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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**RELIGIOUS STUDIES: ROUTE A  
GCSE (NEW)  
FULL & SHORT COURSE**

**SUMMER 2018**

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## RELIGIOUS STUDIES: ROUTE A

### GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2018

### COMPONENT 1

This was the first year of this particular specification and therefore no comparisons with previous year's performance are available. The report should be read in conjunction with the mark scheme which contains the assessment criteria and indicative content for each question.

It was pleasing to see how many candidates engaged with the exam paper with very few missed responses. The paper differentiated well with all questions accessible. Generally, candidates were aware of the structure of the paper, the demands of the questions and the specification content. Many showed they had embraced the issues studied and had made connections with their understanding of contemporary global, ethical and philosophical issues.

Many exam papers showed that candidates were aware of the demands of the new assessment criteria and were able to apply relevant skills to the demands of each question. There were many examples of candidates highlighting relevant key words in questions to help them focus on the demands of the question and also plan their timing for each unit to ensure the appropriate time is allowed for the final 'd' questions. For a minority of candidates the timing of the paper was an issue with some candidates spending a considerable amount of time on the 'a' and 'b' questions. This sometimes resulted in little time for the planning and or completion of the 'd' questions. Some candidates answered the 'd' questions first and then proceeded to answer questions requiring less planning and writing.

Many candidates made reference to sacred texts. However, in some responses these were used in a 'scatter-gun' approach with no real explanation regarding their importance or how they are interpreted. The aim of the text must be to reinforce the argument or understanding. To this end direct references are not needed, however, some candidates seemed to think that by placing quotation marks around a statement that credit would be gained. There were some very spurious quotes alleged to be Biblical sources e.g 'an eye for an eye will make the world blind' and 'women must arrange flowers in the church'. It appeared that sometimes candidates had learnt a quote but were unable to express its meaning, context or different interpretations. As such its inclusion often added little to the argument in the response. Responses often needed to demonstrate a wider understanding of varied interpretations of scriptures. As the analysis of individual questions will demonstrate, sometimes a source of authority was used to explain a belief or practice alleged to be held by all believers in that tradition.

The **use** of appropriate religious/specialist language is a key criterion in this component. Some candidates confidently used key religious, philosophical and ethical terms to express their arguments. It was disappointing to see that in a minority of responses candidates used specialist terms in 'a', 'b', and 'c' questions but failed to **apply** their knowledge and understanding of key language to 'd' questions.

Many candidates made relevant reference to contemporary issues to support their arguments in 'd' questions. It was pleasing to see how many candidates were applying their understanding of philosophical and ethical global debates into their responses. As indicated later in this report the importance of Religious Education in countering stereotypes remains evident.

As the demands of each type of question are distinct it is appropriate for this first year of the specification to consider candidate performance in each type of question before scrutinising responses to individual questions.

- (a) These questions are always based on the key concepts for each unit. Candidates are required to give a definition of one of the key concepts for the unit. For this paper definitions do not need to be placed within a religion specific content. Generally these were answered well. Many candidates had appeared to have learnt a set definition while some wrote from their own understanding in their own words. Either is acceptable. Often candidates supported their definition with an example. It is important to remember that in addition to answering 'a' questions the use of key concepts can be credited, where used appropriately, as part of the criteria for 'b', 'c' and 'd' questions which require the use of 'religious/specialist terms'. This cross transference of knowledge was not always evident in candidates' responses.
- (b) These questions require candidates to select and then describe relevant information using specific religious language to respond to the question. For some candidates the length of their responses were in excess of the amount of marks awarded and this occasionally impacted on candidates being able to give 'd' questions the amount of time warranted and the ability to finish the paper. Candidates are expected to refer to a source of authority, where relevant. For some questions e.g. 2b, a reference to a sacred text might be more relevant than others. References to sources of authority do not need to be confined to sacred texts. Relevant sources of authority could include references to God; Jesus; the prophets; sacred scriptures; conscience; family; religious leaders; religious founders etc.
- (c) These questions usually require candidates to demonstrate an understanding of an area of specification content from religion(s) or religious tradition(s). Candidates answered this question in a variety of ways. Some inserted the heading of the two traditions they had studied and wrote relevant details under each heading. Some candidates tried to answer from the two traditions simultaneously, pointing out similarities and differences. In a few responses the two traditions were not identified and it was difficult from the generic details given which traditions were being referred to. Some candidates wrote about two traditions e.g. Christianity and Islam, but then wrote in detail about different denominations within each. Although it is important to reflect that there is a diversity in approaches there is no need to give lengthy responses regarding different denominational practices in each of the two traditions. It was apparent that some candidates believed they had to compare the two traditions and therefore sought to make them polar opposites. It is recognised with the marking criteria that there will sometimes be overlap between particular traditions' beliefs regarding a certain issue and that a response will be judged upon the evidence, including the specific religious language and interpretation of sources of authority. A wide range of religions/traditions and denominations are accepted for credit, however no credit is awarded for references to Humanism and other non-religious traditions in responses for 'c' questions.

- (d) This question requires an extended piece of writing and carries half the marks for each of the unit. It was pleasing to see that many of the candidates were aware that the response requires a quality of argument which incorporates selection of relevant evidence rather than an opportunity to 'describe all you know'. Many different structures were being used to support candidates' answers and there was evidence of planning, including the use of mind-maps, in preparation for the responses. It is important that if a formulaic structure is used, that candidates don't write to the formula and ignore the demands of the questions. Although responses from a non-religious viewpoint are only needed for 2d many candidates included them in each of the 'd' questions. Although these responses will be credited where relevant, some of the questions e.g. 1d did not really appertain to the beliefs or views of non-religious traditions.

It was evident that many candidates had engaged with the non-religious views and philosophies of Humanism. However a significant number of 'd' responses indicated a limited understanding of the principles of Humanism with views being expressed as synonymous with science, atheism or couched in terms of common sense.

The importance of Religious Studies in countering misconceptions and stereotypes was evident in some d questions. In 1d there were some very stereotypical attitudes displayed to the role of women within western and more global contexts. A minority of responses referred to stereotypical associations of the relationship between Jews and financial gain. There were also many examples of misconceptions that religions cared about others through charitable work and Humanists didn't.

Many responses included analysis and judgement although some were underdeveloped. There is no set formula for the demonstration of these skills. Some candidates began each paragraph with a connection to the preceding argument e.g. 'Further evidence for this argument would be' or 'On the other hand some Christians would consider this contradictory because...'. Some candidates made reference to each point in terms of it being a strong or weak argument. For this to be creditworthy an explanation must be given as to **why** it would be considered a weak or strong argument rather than a reiteration of the point made. It is important to remember that for this particular paper, evidence is not limited to religious and non-religious beliefs it can come from philosophical, ethical and social contexts. Some responses reflected the criteria for a lengthy 'c' question. In such responses candidates would write a significant amount of detail regarding the issue but with no analysis or judgements. There were, however, some excellent responses in which candidates had selected three or four areas for discussion and used those as a foundation for their argument and analysis.

### **Specific Question Analysis**

- Q1. (a) Generally very well answered with candidates often giving an appropriate example to reinforce their definition. As a philosophical and ethical issues paper, the example can be secular or within a religious context
- (b) This was generally well answered with candidates using a range of religious terms. Some candidates wrote about the importance of marriage ceremonies in a range of religions and some within one religion. Either was creditworthy. It was unfortunate that a few candidates wrote generally about the importance of marriage without making any reference to the ceremony.

- (c) There were some good examples of in-depth explanations which reflected the integrity of two different religions or religious traditions. The religions could be those studied for component 2 and 3, or different religions. Some responses showed a limited understanding between the two religions with candidates writing very generic statements such as referring to 'religions don't like it'.
- (d) The question differentiated well with many candidates referring to particular religious practices e.g. nuns; female rabbis in Reform Judaism; distinctions between Sunni and Shia practices; role of female deities within Hinduism. Many candidates based their answer around the argument that equal does not mean the same. Some candidates wrote from an 'insider' perspective of a particular faith. To gain credit, candidates must present an analysis rather than describing a practice.

Many candidates applied learning from section 4 on issues of Human Rights and gender discrimination. Relevant arguments gained credit but sometimes distracted candidates away from the focus of the question which was about gender roles **in worship** and not the rights of women in society. It was pleasing to note the incorporation of contemporary references to the ordination of female rabbis and bishops. As previously mentioned, stereotypes and misconceptions were sometimes evident such as references to women not becoming priests 'as they would spread the confessions'.

Many candidates responded with references to Anglican and Catholic practices. Some responses reflected little understanding of the Catholic position and instead were portrayed as 'old-fashioned' with no references to contemporary thought or practice. Some responses assumed that all Catholics interpreted 1Timothy as meaning all females must be quiet in worship. There was little awareness shown of interpretations of 1Timothy within Christianity as a whole.

When responses referred to Hinduism there were often insightful references to dharma; puja and the different attributes of female deities e.g. Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. Where responses incorporated arguments from Judaism many referred to the separation for seating in Orthodox synagogues and the male role within Orthodoxy. There were few references to other relevant evidence such as the minyan; saying kaddish and the difference between bar and bat mitzvahs. This is knowledge that could have been transferred from their study of Component 3. There were some excellent arguments incorporating practices within Islam. These included references to difference practices between Sunni and Shia and the practices of the Prophet Muhammad. Some responses however offered stereotypical references to a perceived submissive role of Muslim women in worship and more generally.

This question attracted the spelling, punctuation and grammar marks. Responses to this particular 'd' question often used a more limited and less sophisticated range of religious language and terms. Most frequently mis-spelt words were Eve; disciples, Bible, testament and priest.

- Q2. (a) Some candidates had difficulty in succinctly defining what is meant by evolution. In a minority of cases this resulted in the writing of a developed answer about evolution with reference to Dawkins and the Genesis Creation story. Such candidates seemed unaware that the tariff for the question was only 2 marks.

- (b) There were some very pleasing answers here in which candidates made good references to sources of authority to explain why religious believers considered it important to care for the planet. Unfortunately a misreading of the question resulted in some candidates not gaining high marks as they limited their reasons to **how** religious believers care for the planet.
  - (c) Although most candidates showed an understanding of the issues surrounding euthanasia, it was disappointing how many generic answers there were which did not reflect the integrity of two different religions or religious traditions. There were few references to specific teachings or sources of authority. Some candidates produced an evaluative type answer stating arguments for and against euthanasia but containing little specific explanation concerning the beliefs of two different traditions on the subject.
  - (d) It was pleasing to note that the vast majority of candidates made reference to religious and non-religious belief. There were many discussions regarding assumed conflicts between science and religion. Some candidates wrote from an 'insider' view-point that religious creation stories can successfully explain the origin of the universe because they are written in a sacred text which they perceive as the truth. Although this is a valid viewpoint and would be credited, candidates need to give further analysis and consideration of different viewpoints. It was apparent how many candidates had engaged with the debates between science and religion but the question had a very clear focus which related to whether religious creation stories could **successfully** explain the origins of the universe.
- Q3.
- (a) Generally well answered with the definition often being supported with an appropriate example.
  - (b) There were some excellent answers here which reflected the comprehensive activities undertaken by prison chaplains. Some referred to the work of particular religious and non-religious chaplains and some to the chaplain's role in general. Many candidates made reference to not only the work with prisoners but also with the families of prisoners.
  - (c) There were some very good answers to this question but again there were a significant minority of responses that were disappointing with little or no specific religious teachings or attitudes. Such answers were often couched in generic terms of being 'bad' because of taking a life but there was no specific details to underpin why life might be considered sacred or special. Some candidates referred to Humanism as one of the religious traditions. The rubric states that for 'c' questions credit will only be given to **religions or religious traditions**.

- Q3. (d) Very few candidates failed to answer this question. Many made reference to the teachings of Jesus; the Prophet Muhammad and the Buddha and also to contemporary examples of forgiveness such as Gee Walker. It was pleasing to note that the integrity of particular religions, such as Judaism, were explained as a part of an argument. Some candidates appeared to have practiced questions relating to whether people **should** forgive. Some even referred to this nuance in their opening and closing paragraphs and in their planning. Such responses did not successfully answer the question which asked whether it was **impossible** to forgive. Although not required for 3d, many candidates made reference to Humanism. These views were rarely supported by any specific Humanist belief or philosophy and were often just presented as a contra-approach to that of religions.
- Q4. (a) There were a significant majority of candidates who failed to give an appropriate reference to relative poverty and instead limited their answer to a general definition of poverty.
- (b) There were varied responses to this question. Some were of excellent quality with candidates referring to specific incidents such as Charlie Hebdo and the importance of censorship to stop radicalisation; antisemitism and Islamophobia. References were also made to the importance of human rights and, in particular, freedom of speech. There was a significant minority of responses which were very brief expositions of the Golden Rule.
- (c) There were many interesting examples where personal conviction had conflicted with the laws of a country. Candidates could write about the same issue or two different ones. Examples included Martin Luther King and Ghandi but many more contemporary references were referred to.
- (d) There were some excellent responses in which candidates produced a well sourced argument. For a minority of candidates a paragraph was written on each of the religions they had studied and their attitude to use of wealth. Although there was some relevant information these responses did not meet the criteria for this type of question where the argument and analysis is paramount.



## RELIGIOUS STUDIES: ROUTE A

### GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2018

### COMPONENT 2: STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY

This was the first year of examination of the new Eduqas GCSE qualification in Religious Studies. The Christianity paper proved accessible to candidates, achieving a range of marks across all questions on the paper.

Candidates must ensure they address the particular demands of each question. There was evidence some candidates did not respond correctly to 'discuss' and 'describe' triggers in questions (b) and (d). The band descriptors are an important tool for giving guidance on what is anticipated as an appropriate response to such questions. Centres will find the 'WJEC Eduqas GCSE in Religious Studies Route A Guidance for Teaching' document, page 13, particularly useful in preparing candidates for the different demands of the different questions.

- Q1. (a) Candidates were very well prepared to answer this question and the majority of candidates recognised the term and gave very full definitions of the term. There were few blank or inaccurate responses.
- (b) The response generally to this question was disappointing. Few candidates were able to give a concise and accurate description of the main events of the crucifixion. A number of candidates did not follow the rubric instruction and offered an explanation of the crucifixion and its significance, rather than giving a description of the crucifixion of Jesus; this type of response was not correct and would have been more suited to the explain trigger used in question (c). Candidates disadvantaged themselves when not responding correctly to the trigger phrase used in the question. A significant number of candidates did not give an accurate description of the main events of the crucifixion and it is a puzzle why many candidates were unable to describe in any detail the main events. Those candidates achieving the full range of marks on this question, often used in their answers concise and direct quotes from the biblical account. The higher band responses often gave a description of the crucifixion events in order.
- (c) Many candidates gave detailed explanations about the importance of the Bible for Christians, using a wide range of biblical examples to support their reasoning. Although the majority of answers had a focus on the New Testament, many candidates gave a through explanation which included reference to the Old Testament and a demonstration of its importance for Christians. Candidates showed evidence of being well prepared for this question; quality responses referred to its significance because of the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus, the origin narratives in Genesis, the importance of the Ten Commandments, guidance for Christian living, teachings about the afterlife and its use in prayer and worship.

- (d) A wide range of interesting responses to this question. A number of candidates disadvantaged themselves by making little attempt to the question. The allocation of marks for this question is significant; it is important that candidates attempt this question. On occasion, some candidates gave the impression of simply writing all they knew about the afterlife, without reference to the trigger in the question which asks for a discussion. In order to access the higher bands, candidates must offer a discussion, analysis and evaluation of the issue. It was pleasing to read some high quality answers, using a range of arguments to agree and disagree with the statement, often using sophisticated theological debate and including references to philosophers.
- Q2. (a) A number of candidates did not appear to understand this term. Where candidates did know this term, definitions were usually very detailed, clearly showing an understanding of the importance of the Christian belief in grace as a gift from God working through the sacraments. Responses were often supported by the naming of examples.
- (b) It is important that candidates carefully read the question and respond appropriately. Far too many candidates recognised the term 'evangelism' and then responded with detailed answers about Christians evangelising in house to house and street outreach activities. The question focus clearly demanded a description of evangelical worship and not evangelism. It cannot be overstressed that candidates must respond to the demands of the question. Answers achieving the higher band marks were detailed; including references to non-liturgical worship, charismatic worship, more of a focus on spontaneous prayer, hymn singing, personal testimonies, preaching, and speaking in tongues.
- (c) This was a challenging question. Many candidates did not appear to understand the term 'social role'. It is important centres deliver the entire specification to candidates. Candidates who did understand the term approached the question in one of two ways; either explaining the social role of the Christian Church in general terms or by reference to a local church in a local community. It was pleasing to see references to Christian sources of authority to support the social work of the Church where religious belief underpinned the various activities being carried out by churches. A number of candidates made explicit reference to the work of Christian charities.
- (d) A minority of candidates gave a potted narrative of Christian sites of pilgrimage and completely ignored the discussion element of this question. The most common examples used in answers were Jerusalem, Taize and Walsingham. Where candidates engaged with the demands of the question there were interesting responses about the importance of pilgrimage for Christians in the contemporary world. Many candidates offered the view that prayer and worship, the sacraments and acts of charity and benevolence were far more important than pilgrimage. Insightful observations were made about the majority of Christians who have never been involved in a pilgrimage and how it is not a requirement of Christian faith to undertake pilgrimage.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES: ROUTE A

### GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2018

### COMPONENT 2: OPTION 1 BUDDHISM

#### General Comments

Overall the paper successfully differentiated between the different levels of responses offered by candidates through the use of the full range of marks awarded. Accessibility was not an issue, although sometimes for weaker candidates, a lack of knowledge of the key technical terms meant that there were some incorrect or confused answers. In general, time management of the paper was well organised as the evidence from scripts demonstrated that there had been thorough preparation by centres for the examination format presented to candidates. Blank spaces in response to answers were rare and in the main restricted to weaker candidates who did not know the Buddhist terms presented to them in the questions. It was excellent to see that here were some very mature responses to the (d) questions that really gave some thought to their answers and evaluated effectively in response to the questions. Again, in regard to the (a)-(c) questions there was displayed a very impressive knowledge base with good understanding in the (c) questions.

The (a) question requires a clear definition of a key concept. Those candidates that had learned their key terms could accurately recall a suitable definition. However, sometimes the definition was only partly accurate and, as mentioned already above, if knowledge base was lacking the answer was either incorrect or left blank.

The (b) questions demand a particular skill of description that is sometimes devoid of explanation. This can be a difficult exercise for many candidates, including the more able, and sometimes candidates could not resist the temptation to add to their descriptions with explanations – when in this instance was not required - especially in 2 (b) that asked for ‘how Buddhists may make offerings’.

The (c) questions were answered well, with a good depth of knowledge and understanding about the issues related to avoiding samsara and why Buddhists meditate. Here a mixture of description and explanation was permitted if the description supported the explanation by way of example. For instance, ‘Buddhists practise meditation to become calm, for example, in samatha meditation...’

The focus of the final (d) questions in each section is on evaluation skills relating to a given proposition or statement. To excel here, candidates are required to analyse and evaluate different lines of reasoning or viewpoints and not simply ‘list’ some different views. There was a range of ‘types’ of responses. Some offered a simple ‘ping pong’ style ‘for and against’ (sometimes with a conclusion that did not relate to their analysis of the views above!). Others adopted a learned formula, for example, ‘for (some Buddhists), against (other Buddhists), other religions, atheists, my view’; sometimes this was helpful and other times instead of providing support as a framework became restrictive and almost a straitjacket for them! The best answers were not side-tracked by a formula or explaining some view in depth, but rather presented a balance between explaining, analysing and evaluating throughout leading to judgements that were clearly linked to the reasoning before them.

## Question specific comments

### 1. Beliefs and Teachings

#### Q1. (a) What do Buddhists mean by '(s)kandhas'?

Many candidates were able to give a full and accurate definition of the term but there were some who just stated 'five groups' or 'five aggregates' without indicating what they related to, that is, a 'person'. Alternatively, some just stated that they were the 'things' or 'elements' that made up a person. As in the Teacher Guidance the correct definition involves both reference to five 'groups' or 'aggregates' and some reference to the 'person' in some way.

#### (b) Describe how the Buddha became enlightened after he had seen the Four Sights.

This question seemed challenging in two ways: (1) to focus purely on description; and (2) to read the question carefully that stated 'after' the Four Sights. Despite this there were a significant number of good answers that included detail of the various events that took place from the Four Sights up until the enlightenment.

#### (c) Explain how a Buddhist might avoid samsara.

Most answers tended to begin with a statement outlining how the cycle of samsara worked overall which was credited and then focused on aspects such as karma, meditation, dana, ethics and merit making. Stronger answers included depth of explanation of these ways whereas weaker answers either just focused on karma and repeated this throughout or provided a simple list of statements without full explanation.

#### (d) 'The Three Marks of Existence are the most important truths.'

This question invited a full range of responses. Weaker answers tended to confuse or conflate the Three Marks with other Buddhist teachings, got the Three Marks completely wrong, or just offered a simple explanation of why the Three Marks were important without any real evaluation. There were some very strong, mature answers that weighed up the relationship of the Three Marks to other Buddhist teachings, considered the overlap and the significance of this for an evaluation and a measured conclusion, and also some that raised the issue of teachings and practice and how the latter is more important than just considering a truth. In addition to this, the statement gave the opportunity to bring in evidence from beyond Buddhism and this was used to good effect by some candidates comparing it to truth claims of other religions or humanists but this was not demanded and approaches focusing on Buddhism alone or Buddhism and beyond could access all marks in the range. As stated in the general comments above, there were also some very mid-range formulaic answers that at times drifted away from analysis and evaluation and into explanation. Most answers arrived at some form of judgement, (not necessarily always at the end of the answer.) A few answers started their answer with a judgement, or drew this mid-way, and followed with reasoning for this judgement – all of these 'structures' are suitable.

## 2. Practices

### Q2. (a) What do Buddhists mean by ‘mettabhavana’?

Once again, the only problem for weaker candidates here was an awareness of religious terminology in Buddhism. There were a few blank answer sections here, as well as partial answers that either got ‘loving kindness’ or ‘a type of meditation’. Obviously fuller definitions stated the exact translation from the Pali of ‘development of /meditation on loving kindness’.

### (b) Describe how Buddhists may make offerings.

This question was answered well but at the same time it was clear that there was an inherent difficulty in stating just ‘how’ something was done without ‘why’. This was more noticeable in things offered for puja, for instance ‘flowers because these are a symbol of impermanence’. This did not in any way affect marks awarded and sometimes it is understandable how this happens in terms of sentence structure and so candidates were not at all penalised for this. The best answers focused on a variety of ways in puja but also included the daily alms round and the different ways of practising dana (giving).

### (c) Explain why many Buddhists practise meditation.

For those candidates that had studied well and revised carefully this was an ideal opportunity to showcase their knowledge and understanding to good effect; indeed, the gauntlet was taken up and there were some very good answers focusing on aspects such as calm, loving kindness, general health, focusing the mind, clearing and cleaning the mind. Such answers referred to the different ways and types of practising meditation to develop their explanations. Weaker answers tended to just focus on the aspect of calm and quiet or concentration without little development.

### (d) ‘Chanting the Triratna (Three Jewels) is the most important Buddhist practice.’

There were different ways of approaching this question and overall, the question appeared to provide differentiation in the quality of answers presented. The proposition focuses on ‘**chanting** the Triratna’ and ‘**practice**’. Some answers completely missed this and just focused on explaining what the Three Jewels were and, sometimes, how significant each one was for a Buddhist. Some who did this digressed into an evaluation over which was the most important of the three and this was not the purpose of the question. Of the former answers, those who did evaluate the significance of the Three Jewels and contrasted them with other areas of Buddhism did not always contrast with Buddhist **practices**. All such evaluations were awarded lower to mid-range marks. The best answers were often those that contrasted the practice of chanting, often as a community, with the more advanced Buddhist practices of meditation, of Buddhist dana, merit making/generation of positive karma. Often the inter-related and complementary aspects of Buddhist teaching and practice were pointed out, for instance, that meditation, dana and karma all relate to the Three Jewels in some way and so it is not the case that one aspect of Buddhist practice is superior to another. Some intelligent responses indicated that although chanted, the Three Jewels actually

underpin the whole Buddhist system of 'beliefs' or teachings and so this implies that all Buddhist teachings are important and that it is important to understand the basic teachings (i.e. purpose) behind Buddhism before practising it.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES: ROUTE A

### GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2018

### COMPONENT 3: OPTION 2 HINDUISM

#### General Comments

The examination paper was accessible with a full range of marks awarded for all questions on the paper. Many candidates made use of the extra space available in the printed booklet with some using the space to effectively plan 'd' questions.

A few candidates ran out of time having spent too long on 'a', 'b' and 'c' questions as they tried to fill the space available, though there is no requirement to do so.

The majority of responses showed that candidates had engaged with the course and many referred to specific knowledge and understanding that is course related. It was evident that the course had played a role in candidates' understanding of the nature and impact of religious beliefs, teachings and practices, where necessary. Some candidates reverted to the generic - 'karma-dharma-moksha' low-level reasoning to support their explanations.

The first question in each section requires a definition of a key concept. Generally, these are very well answered with the majority of candidates able to give a clear definition and many were able to expand on their definition with an example or developed definition. There were occasions, however, where candidates seemed unaware of the key concepts or their importance in the specification. This often resulted in confused or unclear definitions.

The second question in each section requires a description of a belief, teaching, practice or concept. Generally this proved a challenge for some pupils who have been taught to explain key concepts through a particular format, as a result it took some pupils away from the focus of the question and they did not engage directly with the requirements of the trigger terms. Some candidates were using a framework for their responses which caused a lack of focus in their responses.

The third question in each section requires an explanation and this was accessible to most, however, this highlighted an issue as there were a number of candidates who lacked the specific, factual knowledge required to access the questions, for example, the understanding of the symbolic features of Holi.

The final question in each unit requires an evaluation which incorporates different religious and moral viewpoints. Some candidates are using a framework to support their writing structure. Sometimes these can assist a candidate to include key features in their response. There are also occasions where the framework inhibits a candidate's response as they try to fit their answer into the framework, thus diminishing a cohesive argument. Some candidates were able to engage directly with the focus of the question, however, some were only able to talk about the topic in a general sense.

## Question specific comments:

### Belief and Teachings

- Q1. (a) The majority of candidates were able to give an accurate definition of the term and were also able to provide examples of practices which demonstrate non-violence to others.
- (b) This question seemed challenging for a number of candidates and proves the requirement of full content coverage. The majority of candidates were referring to the specific Hindu beliefs about the trimurti as opposed to the Tri-guna. Some candidates were able to express the beliefs in the Tri-guna being present within all humans, in differing proportions, while some candidates gave generic responses such as 'good' and 'dark'; without referring to the correct terms, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.
- (c) The majority of candidates were able to access this question and were awarded marks accordingly. The majority of the responses referred to the overall beliefs regarding Brahman and were able to explain the beliefs in relation to specific teachings such as 'The Blind Men and The Elephant'. Some candidates were providing statements which did not support their explanation despite being somewhat relevant e.g. 'all-loving' and 'all-powerful', whereas others were able to explain the concepts in relation to the diverse attitudes towards Brahman such as Nirguna, Saguna etc. Some candidates confused Brahman and Brahma, which then led to a focus on the trimurti. A few candidates spent too much time focusing on a narrative or description of the gods/goddesses.
- (d) This question was attempted by the majority, however, proved challenging for some candidates who did not engage with karma being the 'cause of all' suffering - several candidates defined and explained karma in relation to causing 'good' results as a consequence of positive action. Some candidates were able to explain and evaluate the cause of suffering and doctrine of karma in relation to the various teachings of Hinduism, with many opting for the Dharma, Freewill or Brahman as their main counter-arguments. Some candidates were using a writing frame to support them with their responses, and while it enabled them to structure their response it also encouraged some candidates to refer to arguments that were not relevant to the question or to make a struggled attempt at an alternative view. Some stronger answers were able to draw on knowledge and understanding beyond Hindu beliefs and referred to Christian and non-religious reasoning. There were also some excellent answers which evaluated both the topic and individual arguments presented, in order to create the coherent discussion required of Band 5.

### Practices

- Q2 (a) The majority of candidates were awarded full marks for their response to this question where they were able to identify puja as worship. Some candidates were able to provide examples of worship such as darshan and havan but some made the error of providing the definition as 'form of worship' rather than 'act of worship'.



- (b) This question was well answered by those who focussed on the trigger term 'work', however, some were unable to reach the highest bands due to a focus on 'why' ISKCON conduct the work they do. Again, this highlights the use of rote learning and the use of writing frames and structures as a limiting tool for some candidates. Those candidates who were awarded full marks were able to provide a number of actions with an excellent level of detail and coherency.
- (c) This question was well answered with the majority of pupils being able to explain the symbolic meaning behind Holi. Some candidates were also able to explain the symbolic actions of the festival, e.g. 'community cohesion', 'rejection of varna'. However, there is evidence that some candidates were unclear of the symbolic meaning of this festival or its history and were providing generic responses which stated what happens during Holi rather than why it happens. Some candidates provided too much detail to the stories behind Holi.
- (d) This question was answered generally well. Candidates were able to explain and evaluate the importance of Varanasi as a place of pilgrimage in relation to the various alternatives available, with many opting for the 'Vrindaban' as their main evaluative comparison. Some excellent answers referred to the spiritual benefits of Varanasi in relation to goddess Ganga or antyeshti, while some candidates provided the generic responses in relation to pilgrimage e.g. spiritual development, meeting others of the same faith. Some candidates were using a writing frame to support them with their responses, and while it enabled them to structure their response it also encouraged some candidates to refer to arguments that were not relevant to the question, e.g. those of atheists. The question specifically refers to Hindus and it is felt that with this particular question, atheist or Christian views were not fitting for the response. There were some excellent answers which evaluated both the topic and the arguments presented in order to create the coherent evaluative and analytical discussion required of Band 5. Those who scored top band for this response directly engaged with 'should' as opposed to others who focused on 'must'.

## GCSE (NEW) RELIGIOUS STUDIES (ROUTE A)

Summer 2018

### COMPONENT 3: OPTION 3 ISLAM

This was the first year of examination of the new Eduqas GCSE qualification in Religious Studies. The Islam paper proved accessible to candidates, achieving a range of marks across all questions on the paper.

Candidates must ensure they address the particular demands of each question. There was evidence some candidates did not respond correctly to 'discuss' and 'describe' triggers in questions (b) and (d). The band descriptors are an important tool for giving guidance on what is anticipated as an appropriate response to such questions.

- Q1
- (a) Candidates were very well prepared to answer this question and the majority of candidates recognised the term and gave very full definitions of the term. Some candidates gave a response which focused on the monotheistic idea of one God, rather than the oneness of God.
  - (b) There was a wide range of responses to this question. The very basic response from candidates was simply to state the Muslim belief that Adam was the first man. Detailed responses included references to Adam as the first man, first prophet, and beliefs about his relationship with Allah and his part in the Creation story.
  - (c) Many candidates gave detailed explanations about the importance of prophethood for Muslims, using a range of Muslim prophets to support their reasoning; most frequently reference was made to the prophet Muhammad. Some candidates used the prophet Muhammad to unpack the importance of prophethood while other candidates used a range of prophets, including Isa and Ibrahim.
  - (d) A wide range of interesting responses to this question. A number of candidates disadvantaged themselves by making little attempt to answer the question or offered a two or three line response. The allocation of marks for this question is significant; it is important that candidates attempt this question. An important aspect of the issue is to discuss whether beliefs in angels is relevant today; some candidates missed the point of the question by simply responding with an historical view of angels and made no comment about the importance for Muslims of believing in angels today. The higher band responses had a clear focus on the relevance of angels today, with clear unpacking of the different roles of angels, particularly regarding during prayer and the pivotal role of angels in beliefs about the afterlife. In the higher band responses appropriate references were made to sources of authority.
- Q2
- (a) Candidates were well-prepared for this question and responses were generally detailed, and unpacked with examples. It is not appropriate at GCSE standard for candidates to answer the question 'What is meant by halal?' by simply writing 'the opposite of haram'.

- (b) This very straight forward question, requiring a description of how zakat funds may be spent proved very challenging for a significant number of candidates, who simply wrote 'for the poor'. Once again many responses were evaluations of the significance of zakat and generic charity-giving rather than offering a description of the requirements of how zakat funds must be spent. It is important any teaching programme covers the full specification; it appeared a number of candidates had not studied this topic in sufficient depth.
- (c) The explanations offered to the two types of jihad in Islam were often comprehensive and included a range of examples to support the two types of jihad. In order to access the higher band of marks, it was necessary for candidates to explain the two different types of jihad. Any response limited to one type of jihad would not achieve the highest marks. Some candidates described the Christian idea of a just war; this was not relevant to the question and not appropriate on an Islam examination paper. Candidates must focus on the religion of Islam in this paper.
- (d) The quality of responses to this question varied enormously in length and quality. Some candidates made no attempt to offer a discussion of the statement; a detailed description of the ritual performed by Muslims on Hajj, with little or no attempt to frame the answer within a discussion, will achieve few marks. Some candidates responded with bullet points or two or three sentences. This is not appropriate for GCSE level, the band descriptors provide guidance on how this type of question needs to be tackled. Where candidates engaged with the issue, it was pleasing to note how many candidates offered a sophisticated response; the relevance of pilgrimage today versus the need to live as a Muslim in daily life and how pilgrimage to Makkah is not practically possible for many Muslims despite being a pillar of faith. There were some excellent, well thought-out evaluations of the issue, including references to sources of authority and very good use of specialist language.

## **RELIGIOUS STUDIES: ROUTE A**

### **GCSE (NEW)**

**Summer 2018**

#### **COMPONENT 3: OPTION 4 JUDAISM**

This was the first year of this particular specification and therefore no comparisons with previous years' performances are available. The report should be read in conjunction with the mark scheme which contains the assessment criteria and indicative content for each question.

It was pleasing to see how many candidates had engaged with the exam paper and were able to apply relevant skills to the demands of each question. There were many examples of candidates high-lighting relevant key words in questions to help them focus on the demands of the question and also plan their timing for each unit to ensure the appropriate time is allowed for the final 'd' questions.

There were many pleasing aspects of candidates' responses. Of particular note was their recognition of the diversity of views held within Judaism. Virtually all candidates referred to differences between Orthodox and Reform with some candidates recognising the breadth of diversity within each tradition and making insightful references to Charedi and secular Jews. Such distinctions were often used in responses to question 2d demonstrating a sophisticated awareness of implications of diversity for Jewish identity. There were a few instances of references to 'reformed' Jews rather than Reform Jews. Some candidates made specific reference to 'observant' Jews making appropriate connections with how their observances of the Torah and Talmud impacted on their daily life.

Responses demonstrated an engagement with many of the issues of the specification. Candidates generally were very confident in their explanations of pikuach nefesh, mizvot and kashrut. Many relevant references were made to yetzer ha tov and yetzer ha ra and the importance of the shekhinah. Candidates wrote more accurately and confidently when the question was asking them to respond to an issue found only in Judaism e.g. kashrut; Pesach. Confusions arose when the issue or concept was relevant to both Judaism and Christianity e.g. Creation, the after-life and the Messiah. There was some considerable confusion regarding basic understanding of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Despite some sophisticated 'd' type answers, the same candidates were expressing, in other responses, that Jesus was the Messiah Jews were waiting for; that at Pesach Jews expect Jesus to enter their homes and that the Shekhinah was the Holy Spirit. There were a minority of responses that used parables and the life of Jesus as evidence for particular questions. In question 1b some candidates considered they needed to write a comparison between Christianity and Judaism with some concluding that in Christianity God made the world better than God made it in Judaism. Nowhere in the paper are candidates required to make any reference to or comparisons with any religious traditions other than Judaism.

Many responses incorporated effective use of sources of authority. References were made to Maimonides; the beth din; Torah and Talmud with many candidates able to qualify their responses with references to different interpretations of the Torah and Talmud.

It was evident that many candidates had engaged with the concept of 'living Judaism' and there were examples of candidates relating their learning to contemporary situations such as mitzvah day, the role of the eruv, recent discussions regarding alleged political anti-Semitism and contemporary discussions regarding the preparation of kosher meat.

### **Demands of Questions**

As the demands of each type of question are distinct it is appropriate for this first year of the specification to consider candidate performance in each type of question before scrutinising responses to individual questions.

- (a) These questions are always based on the key concepts for each unit. Candidates are required to give a definition of one of the key concepts for the unit. Generally these were answered well. Many candidates had appeared to have learnt a set definition while some wrote from their own understanding in their own words. Either is acceptable. Often candidates supported their definition with an example. It is important to remember that in addition to answering 'a' questions the use of key concepts can be credited, where used appropriately, as part of the criteria for 'b', 'c' and 'd' questions which require the use of 'religious/specialist terms'. This cross transference of knowledge was not always evident in candidates' responses.
- (b) These questions require candidates to select and then describe relevant information using specific religious language to respond to the question. For some candidates the length of their responses were in excess of the amount of marks awarded and this occasionally impacted on candidates being able to give 'd' questions the amount of time warranted and the ability to finish the paper. Candidates are expected to refer to a source of authority, where relevant. For some questions e.g. 1b, a reference to a sacred text might be more relevant than others. References to sources of authority do not need to be confined to sacred texts. Relevant sources of authority could include references to God; the Torah; beth din; rabbis; Talmud; Maimonides ; the prophets; conscience; family ; the Haggadah etc.
- (c) These questions require an explanation of a particular issue or concept important in Judaism. Within the explanation candidates are expected to use a range of appropriate specialist language including relevant key concepts and appropriate sources of authority. Candidates are not expected to make any judgements or evaluations but are expected to be able to explain rather than just describe.
- (d) These questions require an extended piece of writing and carry half the marks for each of the unit. It was pleasing to see that many of the candidates were aware that the response requires a quality of argument which incorporates selection of relevant evidence rather than an opportunity to 'describe all you know'. Many different structures were being used to support candidates' answers and there was evidence of planning, including the use of mind-maps, in preparation for the responses. It is important that if a formulaic structure is used, that candidates don't write to the formula and ignore the demands of the questions. Candidates are not expected to make reference to any other religious or non-religious traditions in their response in addition to Judaism.

Many responses included analysis and judgement although they were often underdeveloped. This was particularly the case when candidates had focussed on breadth of content rather than depth of argument and analysis. There is no set formula for the demonstration of these skills. Some candidates began each paragraph with a connection to the preceding argument e.g. 'Further evidence for this argument would be' or 'On the other hand some Orthodox Jews would consider this contradictory because...'. Some candidates made reference to each point in terms of it being a perceived strong or weak argument. For this to be creditworthy an explanation must be given as to **why** it would be considered a weak or strong argument rather than a reiteration of the point made. There were some excellent responses in which candidates had selected three or four areas for discussion and used those as a foundation for their argument and analysis.

### Specific Question Analysis

- Q1. (a) This was very well answered with most candidates being able to define how a covenant is an agreement with an appropriate example.
- (b) Most candidates engaged with the question but sometimes responses were limited to a narrative of the Creation story in Genesis. It was pleasing to read the responses which recognised God's ongoing role as Creator as evidenced through the celebration of Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah. Some candidates gave an involved discussion regarding literal and non-literal interpretations of the Creation story. Such responses sometimes strayed from the demands of the question about beliefs of God as Creator. The question asked for a description about Jewish beliefs about God as Creator but some candidates continued their description with reference to Christian beliefs. Such further responses gained no extra credit
- (c) Most candidates were able to offer some of the different beliefs about the Messiah with a significant minority recognising that for many Jews beliefs about the Messiah are not a key focus of the religion. Answers were particularly effective when they began with this context before going on to explain some of the many beliefs. Some candidates made reference to teachings of the Tenakh but some interpretations of passages are not common in Jewish belief and reflected Christian understanding of the Messiah. A significant minority explained that Jews were waiting for the Messiah but that the role would be fulfilled by a second coming of Jesus. There were a significant number of responses which made appropriate reference to the teachings of Maimonides and the differences between Orthodox and Reform interpretations.
- (d) The question required analysis and evaluation regarding the importance of the afterlife in Jewish belief. It was unfortunate that some candidates limited their responses to an explanation of Jewish belief regarding the afterlife, instead of an evaluative discussion. There were, however, some excellent responses to this question with candidates referring to the emphasis within Judaism on current life and fulfilling the mitvot. Many candidates applied relevant knowledge from the specification as part of their argument e.g. judgement and Rosh Hashanah; the importance of pikuach nefesh; reference to funeral rites and wording of prayers such as the Amidah. References to beliefs about the after-life in Christianity and non-religious traditions were not creditworthy.

- Q2. (a) Candidates could describe the Torah (as in the first five books of Moses) or the sefer Torah/Torah scroll (as used in worship in the synagogue). Most candidates made reference to the first five books of Moses with some naming them (or at least those they could remember). A minority confused the Torah with the Siddur or prayer book. More candidates failed to respond to this question than 1a and it was evident that many candidates were unclear regarding the relationship with the Torah and the Bible.
- (b) Some candidates limited their answer to descriptions of the seder meal with little or no recognition of the importance of the removal of Chametz and the role of the synagogue. It was disappointing that few candidates referred to the Haggadah and important celebrations such as the asking of the four questions. A minority of candidates referred to an empty plate and the door being left open for Jesus to return! Some candidates seemed unsure of what Pesach was and either failed to answer the question or wrote about Succoth or Rosh Hashanah.
- (c) The majority of candidates engaged with this question, applying their knowledge and understanding from the specification. Some candidates began their response effectively with a generic statement regarding the importance of the home for worship and values or as a place of sanctuary and peace. They then continued to explain two or three particular examples such as Shabbat; keeping Kashrut; the placing of the mezuzah cases; festivals or initiation rites.

Many candidates used a comprehensive range of religious language to explain the importance of the mezuzah; kosher kitchens; brit milah; sitting shiva and celebration of festivals. It was evident that candidates had engaged with their learning about the mezuzah although descriptions reflected a misunderstanding regarding what they looked like and what was in them. Some referred to the Bible being inserted in them. There were some confusion regarding the mezuzah and tefillin.

A minority of responses were very general with explanations limited to the importance of the home for security with no application of areas they had learnt from the specification as a whole.

- Q2 (d) Although this was the final question it was disappointing to note the number of candidates who did not attempt a response. For a minority it was evident that they had mis-timed their previous responses and ran out of exam time.

The vast majority of responses recognised what was meant by 'keeping kosher' with a number beginning their analysis by referring to kosher not just being about dietary rules and regulations. Candidates were well informed about kosher diets. They recognised the differences between Orthodox and Reform; were able to refer to Leviticus; discussed the role of ritual slaughter and also the importance of other important features of Judaism, especially Pikuach Nefesh. It was unfortunate that their understanding was often not expressed in terms of an analysis to respond to the question. Sometimes candidates wrote a significant response focussing on whether Jews should keep kashrut but failed to focus any discussion regarding whether Jews **have to** keep kosher to be Jewish. There were, however, some very sophisticated and insightful responses with thorough consideration of the question. Such responses analysed the importance of keeping kosher in comparison to keeping the ten duties or commandments; being born of a Jewish mother and, most frequently, references to Pikuach Nefesh

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES: ROUTE A**  
**GCSE (NEW)**  
**Summer 2018**  
**COMPONENT 3: OPTION 5 – SIKHISM**

**General Comments**

The examination paper was accessible with a full range of marks awarded for all questions on the paper. Many candidates made use of the extra space available in the printed booklet with some using the space to effectively plan 'd' questions.

A few candidates ran out of time having spent too long on 'a', 'b' and 'c' questions as they tried to fill the space available, through there is no requirement to do so.

The majority of responses showed that candidates had engaged with the course and many referred to specific knowledge and understanding that is course related. It was evident that the course had played a role in candidates' understanding of the nature and impact of religious beliefs, teachings and practices, where necessary.

The first question in each section requires a definition of a key concept. Generally, these were very well answered with the majority of candidates able to give a clear definition and many were able to expand on their definition with an example or developed definition. There were occasions, however, where candidates seemed unaware of the key concepts or their importance in the specification. This often resulted in confused or unclear definitions.

The second question in each section requires a description of a belief, teaching, practice or concept. Generally, this proved a challenge for some pupils who have been taught to explain key concepts through a particular format and as a result it took some pupils away from the focus of the question and they did not engage directly with the requirements.

The third question in each section requires an explanation and this was accessible to most, however, this highlighted an issue as there were a number of candidates who lacked the specific, factual knowledge required to access the questions, for example, the understanding of the symbolic features of the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

The final question in each unit requires an evaluation which incorporates different religious and moral viewpoints. Some candidates are using a framework to support their writing structure. Sometimes these can assist a candidate to include key features in their response. There are also occasions where the framework inhibits a candidates' response as they try to fit their answer into the framework, thus diminishing a cohesive argument. Some candidates were able to engage directly with the focus of the question, however, some were only able to talk about the topic in a general sense.



## Question Specific Comments:

### Beliefs and Teachings

- Q1. (a) The majority of candidates were able to give an accurate definition of the term and were also able to provide examples of sewa while some were able to explain the different types of sewa. However, it was also evident that some did not understand the term and so were providing inaccurate definitions.
- (b) This question was generally well answered. The majority of candidates were referring to the specific Sikh beliefs about God as expressed in the Mool Mantra. Some candidates were able to express the beliefs in the 'divine spark' as a part of God within all humans while some candidates gave generic responses such as 'all-loving' and 'all-knowing'; more commonly associated with the Classical Attributes of Christianity.
- (c) The majority of candidates were able to access this question and were awarded marks accordingly. The majority of the responses referred to the overall spiritual goal of mukti and were able to explain the benefit of being God-centred. Some candidates were providing statements of fact which did not support their explanation despite being somewhat relevant e.g. 'gurmukh is the opposite of manmukh', whereas others were able to explain the concepts in relation to the foundations and central teachings of the faith.
- (d) This question was answered well by the majority. Candidates were able to explain and evaluate the importance of Karma in relation to the various teachings of Sikhism, with many opting for the 'Oneness of Humanity' as their main evaluation. Some candidates were using a writing frame to support them with their responses, and while it enabled them to structure their response it also encouraged some candidates to refer to arguments that were not relevant to the question, e.g. those of atheists. The question specifically refers to Sikhs and it is felt, that with this particular question, atheist views were not fitting for the response. There were some excellent answers which evaluated both the topic and the arguments presented in order to create the coherent discussion required of Band 5.

### Practices

- Q2. (a) The majority of candidates were awarded full marks for their response to this question where they were able to identify Vaisakhi as either a Harvest Festival marking new beginnings, or the celebration of the formation of the Khalsa. Some candidates were able to provide a brief narrative of what took place at the event in 1699.
- (b) This question was well answered by those who focussed on the trigger term 'how', however, some were unable to reach the highest bands due to a focus on 'why' gurburbs are celebrated. Again, this highlights the use of rote learning and the use of writing frames and structures as a limiting tool for some candidates. This also highlighted the importance in the understanding of subject specific language where some candidates were unable to access the question due to a lack of knowledge.

- (c) This question was well answered with the majority of pupils being able to explain the importance of the Golden Temple as a place of pilgrimage. Some candidates were also able to explain the importance of the Golden Temple in relation to its symbolic features, e.g. 'four entrances', 'pool of nectar'. However, there is evidence that some candidates were unclear of the symbolic meaning of this sacred site or its history.
- (d) This question was answered generally well. Candidates were able to explain and evaluate the importance of the gurdwara in relation to the various alternatives available, with many opting for the 'God permeates all existence' as their main evaluative comparison. Some candidates were using a writing frame to support them with their responses, and while it enabled them to structure their response it also encouraged some candidates to refer to arguments that were not relevant to the question, e.g. those of atheists. The question specifically refers to Sikhs and it is felt, that with this particular question, atheist views were not fitting for the response. There were some excellent answers which evaluated both the topic and the arguments presented in order to create the coherent evaluative and analytical discussion required of Band 5. Those who scored top band for this response directly engaged with the gurdwara being 'the best' place as opposed to 'the only' place.



WJEC  
245 Western Avenue  
Cardiff CF5 2YX  
Tel No 029 2026 5000  
Fax 029 2057 5994  
E-mail: [exams@wjec.co.uk](mailto:exams@wjec.co.uk)  
website: [www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk)

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