



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

RELIGIOUS STUDIES AS

SUMMER 2017

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EDUQAS
GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Summer 2017

COMPONENT 1: OPTION A - AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

Introduction

This unit was a very popular choice by centres. On the whole the paper was answered well and was accessible to the majority of students who were entered for the examination. The paper allowed for clear differentiation of responses. At the top end there were a number of candidates that achieved full marks and at the lower end some candidates whose knowledge base was limited and who offered very little in the way of reasoned argument.

The question paper had two sections. In the first section the most popular answer was question 1 on Sallie McFague, but there were also a number of answers on question 2 the Trinity. All option questions gained responses from candidates, with Q. 4 (Love of neighbour) being the most popular option choices amongst candidates for Section B. A very small minority omitted a question. There were very few rubric errors and it was interesting to note that often students demonstrated evaluation skills proficiently.

The standard of answers displayed the full range, but what was noticeable in relation to the Legacy papers was the improved quality of section (b) [AO2] evaluation answers. It is obvious that there had been more preparation in developing critical analysis skills for the new Specification to reflect the shift in weighting of assessment objectives. On the whole candidates showed a good understanding of how to respond to the different demands of the assessment objectives and examination technique was generally good. Part (b) was sometimes better than part (a), with some good purposeful discussion.

Overall, candidates offered competent, detailed responses in the time allowed for answering the questions and displayed a sound knowledge of the Specification despite its extent. There were only a very small number of candidates who did not make a significant attempt at the questions.

Section A

1. (a) Outline Sallie McFague's responses to the view that God is male.

[AO1 25]

This was generally answered well, with many candidates being able to identify Sallie McFague's theological position and refer to the specific metaphors used by her. The best answers acknowledged McFague's use of the metaphor of God as Mother, and discussed the substitution of 'Mother, Lover and Friend' for the persons of the Trinity. The stronger candidates also examined the idea of panentheism, and the idea that the world should be seen as God's body as opposed to the language of God as 'King' that reinforced patriarchal oppression of women. Weaker answers talked in more general terms about McFague's idea that the idea of God as female would be more inclusive.

Features of stronger answers

- Could clearly outline the different aspects of McFague's responses to God being male.
- Used subject specific language well and in the vast majority of cases this was fully understood.
- Managed to explain McFague's feminist critique of male language about God.
- Offered accurate explanations of McFague's alternative metaphors for the persons of the Trinity.
- Engaged with McFague's panentheist ideas and ecofeminism.
- Detailed knowledge of McFague's views but also showed understanding in the way in which they were linked back to the question.

Features of weaker answers

- Lacked McFague's initial critique and went immediately to her alternative metaphors without really showing why these were needed and the whole rationale behind her response.
- Failed to explore McFague's specific views about the use of metaphors.
- Lacked the use of examples to help explain specific points.
- Inaccurate metaphors used or metaphors not recalled leaving gaps.
- Generic responses that drifted into explaining why the Bible used male language.

1. (b) **‘The concept of God as mother helps Christians to understand more about the nature of God.’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Candidates were able to refer to the advantages and disadvantages of McFague's position with the better responses presenting a balanced debate. There were a number of sophisticated answers that examined McFague's arguments critically and included references to revelation and God being beyond the realms of nature. Biblical evidence often helped responses to justify the different points of view presented.

Features of stronger answer

- Balanced responses with biblical references used to good effect.
- Showed an understanding and analysis of the language used for God in the Bible.
- Recognised that the Bible was a product of a patriarchal society, arguing that feminine imagery would aid an understanding of the nature of God.
- Engaged in debate and recognised the significance of McFague's panentheism and how it contrasted with traditional Christian beliefs about creation.

Features of weaker answers

- Focused on the general idea that God would be seen as more loving and caring if described using feminine imagery.
- A lack of depth when candidates tried to offer counter-arguments.
- The concept of God as mother was often accepted rather uncritically without questioning the implications of this for Christian theology as a whole.
- Presented a rather simplistic argument of bringing Christianity up to date.

2. (a) **Explain why there is need for the doctrine of the Trinity in Christianity.** [AO1 25]

This was very much a question that produced 'hit and miss' answers. Many candidates approached the question from the perspective of what clarifies the doctrine of the Trinity and enhances personal understanding for a Christian today and ignored any historical significance; this was an acceptable approach if explained clearly. Some answers just described how the Trinity was used in prayers and ceremonies and offered vague illustrations. There were a few answers that hit the target and discussed the need for clarity within the Christian tradition about the nature of God and to the need to counteract heresy.

Features of stronger answers

- Ability to engage in discussion regarding the compatibility between the Trinity and monotheism.
- Focused on the need for the doctrine of the Trinity as explaining the nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Explored the ideas surrounding the Incarnation and Jesus as pre-existent.
- Examined the ideas of the need for clarity over the doctrine and the formulation of the Trinity to combat heresies such as Arianism.
- Alternative approaches, such as a psychological perspective that explained how the three persons of the Trinity help Christians to relate to God in different ways, explained well.

Features of weaker answers

- The doctrine of the Creed and its individual components was explained, but not the need for it, implicit in the question.
- A lack of academic rigour in the answers without reference to theological debate.
- Very few candidates made direct references to scripture or to the Patristic writings.
- A focus entirely on the contemporary use of the Trinity that limited understanding of the broader developments.

2. (b) **‘The doctrine of the Trinity is not compatible with monotheism.’
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]**

The responses to AO2 were variable and very much dependent often on the focus and quality of the answer in (a). There was a tendency to repeat the basic problem of ‘how can three persons be one’ without really exploring the depth of the defences and challenges to the concept of Trinity. For the more able candidates this was the opportunity to engage with the whole scholarly debate about the Trinity.

Features of stronger answers

- Discussed the idea that Christianity could be challenged as being tri-theistic rather than monotheistic.
- Referred to how thinkers from outside the Christian tradition viewed the concept, for example, Islamic and Jewish traditions.
- Referred to the reasons why the Trinity has to be monotheistic in relation to the holistic view of Biblical theology.
- Referred to scholarly debates that aimed to clarify monotheism such as the Patristic writings or modern theologians such as Barth.

Features of weaker answers

- Confused about the persons of the Trinity as co-eternal, co-existent and co-equal and the idea that all persons are fully God but distinct.
- The counter-argument was often rather basic and there was a tendency towards a simplistic and Modalistic understanding of the Trinity (itself considered heretical in orthodox Christian theology).
- Tended to repeat the same argument for each of the three persons.
- Lacked a variety of views.

Section B

3. (a) **Explain the views of Rudolf Bultmann on Jesus’ resurrection. [AO1 25]**

Answered well on the whole with most candidates being able to explain Bultmann's demythology in relation to the New Testament and the reasoning behind it in relation to the resurrection narratives. Few were able to successfully explain Bultmann's subsequent understanding of the kerygma that followed or indeed the specific emphasis that the victory over death was seen in the crucifixion. This latter aspect is the underpinning element to his rejection of the historicity of the resurrection in explaining why it was not needed from a Christian perspective not just a rationalistic view.

Features of stronger answers

- A good understanding of Bultmann's demythology.
- Examined Bultmann's understanding of the resurrection as being the rise in faith of the church.
- How this brought into doubt the historicity of the resurrection.
- Had an appreciation of the balance between rationalism and faith in Bultmann's ideas.

Features of weaker answers

- Lacked a full understanding of Bultmann's view.
- Refer to demythologizing the text but not why.
- Wrote more about N.T. Wright than Bultmann.
- Clear misconceptions about Bultmann's view that he was out to discredit Christianity.
- Emphasised only the rationalistic approach of Bultmann.

3. (b) **'Bultmann's views about the historical reliability of the resurrection make Christianity meaningless.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The problem with this question was that many candidates, due to their incomplete knowledge of Bultmann, missed the thrust of the question and saw this as a question solely about the historicity of the resurrection, rather than the broader issue of whether Bultmann's interpretation meant that Christianity was meaningless. There was a tendency for this to become an attack on Bultmann by Wright, rather than appreciating Bultmann was arguing from a position of trying to defend Christian faith and make it more credible for the modern age. A few candidates clearly did not know who Bultmann was and confused him with Moltmann and the suffering Christ.

Features of stronger answers

- Were able to identify Bultmann's underpinning purpose of defending the Christian faith in the modern age.
- Used the claims of N.T. Wright carefully in opposition to Bultmann's view on the resurrection.
- Debated and discussed the issue of what made Christianity 'meaningful' – faith or fact.

Features of weaker answers

- Simply debated the historicity of the resurrection event at a basic level.
- Confused the teachings of Bultmann about the meaning of the death of Jesus.
- Presented Bultmann as anti-Christianity.

4. (a) **Examine the importance for Christians of the principle of love of neighbour.** [AO1 25]

This was another 'hit and miss' answer that ranged from a good overview of the teachings within Christianity about love of neighbour with good use of biblical evidence to a simple re-telling of the Good Samaritan parable. There were quite a few vague answers that failed to extend beyond explaining that as a Christian it is important to be kind and helpful. Answers that took a less biblical approach were valid but the best ones gave concrete examples of how love of neighbour was demonstrated within Christianity.

Features of stronger answers

- Able to explore the links of Jesus' teaching with Old Testament theology.
- Linked the principle of love of neighbour to biblical references well and gave many practical and modern examples in support.
- Understood the clear distinction between the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus but the common ideal.
- Identified and explained the context of the Greatest Commandment but did so selectively and accurately without retelling the parable.

Features of weaker answers

- Often showed some confusion about whether the command love of neighbour was included in the Ten Commandments.
- Wrote out the parable of the Good Samaritan.
- Simple, generic points about love of neighbour in how a Christian may behave displaying limited knowledge and understanding.
- There were a large number of responses that mixed up Bible teachings, which led to a muddled response.

4. (b) 'Love of neighbour is the only moral principle a Christian needs for today.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

This was a question that could invite some very different and open responses with examples that could be drawn from anywhere within Christianity and across the course of study. The best responses took advantage of this opportunity and there were some very mature responses at the top end. Focus, however, remained upon love of neighbor as the only moral principle and many answers interpreted this in its narrowest sense as one religious principle against others.

Features of stronger answers

- Well responded to in support of it being the only moral principle.
- Analysed issues such as whether other concepts (e.g. conscience, truth, forgiveness) were more important.
- Debated whether love of neighbour was already encompassed or underpinned other religious teachings.
- There were some in-depth discussions at the top end that made interesting comparisons with other sources of morality or alternative moral principles, for example, agape and Situation Ethics and Natural Law.

Features of weaker answers

- Answers were general and tended to focus on the notion of the principle of love verses the other religious laws.
- Little understanding of agape shown.
- The alternative view tended to be generic about how all laws are important.

5. (a) **Explain different Protestant approaches to understanding the Eucharist in Christianity.** [AO1 25]

This was answered well with most candidates being able to refer to consubstantiation, memorialism and virtualism that are the three approaches named in the Specification. In particular there was an excellent use of subject specific language and terminology. In some unfortunate instances answers earned little merit because they had confused Catholic and Protestant understandings of the Eucharist, either in part, or in a few minor instances just focusing on Roman Catholicism.

Features of stronger answers

- Gave accurate explanations of the three main protestant understandings of the Eucharist.
- Some good discussions offered and most candidates demonstrated that they understood both the similarities and differences between various Protestant understandings of the Eucharist.
- Detailed knowledge and understanding of the Eucharist service.
- Aware of the specific reasons for each approach taken.

Features of weaker answers

- Spent too much time outlining the Last Supper.
- Spent too much time explaining the Roman Catholic approach before answering the question.
- Confused Protestant and Catholic approaches.
- Confused the three Protestant theories.

5. (b) **‘There is no common ground between Christian understandings of the Eucharist.’ Evaluate this view.** [AO2 25]

Many answers generally analysed the differences between Catholic and Protestant views, but recognised that there was common ground in that all denominations emphasised the importance of the Eucharist and saw it as a remembrance of the Last Supper. Some of the best answers also examined differences within Catholicism itself.

Features of stronger answers

- Had a balanced view of both similarities and differences between the two traditions.
- Explored the differences within, as well as across, traditions.
- Made use of specific detailed differences to support the variety within Christianity.
- Argued that variety did not mean contradiction and that just because there were differences it did not cancel out all sense of commonality i.e. aware of the complex nature of the debate.
- Aware of the biblical context, references and common use of scripture.

Features of weaker answers

- Not being able to explore the nuanced differences effectively.
- Saw this a general division between Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity rather than as a more complex issue of variety of religious thought and expression.
- Heavily dependent on differences and vague on similarities.
- Did not draw upon the common biblical evidence of the Last Supper or reference to other biblical references to the Eucharist in the early Church.

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Summer 2017

Component 1: Option B - An Introduction to Islam

It was very pleasing to see many good and outstanding responses in this, the first examination of this new syllabus. Many candidates engaged well with the material and had clearly read widely and referred to the views of scholars. A good degree of detail was demonstrated in breadth and depth in AO1 answers.

When attempting AO1 questions, some candidates chose to write introductory paragraphs and some did not. The best answers amongst those who did briefly defined terms. Those who did not included their definitions within their main paragraphs. Both approaches are equally valid. It is not necessary to write an introduction or conclusion which repeats information found elsewhere in an answer, as no additional marks are given for this. Responding to AO2, many candidates wrote engaging discussions which delved into different shades of interpretation, not necessarily simple opposing views. The best responses built up an argument, step by step, paragraph by paragraph. For example, one paragraph would identify an argument and support it from one perspective; the next would take it further and support it by another, or offer a different shade on interpretation.

Section A

1. (a) **Explain three of the five categories of action that guide Muslim living.** [AO1 25]

The best responses chose and explained three of the five categories of action, giving a range of examples chosen from religious requirements, issues of morality and everyday life. These were sometimes justified with reference to a Qur'an or hadith quote.

Weaker responses confused the five categories of action, with the five pillars of Islam and as a result much of the material presented was irrelevant. Some candidates confused Qur'an and hadith sayings with the five categories: a saying may be used to justify a category of action, but a quote from the Qur'an itself is not a category without some interpretation or explanation.

1. (b) **'The five categories are a clear guide for Muslim living today.'** Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses engaged with the term 'clear': are the categories easy to apply to modern day situations which Muslims might come across in their daily lives? The best answers considered a range of different issues, particularly those in a multi-faith environment, and others such as medical ethics, and discussed the application of the five categories to these.

Weaker responses did not address the word 'clear' and simply gave examples of how the categories could be used as a guide in different ways.

2. (a) **Examine the different types of giving in Islam.** [AO1 25]

The best responses identified Zakat, Khums and Sadaqah as the three main types of giving. A few defined other acts of generosity or distribution of meat from the Id sacrifice, or even acts of kindness and fellowship. The best answers included details about what Zakat is levied on, how Khums is paid and examples, from the life of Muhammad, of actions which could be considered Sadaqah.

Weaker responses lacked these details, or confused the categories. Some of the weaker candidates commonly missed out Khums, and mixed up the percentages required for giving between Khums and Zakat.

2. (b) **'The main reason for giving in Islam is to support the poor.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses recognised that the key phrase of part (b) was 'the main reason'. Candidates identified many possible reasons including the importance of Zakat as a pillar of Islam and therefore an act of worship for God; to create humility; to make society more equal following the quote of Muhammad who said that 'the person who does not desire for his fellow Muslim what he desires for himself is not amongst us.'

Weaker responses agreed or disagreed with the statement, without making much of a case why and without identifying other reasons then arguing for or against them being the main reason.

Section B

3. (a) **Outline the different ways in which the Qur'an is used and treated by Muslims.** [AO1 25]

The best responses stated that Muslims washed before touching the Qur'an, and used it to guide their daily lives. The best answers added more detail about the ritual of washing, the use in the home, highest bookshelf, in Dua before or after eating and at special events, at Aqiqah (birth), Nikkah (marriage) and Janazaah (Funeral) services; through learning at a Madrassah or even off by heart to become Hafiz or to recite beautifully as a Qari reciter.

Weaker responses only focused on part of the question, such as how the Qur'an is treated, and did not address how it is used to derive guidance for everyday life.

3. (b) **'The message of the Qur'an can never be translated with accuracy.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses handled the issue of translation well. Responses included the issue of accuracy, answered best when the different possible meaning of classical Arabic words was explained with examples. The advantages of bringing the message to a new generation with a different mother tongue, through translation, were contrasted with the fears that the beauty and spiritual meaning might be diminished, as well as the risk of mis-translation.

Weaker responses did not differentiate between translation and interpretation, and simply answered that the Qur'an could or could not be translated into modern English.

4. (a) **Explain what Islam teaches about Akhirah (Day of Final Judgement).**
[AO1 25]

The best responses which defined the Day of Judgement, life in the afterlife and the lead up to the Day were all credited and no candidate was penalised for focusing on any one aspect more than another. There were many impressive responses showing detailed knowledge, written up in well-structured paragraphs, demonstrating both breadth and depth of knowledge in this topic.

Weaker responses tended to simplify the topic into judgement of good and bad deeds and lacked details of events on the Day of Judgement or leading up to it.

4. (b) **'Muslims should live in constant fear of Final Judgement.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses considered the psychological impact of 'fear', the effect it might have on a believer which might distract from awe of God, but balanced this with the need to keep Judgement in mind both as a motivator to attain paradise and as a deterrent against misdemeanours. This question was extremely well answered by some candidates.

Weaker responses focused only on one side of the argument and stated that Muslims should fear judgement as this would scare them into behaving. Positive motivation to achieve paradise was not covered.

5. (a) **Explain the different ways in which Ashura is observed within Islam.**
[AO1 25]

This was a less popular question.

The best responses referred to the passion plays and displays of mourning by Shia Muslims. Some of the best answers included how Sunnis observed Ashura and even mentioned the historical background.

Weaker responses omitted any mention of Sunni practice and described Ashura as an exclusively Shia observance.

5. (b) **‘The practices involved at Ashura clearly express Shi’a identity.’
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 25]

The best responses suggested how ‘identity’ could be manifested in actions that represented beliefs in sorrow for the loss of the right and the true, according to Shia belief. Others discussed self-flagellation and whether this practice had any importance in Shia Islam, or was well known but misunderstood.

Weaker responses did not address the word ‘identity’ at all. Centres would do well to address what constitutes religious identity to enable all candidates, especially weaker ones, to better answer this and any other similar question.

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Component 1: Option C - An Introduction to Judaism

Generally the overall standard was good although some scripts were below the expected standard. There were some excellent papers at the top of the range which showed detailed knowledge, understanding and awareness of Judaism. The higher ability candidates displayed well-structured responses with good use of key terms and extensive vocabulary.

The weaker candidates did fail to address the requirements of the question and therefore did not score as highly as possible, and this is something centres could emphasise in order to improve performance.

Section A

- 1. (a) Examine the nature and purpose of the Torah within Orthodox Judaism. [AO1 25]**

This question was answered to varying degrees of success. All candidates were able to give a general introduction to the Torah, and the status attributed to the Torah.

The best responses were able to recognise the lifelong role of the Torah and the way in which it plays a regular part in worship, celebration and law within the Orthodox community.

Weaker responses failed to address the 'Orthodox' issue within the question, choosing to give a general account of Torah usage, treatment and content without focusing on the status attributed to it by the Orthodox community.

- 1. (b) 'The Torah is no longer an authority within Judaism today.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]**

This question was not answered as well as part (a) overall.

The best responses recognised that the Torah was authoritative to the Orthodox community and that different groups attributed status to varying degrees and had adapted its contents accordingly.

Many candidates discussed the iconic status of the Torah and as such its persistent authority. The better candidates discussed the legal value of the Torah and some discussed how the Torah was relevant, but at a different time.

Weaker responses included reference to only one of the aspects of the question with general remarks concerning the treatment of the Torah. Also, the less developed responses discussed the way in which the Torah is used as guidance rather than developing discussion to include ideas regarding to the Torah being able to return people to God, or develop the connection with the will and mind of God for instance.

2. (a) **Explain the nature and significance of the Mosaic covenant at the time of Moses.** [AO1 25]

The best responses referred to the nature of the covenant and the role the Torah played in this. They also referred to the fact that this covenant was similar to covenants of the time. In addition good responses made links between the covenant and what it meant for the Jewish nation at the time of Moses.

Weaker responses failed to respond fully to the requirements of the question. They focused on Moses' life and gave an historical narrative account of his life rather than focusing on the covenant. Although some historical narrative as background information was credit worthy, this should not have formed the basis for the entire response.

2. (b) **'The Mosaic covenant remains the most important covenant for all Jews today.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses focused on the relevance of the covenant 'today' rather than its general relevance. They discussed how some Jews felt that Judaism was evolving and therefore the contents of either covenant may not be relevant for Jews today, whereas others disagreed.

Many focused on the key issues of monotheism, rules and foundations for moral behaviour being essential for the continuation of the faith. Most candidates discussed the importance of the Mosaic covenant in comparison to the Abrahamic covenant.

Weaker responses failed to recognise the specific relevance of the covenant today, choosing to discuss the general importance of the covenant in an historical context.

Section B

3. (a) **Examine Jewish teachings about 'tzedakah' (charity).** [AO1 25]

This question was not attempted as often as others. Those who did attempt to answer this question did well on the whole. However, no reference was made either to Tikkun olam or the approach to *gemeilut Hasidim* here, and their use would have shown greater understanding of tzedakah within Judaism as a whole.

Good responses referred to Maimonides' ideas in relation to tzedakah and this was done correctly and in detail in some cases. Many were able to discuss the need to give regularly to charity and the percentage expected as well as the boxes that can be found in various establishments. The best responses candidates discussed charity in a global capacity such as hospitality, and duty.

Weaker responses included a basic explanation of the idea of tzedakah being charitable donations on the form of a tithe and failed to recognise the general connotations of the term.

3. (b) **'Prayer is more important than charity in Judaism.'** [AO2 25]
Evaluate this view.

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates.

The best responses were able to respond with developed arguments. The benefit of prayer and charity were discussed in detail with many candidates discussing the benefit of specific prayers. The merits of prayer as a way of communicating with God in a sincere way, rather than an outward sign of commitment to faith, which could be seen as for show only were also considered.

Weaker responses failed to develop the arguments further than the basic idea that prayer was a way in which to communicate with God, whereas charity is a way of helping others, which has to be of greater value rather than developing a personal relationship with God. The weaker responses also failed to name specific prayers which would have shown deeper knowledge.

4. (a) **Explain the significance of Rosh Hashanah within Judaism.** [AO1 25]

The best responses provided detailed knowledge and understanding of the significance of Rosh Hashanah with many of the key aspects of the festival and their significance discussed in detail, for example discussing how the festival marks the anniversary of creation and the days of penitence prior to Yom Kippur.

Weaker responses tended to simply offer a narrative/descriptive approach to this question, rather than explaining the significance of many rituals and this is something to be avoided.

4. (b) **'Jewish festivals do nothing to reinforce Jewish identity.'** [AO2 25]
Evaluate this view.

The best responses discussed the importance of festivals in educating the young and historical awareness, in terms of reinforcing Jewish identity. Most referred to the way some individuals celebrate festivals, but fail to adhere to their faith at any other time. Some also touched upon the idea that festivals are not the only way to reinforce Jewish identity.

Weaker responses failed to recognise that festivals could be a uniting factor for different branches of the faith or that it is an aspect that unites communities across the world. Whilst there was some recognition of the importance of festivals in reinforcing Jewish identity (by educating the young and developing historical awareness) the lines of reasoning or evidence user were often weak and simplistic.

5. (a) Outline beliefs about the nature of God within Judaism. [AO1 25]

Generally, this question was well attempted.

The best responses answered this question confidently and displayed good knowledge and understanding of Jewish beliefs about the nature of God, for example using terms such as omnipotent and omniscient confidently and accurately. Most used the expected terminology regarding the nature of God and many discussed monotheism with reference to the Shema.

Weaker responses failed to include any developed theological discussion about the nature of God. For example, many responses failed to outline the nature of God with reference to the creation of the world, other than stating that God created the world according to the Jewish faith.

5. (b) 'Not all of God's characteristics are meaningful for Jews today.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses discussed in depth the nature of God in relation to the Holocaust and suffering in general. Most were able to discuss that God's power had no limits and that as human's we shouldn't question God's characteristics, only accept them. The role of science in relation to this issue was also discussed by many. Several referred to the continuing role of God in nature as proof of God's characteristics still possessing meaning.

Weaker responses focused solely on the role of God with relation to suffering in the world in an underdeveloped way without discussion on other aspects of the nature of God.

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Component 1: Option D - An Introduction to Buddhism

Overall the answers demonstrated that centres have coped well with the new content and demand. Answers were mostly characterised by depth and detail. Explanation and examples were offered. Candidates were, on the whole, able to deploy their knowledge and understanding of the diversity of Buddhism in an effective and analytical way.

There are some general areas in which improvements can be made. Some of these are very simple, but would greatly enhance the quality of presentation. Some candidates did not use capital letters for Buddhism, Buddha, etc. Some candidates confused the terms Buddha, Buddhism and Buddhist. Candidates might take more opportunity to use key terms (and to spell them correctly).

There was significant evidence of candidates running out of time. This usually occurred in cases where candidates wrote long and irrelevant introductions in storytelling mode. Focus is important.

Opportunities were often missed for candidates to show their awareness of sources of wisdom. For example, if candidates were writing about karma as a significant teaching they could easily quote the *Dhammapada*. 'If a person speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows them, as the wheel of the cart follows the foot of the ox that draws it'. If they can't remember the quote, they can indicate they know that the *Dhammapada* is a source of wisdom on karma. However, candidates should always avoid making up quotes. Often 'quotes' (sometimes dubious ones) are 'thrown in' in an almost random way. Candidates could make much better use of the sources with which they engage. Candidates also need to understand that they are quoting, the writer they are quoting is not also quoting. For example we saw phrases like "Rupert Gethin quotes that "There is a discrepancy between our craving and the world we live in, between our expectations and the way things are." Candidates need to know that *they* quote, Gethin states/says/argues/suggests/proposes.

This is a perennial issue, but addressing the command words more directly would result in an improvement of the standard. Still too many candidates describe when they are asked to explain or examine.

Whilst there was some good quality evaluation in evidence, candidates can still improve on this by developing a style which goes beyond 'some people say this' and 'some people say that'. Often they say 'I think' or 'I believe' and then make an unsubstantiated assertion. They need to understand they don't gain marks for merely having an opinion. They gain marks for the quality of their argumentation. Candidates need to consider issues from more perspectives than merely two apparently opposing ones, and to bring out complexity in a more convincing way. They need more lines of reasoning. Candidates might find it helpful to imagine themselves as lawyers, making a case for a certain way of seeing an issue. In this way they must deal effectively with counter arguments and alternative perspectives, but they should also be able to come to a strong conclusion.

Section A

Question 1 was the most popular from the compulsory section. There were some issues with the level of explanation in this question. A number of candidates recounted a description of the Four Sights and fell short of explaining their significance.

1. (a) Explain the significance of the Four Sights in Buddhism. [AO1 25]

The best responses were able to draw on knowledge from across the Specification to illustrate the significance of the Sights, not just within the biography of the historical Buddha, but in terms of key Buddhist teachings. Some made appropriate reference to secondary sources.

Weaker responses merely described the Four Sights rather than explained their significance. Some limited their answer to explain the significance within the life of the Buddha, but did not extend their analysis further.

1. (b) ‘The Four Sights offer the best insight into Buddhist teachings about impermanence and no-self.’ Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

This question generated some substantial analysis.

The best responses correctly identified that anicca is clearly evident throughout the four sights but anatta is better seen elsewhere. The very best essays gave the story of King Milinda and/or the three lakshanas.

Weaker responses often made the same error in that once points have been made candidates did not make use of the opportunity to illustrate or consider further. Each point may have a counter-argument or alternative perspective. Candidates still seem to understand points as lining up on one ‘side’ or the ‘other’ and are not able to communicate complexity, or to consider a claim from a variety of perspectives.

2. (a) Explain the importance of the Four Parajikas. [AO1 25]

Question 2 was not a popular question except with some centres, where it was chosen by the vast majority of candidates. When it was it was generally done very well with the Parajikas and their implications well explained, and importance accounted for.

The best responses showed good knowledge and understanding of the sangha, and the need for regulation. They had reflected on each Parajika individually and were able to explain it in such a way that illustrated its importance. Some candidates showed good knowledge of the socio-religious background of the early sangha, explaining that teachers with apparently supernatural powers, and teachers who claimed to be liberated/enlightened would have been fairly commonplace.

Weaker responses contained significant irrelevant content that could not be credited. Some candidates wrote about the Patimokkha, or precepts more generally. Weaker answers stated the Parajikas, but were unable to develop any commentary upon them.

2. (b) **‘Buddhism emphasises the importance of rules above all else.’
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 25]

The best responses considered this question from a variety of interesting perspectives and angles, and answered in a mature fashion which went beyond the characterisation of Buddhism as a ‘do as you like’ religion. Some candidates wrote effectively about the Middle Way in relation to this topic.

Weaker responses failed to recognise that other rules and precepts addition to the Parajikas within Buddhism could be referred to here. Some presented Theravāda as rule-driven and Mahayana as more ‘liberal’ or ‘lenient’. This is a simplistic presentation of Mahayana. In order to counter it, candidates might like to reflect on the levels of discipline required in a Zen monastery, or in the practice of zazen.

Section B

3. (a) **Examine the notion of pratityasamutpada.** [AO1 25]

Few candidates attempted this question.

The best responses gave many in-depth modern examples that showed clear understanding of the concept. Some candidates gave well-informed accounts of the twelve nidanas. The best answers were engaged and creative, and reflected good classroom discussion of the concept.

Weaker responses tended to fail to go into any depth to show understanding. Some candidates wrote very short answers. This question requires candidates to put concepts into their own words. It also required the deployment of illustrations and examples. Some candidates were not able to do this well, despite knowing the meaning of pratityasamutpada.

3. (b) **‘The teaching about pratityasamutpada describes reality as it really is.’
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 25]

The best responses offered many examples of how pratityasamutpada relates to the modern day and generally the world around us. On the whole candidates found the concept convincing for describing reality as it really is, and the evidence they presented was strong.

Weaker responses were one-sided and failed to argue against the statement given in the question. Candidates may have worked hard to understand the concept and were able to provide evidence in favour of it, but had not really considered the concept as a controversial explanation of reality.

4. (a) Examine the Eightfold Path. [AO1 25]

This was a popular question.

The best responses split their 22 minutes into eight sections, leaving time for more general comments at the beginning and end. As such responses were balanced. Some of the best answers gave specific examples for each aspect of the path, drawing both on features of modern life for lay people, and on the life of the sangha. Some explained in detail wisdom, morality and meditation.

Weaker responses typically gave either an overview of the three sections, and then just the names of the eight elements, or they gave just the eight elements of the path with a brief explanation. There were a small number of candidates that did not know all eight elements and therefore gave an example for wisdom, morality and meditation.

**4. (b) 'Wisdom without morality is meaningless.'
Evaluate this view with reference to Buddhism. [AO2 25]**

The quality of the responses given for this popular question, were disappointing overall.

The best responses gave some of the points given in the mark scheme and were able to explain what is meant by 'wisdom' and 'morality' in a Buddhist context.

Weaker responses were characterised by unsupported assertions and repetition. Most argued that wisdom and morality were equally needed, but found it difficult to give convincing explanations.

5. (a) Examine different practices of Buddhist meditation. [AO1 25]

This was a popular question, producing a mixed set of answers.

The best responses were thorough and detailed, exploring a significant range of different types of meditation. Some candidates were able to enhance their answers by showing differences in context: meditation undertaken by monks in a monastic setting, compared to mediation undertaken by laypeople identifying as Buddhist, compared to secular settings in which mediation might be used. Some also wrote about the Buddha's own use and recommendation of meditation.

Weaker responses limited their answers to only two or three types of meditation. There were few that explained Metta Bhavana well, if at all. Some answers were rather generic and lacking in subject knowledge. Some answers focused on 'purpose', which was not the emphasis of the question. These answers accrued marks, but if they failed to examine different types, they would not be able to score highly.

5. (b) **‘Meditation is a waste of time in today’s world.’
Evaluate this view with reference to Buddhism.**

[AO2 25]

The best responses considered the question from a range of perspectives. They included a consideration of the value of meditation for Buddhists, and some excellent answers pointed out that meditation is not the only practice of importance in Buddhism, and is not important at all for some Buddhists. There was some high quality analysis of the challenges of modern life, and a consideration of the role of meditation in addressing some of the problems. Some candidates wrote about the view of the Dalai Lama, that meditation can bring about world peace. Some candidates clearly linked the practice of meditation with overcoming attachment, ego, greed hatred and delusion.

Weaker responses were one-sided (either meditation is irrelevant in secular society or meditation is a really excellent practice that leads to peace, calm and harmony). Weaker answers were unable to consider the issue from a variety of angles. Few weak answers explored the role of meditation for Buddhists (presumably interpreting ‘today’s world’ to mean ‘modern secular people – not religious people like Buddhists’).

**EDUQAS
GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

Summer 2017

Component 1: Option E - An Introduction to Hinduism

It was pleasing to see that centres have risen to the challenges of the new specification. The excellent standard of some responses showed that the candidates had been well prepared with accurate, extensive understanding and confident use of religious concepts and terms. However, it is imperative that centres focus on the detail of the specification content.

The paper seemed accessible to the vast majority of candidates and the answers spanned the range of bands. It also seems that some weaknesses have been transferred from the old to the new specification. Candidates need to focus on the question set and answer the demands of that question. Some failed to do this and answered on a related concept or teaching e.g. on the question on Gandhi and Ambedkar some gave a full explanation of the varna system rather than focusing on the views of Gandhi and Ambedkar. Others did not read the question carefully enough especially in part (b) and therefore did not address the issues raised by that question. However generally the evaluative questions were well structured and moved away from the traditional for and against method of answering. This allowed a more complete evaluation of the issues raised.

On an administrative note some centres were giving candidates a four page booklet to begin with, then another four page booklet and then a sixteen page booklet of which only a page or two was used. This not only creates inconvenience for the examiner, but is a complete waste of paper. Some candidates do not fill in the box noting the questions that they have answered on the front of the answer booklet leaving the examiner to do this. Some candidates were also answering parts (a) of the two questions chosen and then parts (b). There appears to be no logic to this approach as both parts of the question are worth the same amount of marks.

Section A

1. (a) Examine the concept of varnashramadharma in Hinduism. [AO1 25]

This was a popular question. However there was a wide range in the standard of answers given.

The best responses addressed the question directly with sound knowledge and understanding. There was some impressive use of scriptural and scholarly quotes to exemplify points made. They were able not only to distinguish between the three different parts of the concept but also to explain the way they are linked and their influence on Hindu lifestyle.

Weaker responses did not focus on the concept of varnashramadharma, although some candidates took it as a chance to write all they knew about varna, the ashramas and dharma without any discussion on their relation to each other and therefore the concept as a whole. There were also some very general and superficial answers to this question. It was surprising to see a number of answers which did not explain one of the three parts which of course deems the concept incomplete and therefore meaningless. There was also no reference to its importance in the daily lives of Hindus.

1. (b) **‘Duty is the most important part of Hinduism.’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

This was generally a well answered question with most candidates able to present reasoned arguments.

The best responses were well developed focusing entirely on the issue raised by the question, were well supported, challenged and evaluated. There was some good use of quotes and scholars to support arguments. They also gave specific examples of the duties Hindus have to follow at different stages in life e.g. during the householder stage. They were able to consider whether these duties were a help or hindrance to a Hindu’s lifestyle.

Weaker responses lacked challenge and evaluation of the issue and contained a number of repetitions of the same point. They also included reference to anything and everything within Hinduism being a more important part – referring to individual gods, temples, places of pilgrimage, but without evidence of any sort to support such claims.

2. (a) **Outline the views of Gandhi and Ambedkar on varna and untouchability.**
[AO1 25]

The best responses made clear the differences between the Gandhi and Ambedkar. Answers referred to Gandhi’s promotion of varna, and his reasons for this, his calls to absorb Dalits into the shudra varna and his use of ‘Harijans’. Candidates were able to distinguish this from Ambedkar’s first-hand experience of Dalithood, his calls for the complete eradication of the varna system, his drive for political mobilisation of Dalits and his conversion to Buddhism. There was also some excellent use of quotes to exemplify. Some candidates were stronger in their knowledge and understanding of the one than the other, delivering an unbalanced and limited response.

Weaker responses failed to address the question directly, rather drifting into relating all they knew about Gandhi. This was also not a question requiring an explanation of the varna system in Hinduism which is what a number of candidates wrote as an answer. Others completely confused the two distinct views having Ambedkar as a supporter of the varna system.

2. (b) **‘Varna is not relevant today.’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses presented strong arguments to support the view that varna is still relevant today. They were able to give examples of the positive impact of caste whilst giving excellent consideration to the inherent discrimination it entails. They also considered effectively the relevance of the system in modern society. The responses contained thoughtful argument and a clear conclusion.

Weaker responses tended to be one sided and focused on the varna system as being divisive, unjust and oppressive and with no place or relevance in modern society. Whilst there is evidence to support this view others would refute it completely. A complete evaluative answer needs to consider more than one view on the issue being considered.

Section B

3. (a) **Explain jnana yoga and karma yoga as paths to liberation.** [AO1 25]

The best responses contained thorough knowledge and understanding of jnana and karma yoga and of their main features. Candidates referred to jnana yoga as the understanding of the relationship between kshetra – the body – and kshetrajna – the soul or atman. Impressive responses also identified the practices associated with jnana yoga. They were also able to identify karma yoga as the path of unselfish action and were able to give examples. They were also able to explain the concept of a path to liberation.

Weaker responses showed very limited knowledge of the topic and did not address the question in any detail especially on jnana yoga. They could not exemplify the practices in any way. Some responses did not correctly identify the two yogas.

3. (b) **'Jnana yoga is the most important path to liberation.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses gave a range of valid arguments to support the view that jnana yoga is the most important. The arguments were supported by clear reasoning – jnana being the most difficult path and therefore requiring tremendous strength of will and intellect. They were also able to refer to Advaita Vedanta within this context. Strong counter arguments were also evident referring to the superiority of bhakti yoga and karma yoga. The responses contained thoughtful argument and a clear conclusion.

Weaker responses tended to reiterate much of what was used in part (a) and described or explained what each of the three yogas were without really evaluating their comparative effectiveness as paths to liberation.

4. (a) Explain Hindu teachings about karma and reincarnation. [AO1 25]

The standard achieved in the responses to this question was generally disappointing.

The best responses addressed the question directly with sound knowledge and understanding. There was some impressive use of scriptural and scholarly quotes to exemplify points made. They were able to distinguish between punya and papa and to explain the three types of karma noted in the specification. They also successfully linked the concept of karma with the concept of reincarnation and the attainment of Moksha.

Weaker responses to this question were very general and superficial. It was surprising to see a number of answers which did not specifically explain what karma is, whilst others had very little knowledge and repeated the few basic points made. Some concentrated completely on karma and made very little reference to reincarnation, whilst others explained karma simply as cause and effect and then wrote about reincarnation.

4. (b) ‘The next life is far more important for Hindus than the present life.’ Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses were well developed focusing entirely on the issue raised by the question, were well supported, challenged and evaluated. There were some good use of quotes and scholars to support arguments. They referred to the importance of the next life as ethical motivation and as the goal in a Hindu’s life. Good responses were also able to evaluate the importance of the present life in terms of its effect on the next and the difficulty in deciding which is the more important.

Weaker responses lacked challenge and evaluation of the issue and contained a number of repetitions of the same point mainly concerning the attainment of good karma. Answers tended to be no more than a list of points for and against without any real development of the arguments.

5. (a) Examine the importance of Holi to the Hindu community. [AO1 25]

The standard achieved in the responses to this question was generally disappointing.

The best responses showed a good understanding of Holi’s social and spiritual significance, highlighting a number of aspects such as the theme of good over evil, rewards of loyalty to God, the benevolence of the gods, removal of social barriers, community cohesion, spring festival, renewal of friendships and spiritual blessings by Agni.

Weaker responses provided generic descriptions of Holi celebrations, rather than focusing on the set question - its importance to the Hindu community. At AS level more is expected than merely describing the background to a festival and what takes place. Many were responses were generic descriptions that relied upon knowledge of coloured powder fights and bonfires. At best, the theme of bringing the community together was briefly mentioned. Many quoted Owen Cole ‘Holi is the most riotous and notorious festival ...’ without linking the quote to the question.

5. (b) **‘Holi is more a social occasion than a religious celebration.’** [AO2 25]
Evaluate this view.

The best responses answered the question directly and considered the main features of the festival - whether they are social or religious; whether the festival is able to convey any religious or ethical teachings today. Good responses exemplified arguments with reference to the practices – throwing of coloured powder, easing of caste restrictions, eating and drinking. However the link between these practices and religious beliefs was clearly made. A few strong, well developed and evaluated arguments were offered.

Weaker responses simply attempted to reword the question to suit what they knew. The focus on ‘social occasion’ was ignored and some candidates argued for and against Holi being a religious festival or not. Although this in part was creditable, it failed to address the full issue of the question set.

**EDUQAS
GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

Summer 2017

Component 2: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion

This, the first of the compulsory papers, was generally answered well and was accessible to the majority of students who were entered for the examination. This paper was certainly in line with previous years. The answers offered displayed evidence of clear differentiation and there were marks across the full spectrum, with some demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding.

The question paper had two sections. In the first section the most popular answer was question 1 on Aquinas, but there were also a number of answers on question 2 the Teleological argument. All option questions gained responses from candidates, although from weaker candidates there were some unfinished answers and cases where either part (a) or part (b) had not been answered. There were very few rubric errors and it was good to see that often students demonstrated a good level of evaluation. In weaker responses there was often the conflation or confusion of different scholars and theories perhaps reflecting the extent of the new Specification, but this was also a key differentiator for assessment.

Overall and in relation to the Legacy papers, the (b) [AO2] evaluation answers were much more developed, obviously reflecting the increase in weighting, but also reflecting the amount of preparation done by centres and candidates for these answers. The nature of the subject often meant that the AO2 answers were fuller than those at AO1.

Section A

1. (a) Outline Aquinas' cosmological arguments for the existence of God. [AO1 25]

The standard here was generally good. A few candidates conflated the cosmological and the teleological arguments and seemed unsure which of Aquinas' Five Ways formed the cosmological argument. However, most candidates were able to successfully identify the first three ways though there were variations on the amount of detail included. In particular, there was a lack of example/illustration and the rejection of infinite regression was rarely mentioned. Most made reference to the idea of motion, but only a few detailed potentiality and actuality. The second way of cause and effect produced more detailed answers. In the third way, the idea of contingency was mostly used correctly though few referred to necessary being and its implications for the argument.

Features of stronger answers

- Clearly explained the arguments and appropriate examples/illustrations for example with potentiality and actuality.
- Good explanation of why Aquinas rejected infinite regression.
- Clear understanding of the distinction between necessary and contingent.

Features of weaker answers

- Elements of reasoning or key steps in the argument were missed.
- Undeveloped explanations for each stage.
- Some misunderstood the idea of “beings” and assumed they only referred to people. Hence contingent beings often had reference to parents and children.

1. (b) **‘Aquinas’ cosmological arguments are not convincing.’
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 25]

Most candidates successfully identified the criticisms of the cosmological argument from Hume and explained how alternative scientific arguments may be considered rival theories and so weaken the argument. A number of candidates discussed evolution rather than the Big Bang. The fallacy of composition, though often referred to was rarely understood. There were lots of quotes about mothers and the universe having a mother, but many candidates did not seem to understand how it connected with the challenge to the cosmological argument. Finally, evaluation is about weighing up the relative strengths and weaknesses of those arguments such that it leads to a justified conclusion. Those candidates who did evaluate, produced some excellent answers.

Features of stronger answers

- Accurately identified key challenges and criticisms.
- Evaluated the criticisms rather than just explained them.
- Used philosophical terminology to identify the strengths of the argument e.g. logical, a posteriori, inductive reasoning, etc.

Features of weaker answers

- Simply repeated challenges without assessing them.
- Many candidates still interpret ‘evaluate’ as meaning ‘list the arguments for and the arguments against’.
- Confused the challenges or could not explain them properly.

2. (a) **Outline the teleological arguments of Aquinas and Tennant for the
existence of God.**

[AO1 25]

This question was not as popular as question 1, but nearly all candidates were able to address the arguments of both Aquinas and Tennant. A significant number of candidates answered on Paley – either because they confused it with the name Aquinas or because that was the only argument they knew. When explaining Aquinas, few made reference to the archer and the arrow and those who did rarely understood what it illustrated. Tennant’s arguments were generally well done and explained in depth with the majority detailing both his anthropic and aesthetic arguments. However, the lower band responses failed to offer detailed examples and seemed unsure as to how beauty points towards an intelligent designer.

Features of stronger answers

- Accurately addressed the idea of non-intelligent matter directed to a purpose according to Aquinas through the archer analogy.
- Distinguished between Tennant's anthropic and aesthetic principles.
- Clearly explained the arguments with examples.

Features of weaker answers

- Confused Aquinas' argument with the cosmological idea of causation.
- Could not clarify the idea of 'purpose' in Aquinas.
- Conflated Tennant's two arguments.
- Digressed into Paley's watch analogy.
- Confused Paley with Tennant or Aquinas.

2. (b) **'Scientific explanations for order in the universe are more persuasive than teleological arguments.'**

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

In general, candidates offered a balanced response to this argument though answers often lacked a clear weighing up of the persuasiveness of the various arguments. Many candidates made reference to both the Big Bang and also evolution. Although the Big Bang is more connected to the cosmological, there is a case for referring to it in the design in terms of resulting order but this was rarely explored. Again, candidates needed to make clear why these theories are more persuasive than teleological arguments.

Features of stronger answers

- Evaluated and commented on the persuasiveness of scientific data/arguments instead of just listing them.
- Were able to clearly see both strengths and weaknesses in arguments due to their inductive nature.
- Gave clear justification for their argument and appreciated the complexity beyond a simple 'science' and 'religion' divide.
- Referred to arguments such as 'God of the Gaps' and considered the empirical evidence for evolution as opposed to the speculative conclusions of design arguments.

Features of weaker answers

- Simply listed facts about the Big Bang and evolution.
- Opted to repeat Paley's design argument with no real references to science.
- Struggled to clearly identify different lines of argument beyond a 'science' and 'religion' divide.

Section B

3. (a) **Outline the challenges to the ontological argument with reference to Gaunilo and Kant.** [AO1 25]

Although a popular question, a surprising number of candidates attempted it not knowing Kant's arguments. Candidates often began with a short explanation of Anselm's argument in order to illustrate Gaunilo's response. Reference was often made to Gaunilo and the greatest island but the conclusion was usually stated rather than explained. Although most knew that Kant's challenge was linked to existence not being a predicate, they were not always able to explain its relevance. As always with part (a) questions, it is the lack of explanation in the candidates answers that limit the band they are awarded.

Features of stronger answers

- Coherent explanation of Kant's criticism concerning 'predicate'.
- Understood the 'perfect island' challenge and concentrated on explaining how Gaunilo reasoned this rather than a response to it.
- Made good use of reference to Descartes' triangle analogy and Kant's response.

Features of weaker answers

- Not selective enough e.g. explained the ontological argument from Anselm and then briefly the challenge by Gaunilo and then the response.
- Could not really explain the idea of 'predicate' in relation to the argument.
- Gaunilo's island challenge was stated, but not explained.

3. (b) **'The challenges to the ontological argument are ineffective.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

This question was rather weakly answered. Candidates were able to explain the response given by Anselm to Gaunilo although reference was not always made to Anselm's second form of the argument. Higher band candidates were able to describe why and how the criticisms are ineffective in weakening the ontological arguments. At the lower band response, candidates often restated Anselm and Descartes arguments as explanations as to why the criticisms were ineffective but did not actually explain how Anselm and Descartes were more convincing than the criticisms. Modern scholars were brought in with varying degrees of accuracy and understanding.

Features of stronger answers

- Used references and sources beyond Anselm, Gaunilo and Kant to good effect.
- Introduced different lines of reasoning from the wider debate amongst scholars.
- Discussed the issue of a 'leap' from concept to reality.

Features of weaker answers

- Restated Anselm and Descartes arguments as explanations as to why the criticisms were ineffective.
- Did not actually explain how Anselm and Descartes were more convincing than the criticisms.
- Repeated the challenges without commentary or analysis.

4. (a) Explain how Irenaean type theodicies offer a solution to the problem of evil. [AO1 25]

A few candidates erroneously discussed Augustinian type rather than Irenaean type theodicies. Most answers to this question tended to be in the mid-range. Candidates included both Irenaeus and Hick, usually beginning with the creation of man-made in the image of God but not in the likeness. Higher band responses then successfully explained the purpose of evil concerning the development of humanity and addressed the role of free will, epistemic distance and universal salvation. It was a shame that few candidates referred explicitly to the problem of evil and fewer took time to address how the theodicy provides a solution to this in terms of the benevolence and omnipotence of God.

Features of stronger answers

- Accurate and detailed presentation of key Irenaean elements such as 'image', 'likeness', 'soul-making', 'epistemic distance', etc.
- Good awareness of how John Hick developed the theodicy.
- Clear understanding of the purpose of 'epistemic distance' linking it to both free will and development.
- Explained all the above with a focus on how they attempt to solve the problem of evil.

Features of weaker answers

- Confused theodicies.
- Spent too much time outlining the problem of evil.
- Had the general idea of evil serving a purpose of 'teaching' and 'development', but either could not clearly explain how through use of appropriate examples.
- Omitted key elements such as 'image' and 'likeness' distinction, epistemic distance, etc.
- Merely presented the free will defence.

4. (b) 'Irenaean type theodicies are not compatible with the 21st Century world view.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Candidates who, in error, referred to the Augustinian theodicy in (a) did somewhat better on this question and were able to make general comments about theodicies and 21st century world views. Many candidates within mid-high range band responses were able to accurately explain general strengths and weaknesses of the Irenaean theodicy, but some did not always elaborate sufficiently on their points. Few candidates reached the highest band response for this answer. This was mainly due to their responses highlighting the generic strengths and weaknesses of the theodicy and not addressing what is meant by '21st Century World view'.

Features of stronger answer

- Used the traditional strengths and weaknesses and related them clearly to examples from the 21st century and/or its world view.
- An awareness of how lines of argument could be defended e.g. eschatological justification, but also the implications of this.
- Made good use of examples of types of suffering to support an argument.
- Some candidates made use of more recent presentations of the problem of evil pointing out the ways that the theodicy did or did not address them.

Features of weaker answers

- Struggled with the 21st century world view.
- Just listed one or two key challenges.
- Gave minimal exemplification for supporting an argument.

5. (a) **Examine the nature of religious experience with reference to visions and mysticism.** [AO1 25]

Surprisingly, this was the least popular question. Again, most answers were in the mid-range level. Candidates gave a general description of religious experiences along with examples of visions and mystical experiences, but only a few candidates explained the types and styles of visionary experiences. Examples were often not given, though some could give examples such as the Vision at Mons and good use was made of Muhammad's vision. Candidates felt more confident when discussing mystical experiences. They were more detailed and most candidates successfully identified William James' four characteristics of mystical experience. However, few students gave more than a brief overview of the general nature of mystical experience or the role of mystical experience within different faiths, e.g. Sufism.

Features of stronger answer

- Use of James' analysis of mysticism.
- Good examples to explain visions.
- An awareness of the overlap between the two.

Features of weaker answers

- Unaware of what mysticism was.
- Simply narrated a religious experience such as a vision.
- Explained prayer and conversion.

5. (b) **'Visions and mysticism are valid means of communicating religious teaching and belief.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Higher level responses offered a well-balanced view of the arguments both for and against the validity of religious experiences from the perspective of Franks-Davies, Freud and Persinger. Occasionally, reference was made to Swinburne's principles of testimony and credulity. However, a number of responses, as before, did not really tackle the demands of the question set and, in particular, failed to address the issue of 'communicating'. Only the best candidates considered the unknowable nature of God.

Features of stronger answer

- Generally focused on the question set and used the traditional debates about the usefulness or meaningfulness of religious experiences.
- Good use of different scholars to support arguments

Features of weaker answers

- Just focused on whether or not a religious experience is valid in itself.
- Repeated criticisms and challenges to religious experience without understanding the significance of these for the issue of communication.

EDUQAS
GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Summer 2017

Component 3: An Introduction to Religion and Ethics

It was very pleasing to witness that a lot of candidates, from many different centres, were able to write good to outstanding responses to this first examination of the new specification. This is a tribute to both the candidates themselves, but also their teachers on how well they prepared them for this specification.

Good to outstanding responses answered the AO1 questions set. Weaker responses tended to try and write everything they knew, rather than specifically answering the question. Moreover, good to outstanding responses explained relevant theories with a mix of detail, clarity, examples (when needed) and scholarly views. Weaker candidates often lacked detail and clarity, illustrated by either misunderstanding theories or mixing up theories from other parts of the specification. Furthermore, candidates do not need to write an introduction or conclusion which repeats information found elsewhere in an answer, as no additional marks are awarded for this.

Many candidates, in their AO2 responses, clearly demonstrated the understanding they gained either in class or as a result of individual research, by being able to reference the views of scholars. Weaker responses tended to have short, generalised strengths and weaknesses of a particular theory. Whereas stronger responses moved away from the simple for and against format, by analysing the points they put forward and evaluating key points as they went through their responses. For example, one paragraph could identify an argument, with perhaps an illustration, and then support that line of argument from a certain scholarly perspective; the paragraph could further develop by considering an objection to the original argument, again potentially supported by scholarly opinion, and then the whole paragraph could be evaluated.

A few candidates lost marks because of poor time keeping during the exam i.e. they ran out of time before completing all the questions.

A very small number of candidates made rubric errors i.e. answering only one question or answering two questions from the same section e.g. answering questions 3 and 4.

Section A

1. (a) **Explain Mill's development of Bentham's Utilitarianism.** [AO1 25]

The best responses had an implicit understanding of Mill's development of Bentham's Utilitarianism e.g. they could generally detail the 'Higher and Lower Pleasures', the 'Harm Principle' and the introduction of 'Rule Utilitarianism'. Some candidates also successfully identified that Mill favoured what is now known as 'Weak Rule Utilitarianism'. Some outstanding candidates weaved Bentham and Mill in together to illustrate the context of Mill's development of Bentham's Utilitarianism.

Weaker responses tended to either concentrate too much on Bentham's Act Utilitarianism, leaving little time for Mill's development, or in some more extreme cases just concentrate solely on Bentham's Utilitarianism. Some candidates seemed well prepared to answer a question on Bentham's Utilitarianism, but less so on Mill's Utilitarianism.

1. (b) **'Act Utilitarianism is not relevant in modern society.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses were able to clearly illustrate why Act Utilitarianism is or is not relevant in modern society, rather than just using generic arguments. For example, some candidates raised interesting points regarding the place of Act Utilitarianism in a modern multi-cultural democracy where British values such as tolerance should be upheld or using the non-religious aspect of Utilitarianism to justify the main reasons as to its suitability given the secular nature of some modern societies. In addition some candidates successfully compared the relevance of Act Utilitarianism, in modern society, with other ethics they had studied – including Rule Utilitarianism.

Weaker responses found it hard to fully link the strengths and weaknesses of Act Utilitarianism into the question set. Therefore, the candidate would write simple examinations of the strengths and weakness rather than a discussion on the unsuitability of Act Utilitarianism in society today. Therefore, weaker responses tended to just have lots of generic 'pros' and 'cons' of Act Utilitarianism without either developing the points made or linking them to the AO2 question set. Moreover, some candidates did not differentiate between Act and Rule Utilitarianism and that they may have different relevance's in modern society.

2. (a) **Compare Act and Rule Utilitarianism.** [AO1 25]

The best responses were able to successfully explain Act Utilitarianism and then Rule Utilitarianism; therefore, implicitly illustrating the differences. They also identified the trigger word 'compare' and engaged in an essay structured to this, explicitly comparing the two forms of Utilitarianism. For example, there were some good scripts that considered the use of the Hedonic Calculus in the different versions of Utilitarianism. Other good responses compared Act Utilitarianism to the two versions of Rule Utilitarianism – strong and weak.

Weaker responses tended to concentrate on one of the forms of Utilitarianism only – particularly Act Utilitarianism, therefore missing the point of the question. Some candidates only understood Rule Utilitarianism on a very generic level i.e. you follow rules/laws/government, etc., rather than explaining what the criteria for creating the 'rule' was. Some candidates confused Rule Utilitarianism with Mill's development of higher and lower pleasures. Finally, a few candidates confused 'happiness' with either 'love' or 'good'.

2. (b) **'Following Act Utilitarianism leads to immoral behaviour.'** [AO2 25]
Evaluate this view.

The best responses were able to apply the 'pros' and 'cons' they had learnt about Act Utilitarianism to the specific demands of the question set. Particularly good responses were able to illustrate their points with good contemporary examples e.g. issues associated with racism, Brexit, abortion, animal rights, etc. Some candidates used a wide range of scholars to critique and support various points.

Weaker responses presented the 'pros' and 'cons' of Act Utilitarianism without really applying it to the question. This resulted in a response that did not really answer the specifics of the question. A number of answers were very descriptive in nature, with only a limited amount of analysis or evaluation of the arguments presented.

Section B

3. (a) **Apply Fletcher's Situation Ethics to the issue of homosexual relationships.** [AO1 25]

The best responses were able to successfully apply Fletcher's Situation Ethics to the issue of homosexual relationships. Some very good responses used the principle of agapeic love and a combination of the Fundamental and Working Principles of Situation Ethics to address the issue of homosexual relationships. They carefully considered each aspect in turn and displayed a high level of knowledge and understanding.

Weaker responses did not mention homosexuality at all, or only in the final paragraph / sentence, but with no real connection between the theory and ethical issue. Some responses were limited by their understanding of Situation Ethics, they were quite generic and not specific i.e. Situation Ethics is only about love. Therefore, they failed to recognise the nuance and relativistic nature of this theory; it always seeks to assess each particular relationship and consider whether agape is best served. A few candidates used the question as an opportunity to rant about anyone who is critical about homosexual relationships, which failed to address the question set.

3. (b) **‘Religious believers must reject Situation Ethics as a basis for making moral decisions.’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses addressed the specifics of the questions very well. Particularly good responses recognised the relativist/absolutist clash and the challenge raised by Situation Ethics of religious legalism and/or literalism. Other good responses made reference to Old and New Testament biblical teachings on love by Jesus, St. Paul, etc. which appeared to demonstrate personalism and support for the statement. Some candidates contrasted Situation Ethics with other religious ethical approaches they had learnt such as Natural Law and/or Divine Command Theory.

Weaker responses ignored the 'religious' aspect of the question and instead simply wrote a generic strengths and weaknesses Situation Ethics AO2 answer. Other weak responses came about as a result of the candidate not really understanding Situation Ethics e.g. it is relativist, etc.

4. (a) **Outline Virtue Theory with reference to Aristotle.** [AO1 25]

A very well answered question with most candidates able to explain Virtue Theory and the contribution of Aristotle.

The best responses included reference to Aristotle’s moral virtues and the doctrine of the mean. Some candidates successfully developed Virtue Theory by referencing virtuous role models or the importance of phronesis/sophia or wisdom in discerning what constituted a virtue. Some good responses made excellent use of examples e.g. illustrating the doctrine of the mean with one (or more) of Aristotle’s twelve moral virtues and its relevant vices of excess and deficiency.

Weaker responses tended to just briefly outline the relevant theory rather than develop the points made e.g. the doctrine of the mean was just said to be the middle way, but many failed to explain what it was the middle way between. A few candidates got bogged down in the background to Virtue Theory (ancient Greece, eudaimonia, city states, Plato etc.) and didn't ever get to the meat of moral virtues, doctrine of the mean etc. Some candidates confused Aquinas for Aristotle.

4. (b) **‘Virtue Theory is impractical when faced with a moral dilemma.’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses were able to engage with the specific question asked, they took the more popular arguments about the practicality of Virtue Theory (it is subjective, out of date etc.) and analyse these points in a thorough way. Often these points would be analysed with scholarly contributions from the likes of MacIntyre or Anscombe. Other candidates analysed the practicality of Virtue Theory in comparison to other ethical theories they have learnt.

Weaker responses tended to be let down by a lack of accurate understanding of what Virtue Theory actually is i.e. a few candidates discussed Virtue Theory solely as a deontological ethic, whereas a few others discussed it as a teleological ethic. Other weaker responses merely concentrated on the strengths and weaknesses of Virtue Theory, without trying to link the points they were making to the question set.

5. (a) Examine the precepts and goods within Aquinas' Natural Law. [AO1 25]

This was a popular question and most candidates were able to answer correctly.

The best responses focused on the demands of the question rather than writing all they know about Natural Law. Therefore, candidates that focused the majority of their answer on the precepts (key, primary and secondary) and goods (real and apparent) were able to develop a focused, detailed and clear answer to the question. Some candidates made excellent use of examples when trying to illustrate various aspects of their answer e.g. the secondary precepts were particularly well illustrated, as were apparent goods.

Weaker responses were able to convey basic information on the precepts part of the question their answers lacked detail, for example, some candidates just listed them. Clearer links between primary and secondary precepts would have enhanced several candidates answers i.e. how the secondary precepts are derived from the primary precepts. However, the main issue for some candidates was having only a limited understanding of 'apparent good' and 'real good'. A few candidates confused them with 'internal' and 'external' acts and others wrote nothing at all about the goods.

5. (b) 'Following Natural Law results in injustice.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The best responses engaged well with the question set. Particularly good answers were able to engage with specific elements of Aquinas' Natural Law theory rather than just applying it generically e.g. the key precept of 'do good and avoid evil' was used to argue that this could not logically lead to injustice. Some candidates used pertinent examples to develop points made e.g. the primary precept of reproduction and preservation of life and how these impacted (in terms of injustice) on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, etc.

Weaker responses tended to be too brief e.g. 'Natural Law is unjust because it does not allow abortion', but not failing to explain why this is unjust. A few candidates simply discussed the strengths and weaknesses of Natural Law in a generic way and thus they did not really engage fully with the question.



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