowledge of birth rites in Islam. Weaker responses were most commonly descriptive rather than explaining the importance of these rites, as required by the question. Better responses were able to give examples of different birthrights and explain why they are significant Islam.

(c) The vast majority of candidates understood what it meant to live a halal lifestyle and were thus able to attempt a relevant response. Responses were mixed in accordance with how this knowledge was discussed and evaluated with reference to the question, and many did not include a judgment/evaluation. Many responses mostly consisted of two arguments and a judgement on the issue but were also largely generic, considering modern technology and social change and suggesting that these might distract Muslims from their religion with only limited reference to the religious principles that might be involved. Better responses demonstrated evaluation and judgement throughout and then tended to offer a valid concluding statement.

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Question 6

(a) (i) This was not well answered, with few candidates giving a correct response that made any reference to consensus, Shari'ah or related concepts. Many gave an incorrect response, which ranged from random religious terminology (not always from Islam) to examples of the five pillars or forbidden activities. A few described qiyas instead.

(ii) This was well answered, with many successful responses giving points and/or exemplification. A small number of candidates seemed to think that Muslim aid only helps Muslims and does not provide aid to everyone. Most responses were quite general descriptions of charity work such as providing food, helping with education, shelter, financial aid/relief of poverty which was not linked to Muslim Aid as a specific named charity.

(b) This was generally answered well. Most candidates knew what sadaqah is, with Islam specific knowledge about different types of charity and explanatory detail about why this form might be chosen over or in addition to others common in effective responses. Some candidates seemed confused between the different types of charity and thought that sadaqah too was compulsory, with others making no mention of its voluntary status, rather giving general responses. Better responses were well developed with more detailed explanation including more detailed specific subject knowledge, supported by using appropriate examples.

(c) A range of responses was seen for this question, with many responses offering distinct views and a conclusion, but with little to no Islam specific material included. A significant number of responses were quite generic and not religion specific, and often you could replace reference to Islam with Christianity and Judaism and get the same answer. More effective responses discussed the difference between helping the local community and the worldwide community and were able to assess the importance to a varying extent. Most candidates argued for helping the local community and justified their point of view. Some were more one sided in their views, while better responses looked at different views in some detail. Some better answers did make a final judgement.

Section C – Judaism

Question 7

(a) (i) A range of responses was seen for this question, and many candidates gave two correct responses, the most popular being apples in honey, pomegranates, fish head and carrot stew. Wine was another answer as well as challah bread, although this seemed to be less often paired with a second correct item than other correct responses. Incorrect responses included either treyfah or kosher food items or items from the Seder plate.

(ii) This was a fairly well answered question. Most responses successfully outlined what Sukkot was and how it is celebrated. The best responses gave clear descriptions of building sukkah and the things that are done in them through the festival. Others gave generic answers such as by going to the synagogue, prayer, not going to work. Confusion with both Pesach and Shabbat was common.

(b) Most candidates correctly identified what is marked by Rosh Hashannah and showed some awareness of practices associated with it, with many explaining their general significance. In weaker responses, connection to social significance was usually absent, limiting responses as the precise question had not been fully addressed. There was also tendency by some to keep answers relatively short and this meaning that they lacked sufficient development.

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(c) Many responses to this question were descriptive. Most responses did identify the importance of remembering past events and developed this with the possibility of learning from them, often illustrating this by describing a number of stories from Jewish scripture, often and commonly with an account of the Holocaust. Better responses drew upon multiple different past events and were able to give real detail as to whether it is or is not important to remember these; identifying what might be learned from the story. Many responses did not really address the question in much greater depth than their opening observation. Very few attempted to make a case for not remembering past events or gave a second reason why it might be good to do so. Many included a judgment.

Question 8

(a) (i) This was not very well answered**.** Common correct responses were shellfish, pork and birds of prey. Some candidates repeated their answer to **Question 7(a)(i)** or incorrectly gave answers about Pesach foods. Some got treyfah and kosher the wrong way round and gave examples of what is permitted rather than what is forbidden. Bread and wine were also common incorrect responses.

(ii) This was a well answered question. Generic lists of traditional duties, most commonly raising children, cooking, cleaning, satisfying the husband were frequent. There were some responses with more specific religious knowledge, such as lighting the shabbat candle. There was also some conflation with Christianity, with candidates quoting 'wives submit to your husbands', which is a New Testament quotation. Referring to vows of obedience to a husband was also referenced quite often.

(b) There were few responses that correctly identified the term Chevra Kaddisha. Incorrect responses included material to do with weddings, counselling, helping with prayer, Brit Milah, housekeeping, a priestly role and even Christian baptism. Many gave simplistic description of the role, often only referring to helping with the funeral proceedings. Better answers identified the term and then developed the idea of the role appropriately.

(c) Many responses to this question addressed only one aspect of the question; some focused on Judaism in the modern world with little or no reference to family life, with the response being generally about observing mitzvot and who can wear tefillin in the synagogue, whereas others focused on the way family life has changed in the modern world in very general terms, with little specific mention of Judaism. Very few directly addressed the precise and full question. Better answers identified different changes amongst Liberal/Reformed Judaism compared to the Orthodox tradition and discussed these with some evaluative comments. Very few included the required judgement, which would have improved their answer.

Question 9

Very few candidates answered this question.

(a) (i) This was often left unattempted, sometimes answered with what appear to be random words and only rarely answered with correct, relevant points, most commonly reference to boxes and money for charity.

(ii) Many candidates showed a broad understanding of Gemilut Hasidim as being generally nice and kind, with some giving examples of such behaviour. Better responses made the connection with Tzedakah. There was a notable number of incorrect responses or no attempts to answer at all.

(b) Very few attempting this question had a clear understanding of what stewardship means, with little or limited reference to Judaism. Some gave accounts of Christian mission, with the word Jewish referenced occasionally. Others talked about Gemilut Hasidim, tzedakah and the Golden Rule. References to the environment, creation or the teaching in Genesis were very rare. There were a few better responses referencing Genesis and current practical developments in conservation, such as planting trees.

(c) Very few successful responses were seen for this question. Many answers demonstrated limited knowledge and understanding of specifically Jewish teachings and practices, being general answers without any specific reference to Judaism, and offering generic examples of kindness to others. Some better responses were able to relate the actions to Jewish teaching/practice, but

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many did not address and evaluate how easy it is, being more descriptive of how, or why, Jews can show kindness or not. A common error was for responses to be Christian in their focus rather than Jewish. Consideration of how easy kindness is tended to morph into whether Jews are instructed to be kind or not, with the substance of those instructions often being the example of Jesus and the Two Greatest Commandments. A few better responses were able to discuss how easy it might be, often referring to discrimination targeting Jewish people and therefore evaluating whether it is easy to show kindness to those who do not show kindness to you.

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/23

Festivals, Fasts, Family Life and Social Action

Key messages

- It is important that candidates follow the rubric
- Candidates are reminded that **part (a)** questions only require short answer responses
- Candidates are reminded to focus on the question asked
- For the **part (c)** (evaluation) questions, it is important to include more than one viewpoint and to include a clear judgment
- It is important that all responses refer to the specific religion of each section.

General comments

This was the first series of the revised syllabus.

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

A significant number of rubric errors were seen; mostly in the form of candidates answering only some parts of a question. A few candidates answered only three questions, and very few answered more than the questions required by the rubric.

It is important that candidates address the precise question asked. For **part (b)** questions, many responses included generic material, and some candidates wrote everything they knew about a topic. Better answers were more specifically related to the question and the religion studied.

In addition, candidates are reminded to address the specific command word of a question. For **part (a)** questions, many responses were significantly longer than necessary despite the command words implying that only short answers were needed.

For **part (c)** responses a full range was seen. Most responses tended to be rather brief or lacked a judgement. Many considered different points of view as instructed but needed to evaluate more / give a judgment to improve their responses. Some better answers set out the judgement at the beginning and then justified it. Others attempted a judgement in a conclusion. Many weaker responses lacked specific religious content and were more generalised.

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Comments on specific questions

Section A; Christianity

Question 1

(a) (i) There seemed to be some confusion between advent and Lent, but a most responses were at least partly successful. Common responses included prayers, purple cloths and candles lit. A popular wrong response was advent calendar, which are not used in church so were not credited.

(ii) Most candidates were aware of Lent as a period of fasting and were able to expand at least a little on what fasting might involve including the idea of giving up luxury items.

(b) This was not a well answered question. It was evident in many responses that there was unclarity about what Epiphany is; some guessed about rituals or specific acts of worship. Others wrote generic answers about what enhances a Christian life, and a notable minority wrote about an epiphany in a general sense as a sudden or profound realisation rather than the Christian festival.

(c) This was not a very well answered question. Many responses were generalised and descriptive, not addressing the specific question and instead writing with more of a focus on why Christians want to celebrate Christmas.

Question 2

(a) (i) This was a well answered question. Many responses were generic, but this was valid as a response to this question, with traditional Christian roles being traditional cultural roles, such as bread winner. Incorrect responses included 'become priests'.

(ii) There were mixed responses to this question. Some did not know what Last Rites might mean.

(b) This was not well answered. Responses were generic and vague as to what 'family life' might actually mean, with almost no reference to Christian teachings or traditions seen.

(c) This was not well answered. Adult baptism was generally recognised as a rite of passage, but some seem to have missed the 'adult' in the question and others did not show specific understanding of baptism. Some responses included a generic point about the importance of showing dedication to God or declaring one's faith publicly.

Question 3

(a) (i) This question was not a popular choice. Some responses included good examples of ways of caring for the environment. Others gave a general category (caring for the planet) and a specific example (recycling). Some less successful responses included examples that did not relate to stewardship as a specific Christian teaching about caring for creation that belongs to God, instead giving a selection of examples of Christian behaviour including spreading the gospel and being nice to other people.

(ii) There were mixed responses to this question, with some effective answers and some incorrect responses about what missionary work is.

(b) Those who knew what the two greatest commandments produced successful answers. Less successful responses did not include relevant details. Few gave a reasonable account of how the commandments might impact on daily life or made some reference to loving God.

(c) Most gave a general statement about the importance of caring for people with some implication of that care needing to be tailored to their context and circumstances. Responses could be improved by adding more Christianity specific content as well as making a clear judgement as required by evaluation questions.

Section B: Islam

Question 4

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(a) (i) Many responses were generic and included prayer, visit the mosque, visit family, which were all credited.

(ii) This was a well answered question with candidates demonstrating good knowledge of sacrifice and the division of meat. Less successful responses were mostly telling the story rather than focusing on the festival as the question required.

(b) This was a well answered question, although there was a general tendency to devote too much of the answer to describing the fast. Most were able to identify it as a pillar of Islam and say something about why that mattered; reference to the ummah, the example of the Prophet (pbuh) and concentrating on God was also fairly common.

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(c) Most responses engaged well with the issue, although not many did so from a specifically religious perspective. It was common to argue that it is more interesting or enjoyable to change things around and that it opens up opportunity for learning and dialogue with people who do things differently, rather than a focus on religious reasons or the difference between religious teachings, observance and traditions.

Question 5

(a) (i) There were many general answers to this question, such as 'teach them the Qur'an', 'take them to a mosque', which were credited. Some gave examples of birth rites. A noticeable few seemed confused and gave the Christian answer 'baptise them'.

(ii) This was fairly well answered. The most common responses talked about submitting to or pleasing God by following the rules, being a good Muslim, getting to heaven/Jannah.

(b) This question was fairly well answered. Many responses tended to be very sociological, identifying social change and social problems without relating it back to Muslim tradition or teaching. A few better responses were able to link the changes to traditional family life for a Muslim, most commonly gender roles and halal meat.

(c) Most responses demonstrated understanding of the term akhirah. The tendency was to consider its overall importance in Islam rather than within the modern world. This produced limited responses, as whilst there was religion specific material being used, it didn't directly address the question.

Question 6

(a) (i) This question was well answered, with most candidates gaining both marks.

(ii) This question seemed more of a challenge for candidates. Many demonstrated understanding of what the ummah is, but the idea that it might have a purpose was rarely fully addressed. Most responses made reference to unity among Muslims, some to equality, but only a few were able to develop the response sufficiently.

(b) This question was answered fairly well. Common responses included reference to pleasing God, setting an example to others and the hope that others would help you if you needed it. Some included reference to zakah and the ummah.

(c) This was one of the better answered **(c)** part questions, commonly eliciting multi-sided arguments. The best responses included some evaluation with religious knowledge, reference to God, zakah and the afterlife.

Section C: Judaism

Question 7

(a) (i) This was not well answered, with very few successful responses. Many answers included only one point, and some gave random plants such as olives. A common error was confusion with Pesach.

(ii) Responses to this question were often very general such as 'going to the synagogue' and 'prayers', but many candidates did include reference to repentance, to tashlich (although not usually by name) and blowing the shofar, demonstrating specific knowledge.

(b) There were few successful responses to this question. Most responses were brief and needed more detail or development beyond that sukkah are built because G-d wants it and they are used by spending time in them.

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(c) Successful responses included more than one point of view, with religious content. Some did not seem to know which festival Yom Kippur was, but could still make a case for a festival they did remember being the most important one instead.

Question 8

(a) (i) This was generally well answered. Most knew it was a canopy but there was less consistency on the second point. Some responses did connect it with wedding, some tried to describe it, and some limited answers didn't make a second point at all.

(ii) The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate at least some of the kashrut laws relating to food. Less effective responses did not address the precise question by relating these to the setup of the kitchen. The most common error was to include description of methods of slaughter, which was not directly relevant to this question as it doesn't take place in the kitchen.

(b) Most responses did address remarriage, rather than marriage in general. There was a tendency to present an Orthodox/Reform split on the issue along the lines of how Catholics and Protestants might be considered divided on it and this is inaccurate, with many suggesting that remarriage was not acceptable, sinful and discouraged. This seems a much Catholic Christian response, with Judaism taking a generally more accepting view.

(c) This was generally well answered in terms of knowledge. There was agreement that Bar Mitzvah is important, although there were often one-sided responses. Candidates knew what Bar Mitzvah is, for the most part, and were able to argue that it is really important to mark a shift in personal responsibility, with better answers having specific religious content. Alternative views were less common and often less clear.

Question 9

(a) (i) A significant number of limited responses repeated the question ('G-d created the world') and a few gave no more than this. Successful answers included giving humans control/dominion, making life and humanity and creation over a period of days.

(ii) This was not well answered; few candidates knew what the term meant, and there was a notable number of incorrect responses that did not follow a pattern, appearing as guesses.

(b) Very few recognised they had been asked about a named charity and thus did not address the question asked. Many wrote about the general principle of tzedakah, which limited responses.

(c) The majority of candidates did not demonstrate knowledge of the term stewardship, there was much confusion with it being addresses as spreading the word or looking after others, kindness, even 'loving they neighbour, a Christian teaching. Many responses were limited to general content, most commonly mentioning that it is important as it pleases G-d. Very few were able to evaluate the importance of stewardship.

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