GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

RELIGIOUS STUDIES – ROUTE A – COMPONENTS 1, 2 AND 3 – FULL AND SHORT COURSE
GCSE

SUMMER 2022

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCSE

Summer 2022

COMPONENT 1: RELIGIOUS, PHILOSOPHICAL AND ETHICAL STUDIES IN THE MODERN WORLD

General Comments

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 few missed responses. In many cases these appeared to be the result of running out of time rather than lack of engagement or knowledge. 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 an understanding of contemporary global, ethical and philosophical issues and were confident in relating these to their answers. This year there appeared a greater confidence in candidates formulating judgements in the (d) questions, although the need to substantiate these judgements with religious and ethical evidence is still an area for development. Some candidates consistently used stems stating 'this is a strong /weak argument' but their justification was underdeveloped.

The **use** of appropriate religious/specialist language is a key requirement 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. This has been an area of concern in previous reports and remains one from this year's review of responses. Candidates generally appear to be able to define a key word but do not have such specialist language embedded in their working memory to be able to **use** it in their own writing when appropriate. This limits candidates' ability to reach the highest bands. The lack of specialist language is particularly noticeable in the 1(d) question which attracts SPaG marks.

Candidates are expected to make reference to sacred texts where appropriate. The form of reference is not dictated and does not require complete quotes nor numerical references. What is most important is that the sacred text is contextualised to show clearly the rationale for its inclusion. This year there were some lengthy descriptions of parables which not only took up precious writing time but also did not relate to the specific demands of the question.

Responses generally demonstrated candidates' ability to retrieve and recall a significant number of facts. However, how the facts connected and the implications of such connections were often based on assumptions. Schemas of understanding of philosophical and ethical issues or religious traditions were often faulty. Such schemas had often become embedded into a working memory and, as such, were applied to responses throughout the paper.

It was pleasing to note candidate's responses to the (d) type questions. Many responses indicated a concept-led approach which allowed candidates to address the actual analytical demands of the question rather than explanations of the different views of religious traditions. There were fewer responses which merely detailed the attitude of two religious traditions and would have been more appropriate for a response to a (c) question.

Responses generally showed a developing maturity in analytical skills with a good range of judgement words used throughout the extended writing. The majority of responses indicated whether arguments were strong or weak. This was sometimes formulaic and judgements were not supported by relevant evidence e.g. '*This is a strong argument because many Christians think it is important'* is not a robust reason why an argument is strong. A better response might be '*This is a strong argument because it teaches this in the Bible and many Christians believe the Bible is the Word of God'*

This paper is one of the first exam papers that candidates sit. It was obvious that, for a significant minority, timing became an issue. As discussed later in the report many 4(c) and 4(d) responses were under-developed or lacked a coherency of expression which had been evident in previous questions.

An increased number of responses demonstrated an understanding of diversity within a religious tradition, with an increasing number of references to denominations such as Seventh Day Adventists and Society of Friends. The majority of candidates were aware of diversity within religious traditions although there appeared to be less understanding of why, or the role of different sources of authority.

As indicated later in the report, there were some misconceptions and stereotypes prevalent this year. Responses, often in (c) type questions are sometimes presented as polar opposites. For example, if x religion states x then y religion states the opposite. Not only do such perceptions distort the integrity of the religious tradition but they also form a faulty lens through which the candidate responds to all questions including that tradition. A distorted schema of understanding of Catholicism was particularly apparent in responses. Practices were often alluded to as 'outdated', intolerant of sexual diversity and completely male dominated. Similar concern was raised by the representation of Humanism. Although candidates are only required to refer to include Humanism in responses to Question 2, many choose to do so in all the (d) questions. Where relevant, such views can gain credit. There was a common understanding that Humanists were not theists but for some candidates that resulted in a view that, as they don't believe in a deity then they can do what they like and live hedonistic life-styles. This was particularly apparent in 1(d) and in 2(d), where many responses failed to recognise any moral or ethical decisions Humanists might make regarding marriage or taking a life.

Candidates must remember to clearly state the number of the question(s) they are continuing to answer on any additional writing pages they use e.g. 1d. 2c.

It is extremely challenging to try and match up their responses if they don't make this clear and whilst we would not want to deter candidates from using the continuation space, the fact that so many did not make this obvious has caused significant delays to the marking process this Summer.

Candidates must also avoid writing on any pages that state 'Do Not Write on This Page' as these responses may be missed out during the scanning process.

Comments on individual questions/sections

The demands of each type of question are distinct and, reflecting previous reports, it is appropriate to consider candidate performance in each type of question before scrutinising responses to individual questions.

(a) Questions – These questions are always based on the key concepts. Candidates are required to give a definition of one of the key concepts. 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 learned 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 which, as indicated in the mark scheme, gains some credit. However, for full credit there has to be a definition and not just 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 key concepts was not always evident in candidates' responses.

(b) Questions – 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 was 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 only required to describe or give facts about. There is no necessity for any form of explanation or evaluation. Candidates are expected to refer to a source of authority, where relevant. For some questions e.g. 1(b) 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, philosophers, the Law etc.

(c) Questions –These questions usually require candidates to demonstrate an understanding of an area of specification content from religion(s) or religious tradition(s). Candidates answered these questions in a variety of ways. Some candidates lost marks as they failed/forgot to write about the second religion or religious tradition. Some inserted the heading of the two traditions they had studied and wrote relevant details under each heading. This approach usually resulted in focussed answers which met the rubric demands and is to be recommended. Some candidates tried to answer from the two traditions simultaneously pointing out similarities and differences. Sometimes this produced a highly convoluted response which appeared to take an excessive amount of time. In a few responses the two traditions were not identified and it was difficult to know from the generic details given, which traditions were being referred to. It was apparent that some candidates believed they had to compare the two traditions responses and therefore sought to make them polar opposites. It is recognised within the marking criteria that there will sometimes be overlap between particular traditions' beliefs regarding certain issues 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 because the wording of the question requires *religious* responses.

(d) Questions – This question requires an extended piece of writing and carries half the marks for the paper. It was pleasing to see that many candidates were aware of the demands and prepared themselves before embarking on their response. Sometimes this was evident by highlighting key words, use of planning tools such as mind-maps and indications of timings. It was apparent that the vast majority of candidates were aware that the response requires a quality of argument which incorporates a selection of relevant evidence rather than an opportunity to 'describe all you know'. It is the argument and evaluative discussion which makes this question different to the demands of a (c) question. Candidates are expected to select evidence to reinforce and exemplify their arguments. This is a very different skill to explaining about a teaching.

Sometimes it appeared responses contained too much information but little was developed or contextualised into an evaluative discussion. Many different structures were being used to support candidate's answers and there was evidence of planning, including, as previously cited, 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. Some candidates explained the views of three different religions in successive paragraphs. Such a format often limited responses to an explanation rather than an analysis of arguments. Many responses included analysis and judgement although some were underdeveloped. 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. However, there were some excellent responses in which candidates selected three or four areas for discussion and used those as a foundation for their argument and analysis.

The mark scheme indicates that candidates should show the impact of belief on society. There is no need for candidates to introduce this as a separate thread. Indeed, in doing so, the coherence of the analysis can often be lost. The impact of belief and practice should be evident within the justifications given.

Specific Question Analysis

Q.1   (a)   What is meant by 'roles'? (2)
Generally very well answered with candidates often giving an appropriate example to reinforce their definition, such as roles within a family or a profession. As a philosophical and ethical issues paper the example can be secular or within a religious context.

(b)   Describe reasons religious believers might disagree with adultery (having sex with someone other than your marriage partner). (5)
This question could be responded to generically e.g. teachings in sources of authority, promises made in marriage ceremonies etc. or with reference to one specific tradition.
Candidates were not expected to explain the reasons, just describe them. This was generally answered well, although a minority of candidates developed their response into an evaluation and offered suggestions as to why religious believers might agree with adultery.
This was not required (and is also very difficult to justify)

(c)   Explain from either two religions or two religious traditions beliefs about same-sex relationships. (8)
There were some excellent responses which identified the role of interpretation of scriptures and other sources of authority. In efforts to distinguish the traditions, responses were sometimes polarised into one that accepts and one that doesn't. A significant minority of references to Islam and Catholicism portrayed the traditions as intolerant and inflexible. Credit is given, where appropriate, if candidates refer to similar beliefs and attitudes in each of the two traditions.

(d) **'Marriage has no purpose in 21ˢᵗ century Britain.' (15)**
It was pleasing to note the engagement of candidates with this question. Many gave detailed justifications of different points of view. It is important to note that, as with all (d) type questions, all the points of view can be for **or** against the argument. They do not need to be contrasting – just different. The majority of responses included a focus on relevancy of marriage 'in the 21ˢᵗ century'. Discussions included the importance of keeping religious traditions, the role of vows expressed in wedding ceremonies, increase in divorces, expense and teachings from sacred texts. This question sometimes resulted in misconceptions of Humanism when it was argued that Humanists don't agree with marriage as they aren't religious. The role of ethical considerations was often not discussed.

This question attracted the spelling, punctuation and grammar mark (SPAG). It was disappointing to see that many responses did not include a wide range of specialist religious language and terms. This did not reflect the use of religious language in other (d) questions This is an important consideration as evidenced in the band criteria.

Q.2 **(a)** **What is meant by 'evolution'? (2)**
This was usually well answered. The majority of responses were able to define the key concept in their own words.

(b) **Describe how religious believers might show they care for the environment. (5)**
This question could be answered through the activities of one particular religion e.g. eco-mosques or through generic religious practices e.g. give to charity, pray etc. Unfortunately, a significant minority of candidates explained *why* religious believers care for the environment. This was outside of the remit of the question and often gained no marks.

(c) **Explain, from either two religions or two religious traditions, beliefs and teachings about the afterlife. (8)**
This was generally well answered with some excellent use of religious language used within the explanations. Some responses demonstrated a faulty schema of knowledge of a religious tradition with terms from Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism being used to describe the same religious tradition. As with all (c) type questions responses must come from religious traditions and no credit can be given for responses from non-religious traditions.

(d) **'It is never right to take a life.' (15)**
There were some well-argued responses to this question. The question allowed candidates to respond generically regarding issues relating to sanctity of life or specifically to issues such as abortion and euthanasia. References to issues such as capital punishment or speciesism were also credited where appropriate. To reach the highest bands it was expected that candidates would have focussed some of their argument addressing **'never right'** and thereby incorporating ethical considerations. It was pleasing to note that the vast majority of candidates made reference to religious and non-religious belief, as required in the rubric for 2(d).

Q.3 **(a)** **What is meant by 'good'? (2)**
This was well answered with many candidates referring to being 'morally right' and adding an appropriate example.

(b) **Describe two aims of punishment. (5)**
The vast majority of responses described two aims of punishment using specialist language such as 'justice' 'reformation' etc. Where candidates lost marks it was often due to a misreading of the question or lack of use of specialist language.

(c) **Examine from either two religions or two religious traditions, attitudes to forgiveness. (8)**
There were some very good responses to this question with direct reference to sources of wisdom and authority. However, a significant number of candidates described case studies of forgiveness that they had read or watched but with no reference to actual religious teachings about forgiveness. There are some similarities between religious traditions concerning forgiveness. Credit is given when the similarities are indicated and reinforced with relevant teachings or practice. In an effort to distinguish the difference between traditions some responses gave polar opposite accounts and thereby distorted the integrity of the religious traditions. A significant minority of responses reflected this when explaining the attitudes of Christianity and Judaism. The former included an explanation on extracts from the Beatitudes, Jesus's words on the Cross and parables such as the Forgiving Father or Good Samaritan. However, Jewish attitudes were based upon rigid interpretations of 'an eye for an eye' with limited explanation of the importance of forgiveness in Jewish beliefs and practice.

(d) **'Only God can help people know right from wrong.' (15)**
There were some excellent responses in which candidates used their understanding of different parts of the specification. Responses often included well-argued logical chains of discussion which were concept led and used a range of evidence to justify philosophical reasoning. Some candidates had 'brain dumped' then rank ordered key concepts before beginning their written response. This helped structure a coherent argument. Where candidates used frameworks such as point, explain, evaluate or a discussion through two religious traditions, responses often lacked a coherent discussion to successfully address the demands of the question. Some candidates thoroughly engaged with this question and wrote very extended responses. However, in many cases such candidates had timing issues in later questions.

Q.4 **(a)** **What is meant by extremism? (2)**
Generally, this was well answered. Examples are not required for (a) type responses but can support weak definitions.

(b) **Describe how religious believers promote human rights? (5)**
This question could be responded to generically e.g. lead campaigns, prayer etc. or specifically through a religious tradition, through a religious human rights action group e.g. CARJ, JCORE or the actions of a religious believer(s) e.g. Malala. There were some good descriptions but a significant minority were very general with little or no use of specialist language. If specific religious human rights action groups or religious believers were selected it was important that the response focused on the actions used to promote human rights rather than a general description of the action group or believer.

(c) **Explain from either two religions or two religious traditions teachings about prejudice and discrimination. (8)**
There were a number of under-developed or non-responses as candidates appeared to have timing issues. A minority of responses expressed personal evaluations regarding their perception of discriminatory practices within religious traditions. This was beyond the remit of the question (because the directive is to 'explain') and illustrated some misconceptions. This was particularly evident in references to Catholicism, Islam and Judaism.

(d) **'Religious believers should always obey the laws of a country.' (15)**
Many responses to this question suffered due to lack of time. Responses were often under-developed or unfinished. This was disappointing as completed responses demonstrated an engagement with the question which allowed candidates to use a range of examples from areas of the specification. Many responses included reference to the role of authority in specific religious traditions, examples from the lives of founders of religion, examples of relevant actions of religious believers and moral and ethical arguments. Some candidates wrote very full responses but failed to address whether religious believers should always obey the laws of the country. It appeared that candidates who highlight key words in questions before starting their responses were more successful in fully meeting the demands of the question.

Summary of key points

Responses reflected candidates' engagement with issues in the specification and commitment to the subject in general.

(d) type responses are showing greater depth of evaluation as the relevant concepts are analysed with relevant supportive evidence. The need to substantiate these judgements with religious and ethical evidence is still an area for development. It was good to see fewer explorations through two religious traditions which is more appropriate for (c) type responses.

Responses are including a range of facts but sometimes these are isolated without contextualisation or awareness of connection into a valid schema of understanding.

A significant number of responses in Question 4 suffered from limited time to develop answers fully. **Completing the (d) questions first is recommended.**

The structure for responding to (c) type questions still needs further consideration for candidates to express all they know and understand without distorting the religious traditions.

Although key concept questions are generally answered well, specialist language should be embedded in working memories to be used in (b) (c) and (d) questions.

A more developed understanding of Humanism and Catholicism would support judgements made by candidates and avoid mis-representing these traditions.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCSE

Summer 2022

COMPONENT 2: STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY

General Comments

The paper was accessible with candidates attempting all questions across the examination paper. On occasion, candidates disadvantaged themselves with very brief responses, particularly in (b) and (c) questions, and it is important candidates are encouraged and prepared to use the space provided for examination answers. It was very pleasing to see the very high quality and standard of work in top level answers, where candidates demonstrated comprehensive and detailed knowledge of Christianity.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a) What do Christians mean by the 'atonement'?
Many candidates used the Eduqas definition to achieve full marks for this question. A number of candidates misread the question and incorrectly referred to general ideas about atonement; the reference to '*the* atonement' in the question should have guided candidates to this key concept.

(b) Describe the role of Word and Spirit in creation.
The responses to 1(b) were generally very weak, achieving only middle to low level marks, and although it is a topic direct from the specification, many candidates did not appear to have studied this subject matter. A number of candidates simply described the creation story with no reference to the demands of the question; few candidates linked the Word and the Spirit to creation. Where candidates did understand this subject matter, there were detailed and excellent descriptions, demonstrating a very good understanding of the discussion around the possible meanings of the Word/Logos.

(c) Explain different ways in which Christians interpret the Bible.
In 1(c) responses, most candidates made a real effort to unpack the complexity of the ways different Christians and different Christian traditions interpret the Bible. The very best answers made reference to different traditions and how the Bible might be interpreted in a literal or non-literal way. Many candidates included examples from stories in the Bible and biblical teachings to support the different viewpoints, and it was pleasing to see the use of quotations included in a number of responses. Unfortunately, a number of candidates gave very short responses, which did not allow them to reach the higher levels of marks.

(d) For Christians, the resurrection of Jesus is the most important belief.
In the 1(d) response, evaluation was often limited to the lower bands where arguments and viewpoints were not evaluated; arguments do need to be evaluated in order to move up the band descriptors.

It is necessary for candidates to evaluate the strength and weaknesses of viewpoints; more able candidates were able to successfully and meaningfully use phrases like, 'this is a strong argument because', 'this is very weak argument', 'on the other hand a stronger argument to support the viewpoint is.' Candidates should be encouraged to use these types of phrases in order to demonstrate higher level evaluation skills. However, they do need to *justify why* the arguments are strong or weak. In terms of the content of the answers many candidates contrasted the importance of the resurrection with the incarnation of Jesus, the crucifixion and death of Jesus, and the Christian belief in God the Father.

Q.2 (a) What do Christians mean by 'evangelism'?
Once again, many candidates used the Eduqas definition to answer this question. However, a number of candidates clearly did not recognise the term and gave a wide variety of answers which were all incorrect. Some incorrectly referred to evangelical worship rather than evangelism.

(b) Describe how Christians might celebrate Christmas.
This was a straight-forward question where many candidates gave a detailed and full description of how *Christians* might celebrate Christmas. Unfortunately, some generic type responses failed to identify the ways in which Christians might choose to celebrate Christmas. A number of candidates gave very brief responses and disadvantaged themselves. Bullet point answers are to be discouraged as the question asks for a description.

(c) Explain why Christians have different beliefs about Baptism.
The question required candidates to explain why Christians have different beliefs about baptism. Some candidates appeared unprepared for the 'explanation' aspect of this question and simply gave a basic or full description of a baptism without any explanation. The most common examples of baptism used in responses were infant and believer's baptism, with the correct application of knowledge of different Christian traditions. There was evidence of some outstanding and very detailed responses.

(d) 'Christians are no longer persecuted for their faith.'
There were a wide variety of responses to this question. Some candidates struggled to unpack any creditworthy viewpoints about persecution of Christians. Other candidates used a wide variety of arguments, using examples from both the UK and worldwide, and even including reference to census results which showed the differences in religious belief in contemporary society. A wide range of examples were included to support differing viewpoints and some of the very best answers included relevant references from sources of authority.

Summary of key points

Candidates <u>must</u> remember to clearly state the number of the question(s) they are continuing to answer on any additional writing pages they use, e.g., 1d. 2c. It is extremely challenging to attempt to match up their responses if they do not make this clear on the examination paper. and whilst there is no intention to deter candidates from using the continuation space, the fact that so many did not make this obvious caused significant delays to the marking process for this Summer series of examinations.

Candidates must avoid writing on pages that state 'Do Not Write on This Page', as content on these pages may be missed during the scanning process.

Answers need to be of a sufficient length in order to access marks from the higher levels. Specification coverage is essential in order for candidates to be able to attempt all questions on an examination paper.

Evaluation responses should address the issue of the quality of arguments to support a viewpoint and not just be an extended description or explanation.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCSE

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COMPONENT 3: STUDY OF A WORLD FAITH – BUDDHISM

General Comments

The exam was accessible, with appropriate coverage from the specification. The demand was comparable to previous papers. Generally, candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the main aspects of Buddhism but sometimes struggled with the specifics needed to answer the questions. Better candidates made effective use of synoptic knowledge and understanding (i.e. that gained from across the specification), in order to back up their arguments in (d) questions. Other candidates gained some marks by making use of this general knowledge and understanding but without having the specifics to answer well. It was pleasing to note that many candidates were strong in showing the impact of religion and showing the ability to make connections from across their studies in their responses. It was also noticeable that a significant number of candidates had a deep understanding of Buddhist concepts and were able to use them confidently throughout their responses. It was pleasing to note the effective use of quotes and other sources of wisdom and authority by many candidates, and the frequent use of appropriate religious language.

Most candidates were better prepared for the themes of (d) questions (due to advanced information on the general topic area) but some did not answer the questions that were asked, possibly relying instead on questions that they had already prepared and/or writing all they knew about a topic.

Candidates <u>must</u> remember to clearly state the number of the question(s) they are continuing to answer on any additional writing pages they use e.g., 1d, 2c. It is extremely challenging to try and match up their responses if they don't make this clear and whilst we would not want to deter candidates from using the continuation space, the fact that so many did not make this obvious has caused significant delays to the marking process this Summer.

Candidates must avoid writing on the pages that clearly state 'Do Not Write on These Pages' as content could be missed off during the scanning process.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1   (a)   **What do Buddhists mean by 'mettabhavana'? (2)**
Most answers showed a thorough understanding of the mettabhavana; others were partially correct in referring to loving kindness but failed to mention the part of meditation in its cultivation.

(a)   **What do Buddhists mean by 'arhat'? (2) (SHORT COURSE ONLY)**

There was evidence that most candidates had learnt this well and gave very full, detailed definitions of the term. Some answers showed partial understanding in stating that an arhat was a Buddhist who has attained enlightenment, but they failed to include any reference to it being a Theravada ideal or that it specifically refers to monks who attain enlightenment.

Weaker answers showed a lack of learning, as some candidates mistook the term for impermanence or no permanent self (anicca, anatta)

(b) **Describe how Mahayana Buddhists can realise their Buddha-nature. (5)**
The better answers were specific to Mahayana Buddhism with specific reference to the Six Paramitas, the bodhisattva ideal and the concept of selflessly helping others. Many candidates referred to parables/metaphors (e.g., the Parable of the Hidden Jewel) but these were frequently used to explain the buddha-nature rather than to describe how Buddha-nature could be realised. Many candidates were aware of tathagatagarba and the impact of this belief. Sadly, many answers tended to include generic Buddhist practices such as following the Eightfold Path, mediation and puja and these did not score as well. A minority of candidates misread or misunderstood the word 'realise' and wrote about releasing the Buddha-nature instead. A significant number of candidates seemed unaware of the skill demanded by b. questions and so explained 'why' rather than described 'how'.

(c) **Explain why Buddhists might follow the Eightfold Path. (8)**
Many candidates tried to show the diversity within Buddhism (Theravada & Mahayana) which was pleasing as, when done effectively, it meant that their responses were able to move into the higher bands. Sadly, however, it wasn't always done with accuracy or relevance. Some contrasted Theravada and Mahayana beliefs which is not the skill required here. The better responses either referred to the various steps of the Eightfold Path and showed the importance of each or looked at the three aspects of the Path (the Threefold Way),and considered their significance with some exceptional awareness of the impact of the Eightfold Path on the lives of Buddhists. Many candidates made excellent use of quotes, although some seem to have learned quotes and were determined to fit an answer around them rather than using them meaningfully within the context. Other answers gained marks for making some relevant points e.g., following the example of the Buddha, ending dukkha, gaining enlightenment, completing the cycle of samsara. However, these were often underdeveloped so were unable to move beyond Band 2. Some candidates explained each of the Four Noble Truths, which was not the requirement of the question.

(d) **"The events of the Buddha's early life were essential on his path to enlightenment." (15)**
This question was accessible, and candidates were able to show some very thorough knowledge and understanding of the various events in the Buddha's life. However, although many candidates seem to have prepared thoroughly, some candidates either did not read the question carefully or they wrote answers more suited to a different question. The better answers saw candidates using their knowledge and understanding effectively to analyse and evaluate. The mark scheme allowed for different events to be covered, but many candidates also referred to the events that, legends state, happened before the Buddha was born. This was not credited unless they were able to make an acceptable link between these events and their significance on the path to enlightenment. Reference to Mahayana views that the Buddha's enlightenment was inevitable due to their belief in the buddha-nature was accepted. It was pleasing to note the effective use of religious and specialist language, and the way that sources of wisdom and authority, including quotations, were incorporated.

The stronger answers engaged with this question and produced thoughtful, mature discussions which were not overburdened with too much description or explanation. In many cases, the better answers only analysed two or three events from the Buddha's life but evaluated whether they were essential on his path to enlightenment, weighing up the relative strengths of each argument. The use of evaluative language and evaluating the strength/reasonableness of an argument is crucial in order to attain the higher bands. Candidates who followed a logical train of thought tended to produce more coherent answers; a quick plan jotted down before answering seemed to benefit some candidates, helping them to keep their focus and stopping them from writing too much.

Many candidates were able to pick out elements of the life of the Buddha and were able to fully explain their value on his journey to enlightenment. However, this is not the skill that is being examined in this question, so these answers would have been better if candidates had evaluated the relative importance of these events.

Weaker answers tended to describe everything about the life of the Buddha so were unable to move out of the lowest bands.

Some candidates seemed to misread or misunderstand the focus of the question by referring to what the events in Buddha's life means to Buddhists today working towards enlightenment. The number of references to whether Christians and non-religious people accept the accounts of the events in the life of the Buddha were irrelevant. This paper is about what *Buddhists* believe and practise.

Q.2 **(a)** **What do Buddhists mean by '(s)khandhas'? (2)**
This question was generally done well showing evidence of learning, with many candidates being able to use the term confidently when answering other questions on the paper. Most candidates gave the definition of the concept along with a list of the five elements. Some candidates confused the (s)kandhas with the Five Precepts.

(b) **Describe death and mourning practices in Tibetan Buddhism. (5)**
Relatively few candidates attained full marks as many explained the reasons for the Tibetan death and mourning practices rather than a giving description of what happens. Some elements of explanation were accepted if they also showed knowledge of the practices. There was a lack of accurate information of Tibetan practices although many candidates did gain marks for any relevant, general points e.g., sky burial rituals. There appeared to be a significant lack of knowledge of this area with a considerable number of candidates referring to death and mourning customs of Japanese and/or Theravada Buddhists rather than applying themselves to this question.

(c) **Explain why Buddhists might practise insight (vipassana) meditation. (8)**
Candidates need to read the question in order to determine the skill being required; many responses were explanations of the ways in which Buddhists may practise vipassana rather than the reasons *why* they use it.

It was rare to see candidates who answered specifically about vipassana meditation, instead there were generalities that could fit any Buddhist meditation or activity e.g., ending dukkha, overcoming the three poisons, gaining karma, reaching enlightenment. The effective use of quotes and religious language pushed some answers into Band 3.

(d) **"Parinirvana Day should be the main festival for all Buddhists." (15)**
Many candidates argued which Buddhist festival was the most important, but this was not the question. In order to achieve the higher bands, candidates needed to maintain their focus on the question. The better answers accurately referred to Mahayana and Theravada Buddhists and their differing beliefs and practices regarding festivals. They were also able to draw on a thorough knowledge and understanding of many relevant aspects of the course, e.g., anicca, (s)kandhas, the practice of undertaking extra precepts, gaining karma at Kathina by performing dana, samsara etc. Many candidates were able to reference these concepts in a confident, appropriate way which added to the quality of their responses. It was also pleasing to note the appropriate and effective use of quotations, other sources of wisdom and authority, and religious language. Many weaker responses saw candidates describing and/or explaining the various festivals in detail, but this is not the skill required for this question. Candidates need to use their selected information in a more focused way to justify the arguments put forward. Some candidates had a lack of knowledge or showed confusion over which Buddhists celebrate Parinirvana Day and/or what it celebrates, with many thinking that it commemorated Buddha's enlightenment. These candidates tended to also be confused about Wesak, Kathina and Vassa. Consequently, many answers were unable to get higher than Band 2 due to this 'limited knowledge'.

Summary of key points

- Schools are to be commended for work undertaken to prepare candidates for this exam, particularly in regard to their understanding of Buddhist concepts.
- Concern about the amount written (and time taken) for (d) questions. If this is detracting from the other questions on the paper, a recommendation might be to answer both (d) questions first.
- Overall, candidates do not need to write as much in (d) questions; rather than write everything they know and try to fit it in into agree/disagree they need to use their knowledge and understanding to drive their arguments.
- Candidates need to be aware of (and stick to) the skills required for each question: description in (b) questions, explaining in (c) questions and analysing and evaluating in (d) questions.
- Conceptual knowledge and understanding and the ability to show the impact of religion on life are noticeable strengths of many candidates.
- Concern over some literacy issues i.e., the frequently using 'of' when they mean 'have'.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCSE

Summer 2022

COMPONENT 3: STUDY OF A WORLD FAITH – HINDUISM

General Comments

In contrast to previous years this report reflects the findings from two years of disrupted learning due to the pandemic. Despite these circumstances the responses indicated that all questions were accessible. Candidates could access the highest bands. The responses indicated that the paper differentiated well with a wide range of outcomes. However, it was clear there were gaps in knowledge for many candidates. The vast majority of candidates attempted all questions, but it was disappointing to see that some questions were not attempted. The 1(b) and 2(c) seemed unfamiliar to many candidates and this resulted in a large number of non-responses and weaker answers, which could be a result of gaps within their learning.

Generally, the (a) or key concepts were well answered. Often candidates expressed their understanding with a developed statement or an appropriate example.

Generally, the (b) questions lacked depth of knowledge and description even though the content is in the specification. Most candidates knew very little about the Yugas (1b) and showed a lot of depth for the practices of Diwali (2b) without explaining the origins of Diwali, as this was what the question asked.

The (c) questions showed some good knowledge and understanding of Varanashramadharma (1c), but lacked depth in certain areas to reach the higher bands. The idea of Vaishnava and Shaiva Bhakti was lacking in detail or there was confusion about what Vaishnava and Shaiva Bhakti was.

Candidates seemed to struggle with the evaluative aspect of the (d) questions, and this led to many students being placed in bands 1-3. Similar issues concerning vocabulary and the candidate's ability to evaluate is present in both responses to question 1 and 2 and in different styles of question, which suggests it is not an issue with a specific topic or question style. Those candidates who did well on the paper benefited from the broad range of questions and were able to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge and understanding. Candidates were often able to refer to sources of wisdom and some offered very interesting and relevant interpretations of sacred texts. There were some very successful answers that demonstrated sophisticated critical analysis and evaluation, including detailed technical language.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a) 'What do Hindus mean by 'trimurti?' (Full Course)
Most candidates attempted this question, with the majority of them being able to correctly identify the term and describe the 3 manifestations of Brahman (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva). Weaker answers tended to simply state the gods.

(a) **'What do Hindus mean by 'Avatara?' (SHORT COURSE ONLY)**
Most candidates attempted this question fully, providing either a detailed definition of it being an incarnation of god or a definition with an example. Many referred to the Avatar Krishna or Rama. There were some who were confused with this concept and referred to reincarnation.

(b) **Describe the four ages (yugas) in Hinduism.**
There was a significant number of candidates who failed to attempt the question or misinterpreted what the question was asking. Many candidates interpreted the 'four ages' as referring to the four Ashramas, the four Varnas or the Purusharthas, as there are four aspects to that idea. Some candidates focused on the Trimurti in the creation, or preservation and destruction of the cosmos, not fully describing the 'four ages'. Stronger candidates were able to provide a detailed description of the four yugas, correctly identifying that the term is associated with Hindu cosmology and then providing an outline of each of the four ages (Satya, Treta, Dvapara and Kali). Often the descriptions of each stage would discuss the levels of purity and pollution associated with each stage, the time span of each stage, the characteristics humanity possesses in each stage or the preferred type of worship in each stage. Stronger candidates also highlighted that we are currently in the age of Kali and that at the end of this age Shiva or Kalki will destroy creation so that Brahma can recreate the cosmos. Weaker responses just focused on the last stage briefly or simply listed the 'four ages' without describing what happens in the ages.

(c) **Explain varnashramadharma in Hinduism.**
Many candidates were able to answer this question, though there was small number that did not attempt the question. Most candidates correctly stated that the term was associated with a Hindu's dharma and were able to explain that dharma is often translated as duty and completing one's dharma can lead to liberation from samsara (Moksha). Strong responses provided a detailed overview of both the varna and ashrama system, with some candidates being able to describe the duties associated with of all four varnas and all four ashramas. Stronger candidates were able to use subject specific vocabulary effectively in their responses, referring to the various varnas and ashramas by their Sanskrit terms and applying scripture to develop their points. Stronger candidates also referred to the Purusharthas in connection to Varanasharamadharma. Weaker candidates often provided a simple explanation, lacking detail and use of subject specific vocabulary.

(d) **'The aim of a Hindu's life is Moksha.'**
The majority of candidates attempted this question, with the vast majority understanding what Moksha means. Strong responses often discussed how different Vedantic schools of thought might respond to the statement. Equally, several focused on how followers of Shaivism and Vaishnavism might respond to the question differently. Furthermore, many recognised other aims within the Purusarthas being an important aim in life. They included references to scripture in context. Candidates in the higher bands tended to focus on analysis and evaluation instead of description, consistently evaluating the statement throughout their answers. Weaker responses simply defined Moksha and provided one reason why it is an important aim. Many candidates were within band 3, demonstrating some level of critical engagement and providing alternative answers.

However, there were some candidates who could not gain a higher band due to referring to secular, Atheistic, Humanist or Christian responses to the question. This could not be credited due to the question purely focusing upon a 'Hindu's life.'

Q.2 **(a)** **'What do Hindus mean by 'ahimsa'?'**
Most candidates attempted the question, with the vast majority being able to recognise the term 'ahimsa' and associating it to non-harm or non-violence to living beings. Candidates awarded full marks were able to correctly define the term as non-harm or non-violence which is applied to any living being. Other candidates defined Ahimsa and provided good examples to support their definition e.g. Gandhi and a vegetarian/Sattvic diet.
Some candidates who did not recognise the concept associated ahimsa with a god or a festival.

(b) **Describe the origins of the festival of Diwali.**
Most candidates attempted this question. However, there were many misinterpretations of the question. Many candidates wrote about the practices of Diwali instead of describing the stories or origins behind the festivals. There were a number of candidates who confused Diwali with the festival of Holi, describing the story of Holika. Candidates who were awarded full marks provided a detailed overview of the events of the Ramayana including Rama's exile, Sita's kidnapping, Hanuman building a bridge and Rama and Sita being guided by lights on the way home. These candidates were able to link the ideas of the festival of lights and good overcoming evil with the events of the story. Weaker candidates described Diwali as the 'festival of lights' and a 'celebration of good over evil' but failed to link these ideas back to the origins in the Ramayana, Vishnu or Lakshmi.

(c) **Explain the differences between Vaishnava and Shaiva Bhakti.**
There were a significant number of candidates that did not attempt this question. Many that answered the question struggled to produce a detailed answer. One of the most common incorrect answers was simply stating that both Vaishnava and Shaiva Bhakti were a god and goddesses or a god and a demon (no link was made to either Vishnu or Shiva in these responses). Another common misconception was that they were festivals or pilgrimages. Few candidates were awarded the highest band in this question. Those who achieved the band offered very detailed explanations of the different practices and beliefs. Often, they would highlight the difference between active and contemplative worship (associating active worship with Vishnu and contemplative worship with Shiva). Responses in this band were able to draw on the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads to explain why Vaishnava and Shaiva bhakti may differ from one another and were often able to discuss how the difference between the associated practices reflect the personalities of the deities. Some referred to specific sects like ISKCON. High achieving candidates referred to specific puja practices like Nam Japna, Raja yoga and different key places of pilgrimages e.g. Vrindavan & Varanasi. Weaker candidates produced a limited answer, stating that Vaishnava worship Vishnu and Shaiva worship Shiva.

(d) **'Puja (worship) is the most important practice in Hinduism.'**
The majority of candidates attempted this question. Strong candidates were able to explore how the statement would be understood by different schools and philosophical movements within Hinduism. Many candidates achieving this band discussed how active worship, like puja may be favoured by followers of Vishnu, whilst contemplative worship like meditation may be preferred by followers of Shiva. Some candidates also linked different forms of worship to Brahman Nirguna and Saguna. Additionally, they were critically analysing and juxtaposing the importance of other practices like Varna & Ashrama Dharma, and Yatra (pilgrimage). Additionally, a good command of scripture was used to develop the argument. Weaker candidates made simplistic statements about puja as a form of worship and described the practices of puja but failed to discuss the question. Some candidates interpreted the question as to whether puja is better at home than the Mandir. This missed the focus of the question and did not achieve the full scope of the marks. Again, there were some candidates that also argued from the perspectives of Atheists, Humanists and Christians, despite the clear directive of the wording of the question.

Summary of key points

- Understand the wording of the describe question.
- Candidates should ensure their responses meet the demands of the question 'most important practice', 'the aim of a Hindu's life'.
- In the (d) question it is important to refer to the religion it is asking them to focus on e.g. Hinduism, and not refer to other faiths (Christianity) or ideologies (Atheism/Humanism).
- In the (d) question making sure they are analysing and evaluating, not describing.
- Detailed use of subject specific vocabulary is needed to reach higher bands.
- Revise all aspects of the specification.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCSE

Summer 2022

COMPONENT 3: STUDY OF A WORLD FAITH – ISLAM

General Comments

The paper was accessible with candidates attempting all questions across the examination paper. On occasion candidates disadvantaged themselves with very brief responses, particularly in (b) and (c) questions and candidates should be encouraged to use the space provided for examination answers. It was very pleasing to see the quality in top level answers, where candidates demonstrated comprehensive and detailed knowledge of Islam. There was a significant increase in the use of specialist language in answers and a wider use of references from sacred sources of authority.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a) What do Muslims mean by 'prophethood'?
Many candidates used the Eduqas 'definition' for the 1(a) responses and a significant number of candidates included the names of a variety of prophets as examples to support their answers.

(b) Describe the articles of faith in Sunni Islam.
In the 1(b) responses, many candidates did not appear to recognise the term. A number of candidates gave a full description – incorrectly – of the Five Pillars of Islam. When the candidates did recognise and know the subject matter, answers were often comprehensive and detailed. A disappointing number of candidates did not attempt the question.

(c) Explain why Ibrahim is important in Islam.
The responses to the 1(c) questions were varied; many candidates did not use the space available to offer an explanation and some responses incorrectly focused on prophets other than Ibrahim. A number of candidates stated Ibrahim was an angel or confused Ibrahim with Adam, or described some other teaching in Islam. The very highest level answers were excellent; a detailed knowledge of the life of Ibrahim was demonstrated and full explanations were given as to why Ibrahim was important in terms of his personal faith and implications for Muslims today.

(d) 'Muslim belief in Al-Qadr (predestination) means Muslims have no freedom.'
In the extended response for the 1(d) questions, a number of candidates failed to use the space available and gave very short responses. A number of responses were more descriptive in nature with very limited evaluation; often ignoring the concept of Al-Qadr with answers directed rather to a description of freedom within religion belief and practices.

There were many examples of excellent, thoughtful evaluation answers, well supported viewpoints with quotations from the Qur'an, demonstrating excellent knowledge and well-argued viewpoints.

Q.2 (a) What do Muslims mean by 'lesser Jihad'?

In the 2(a) question on lesser jihad, many responses again used the Eduqas definition.

A number of candidates incorrectly referred to the 'greater jihad' in their responses and received no marks, or they did not recognise the term and gave a wide variety of incorrect answers.

(b) Describe how Muslims might celebrate Id-ul-Fitr.

The range of answers to this question included some excellent full mark answers; both detailed and comprehensive. Some responses were too brief where candidates often gave a list rather than a detailed description, and often repeated themselves. A number of responses were too brief; when candidates give very short responses, they disadvantage themselves.

(c) Explain why Muslims fast during Ramadan.

Some answers were far too brief. Where candidates did recognise the term 'Ramadan', responses were often detailed and focused on the explanation of why Muslims fast during this Muslim month. The best responses gave a number of reasons why fasting was important; answers often showed insight into the importance of fasting as both a religious and practical practice, including the use of relevant specialist terms.

(d) 'Prayer is the most important Muslim practice.'

In the 2(d) question on prayer, many candidates supported the idea that prayer was the most important practice for Muslims and offered a variety of well thought out arguments to support this viewpoint. Many candidates used an extensive knowledge of Islam to offer a variety of alternative practices as being equally or more important than the practice of prayer, including such examples as charity giving and going on pilgrimage. It was pleasing to read responses where candidates used examples from both communal prayer in a mosque and personal and private prayer, with an adept use of specialist language.

Summary of key points

Candidates <u>must</u> remember to clearly state the number of the question(s) they are continuing to answer on any additional writing pages they use, e.g., 1d. 2c.
It is extremely challenging to attempt to match up their responses if they do not make this clear on the examination paper. and whilst there is no intention to deter candidates from using the continuation space, the fact that so many did not make this obvious caused significant delays to the marking process for this Summer series of examinations.

The use of specialist language enhances any response and specialist language should be used when appropriate in any of the (b), (c) and (d) answers.

Answers which are too brief do not allow candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding; candidates should endeavour to fully answer questions and use the available space.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCSE

Summer 2022

COMPONENT 3: STUDY OF A WORLD FAITH – JUDAISM

General Comments

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 candidates' engagement with the paper and the skilful way that many candidates are using their knowledge and understanding to answer the questions. There was increased evidence of candidates responding to the (d) questions with greater confidence.

Reflecting observations in previous reports, the vast majority of candidates recognise the diversity of Jewish beliefs and practices. This year there was evidence of more recognition regarding the role of different interpretations of sources of authority on belief and practice. It was pleasing to note that the vast majority of responses demonstrated an engagement and genuine interest with many of the issues of the specification. Many candidates expressed a sophisticated understanding of key beliefs of Judaism, especially pikuach nefesh. It was evident from the responses to (d) questions that candidates had a good understanding of the specification and many readily and insightfully used a range of evidence to justify their evaluative discussions as identified below in 1(d) and 2(d).

There were a significant number of references to differences between Jewish and Christian beliefs and practices. Nowhere in this paper is it appropriate to respond to the beliefs and practices of any other religious or non-religious traditions. As will be detailed later, there was an increasing number of responses which indicted Judaism as an outdated tradition in which believers do not integrate into contemporary society. It would appear that some programmes and films have exacerbated these misconceptions. It was disappointing to see Jewish traditions compared to those of so-called 'normal' people.

Responses indicated some faulty schemas of knowledge regarding the role of Noah, Abraham and Moses with many responses confusing the life events of each. This was particularly apparent in responses to 1(b) and 2(d).

Demands of Questions
It is appropriate to consider candidate performance in each type of question before scrutinising responses to individual questions.

(a) Questions – These questions are always based on the key concepts. Candidates are required to give a definition of one of the key concepts. Generally, these were answered well. Many candidates had appeared to have learned 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) Questions – 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 their ability to finish the paper. Candidates are expected to refer to a source of authority, where relevant. For some questions e.g.1(b), 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) Questions – 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 (use of the word 'because' is often useful for explanations).

(d) Questions – These questions require an extended piece of writing and carry half the marks for this paper. 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 in 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 there 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.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 **(a)** **What do Jews mean by 'mitzvot'? (2)**
This was generally well answered well with many responses referring to the duties expected to be carried out. Some candidates confused the term with the rites of bar and bat mitzvah.

(b) **Describe the Covenant with Moses. (5)**
The vast majority of candidates engaged with this question but there were many detailed descriptions of the plagues which is outside the remit of the question. Most candidates engaged with the question but there was significant confusion between the life events of Moses, Noah and Abraham. There were a significant number of responses that confused the Covenants of Abraham and Moses and gave detailed description regarding the importance of Brit Milah.

There were, however, some excellent detailed descriptions which contextualised the Covenant and accurately described the conditional agreements made.

(c) **Explain Jewish beliefs about God as One and God as Creator. (8)**
Generally, there was a good response to this question with responses addressing both parts of the question. It was pleasing to see the varied use of appropriate language used in the response. There were many references to the Shema and Mezuzah and references to Creation in the Torah and celebrated at Rosh Hashanah. Some responses referred to the diversity of views regarding the role of God as Creator and literal and non-literal interpretations of the Creation account in Genesis.

(d) **'All Jews should keep the Ten Commandments.' (15)**
This question was generally well answered with many responses focussing on whether **all** Jews **should** keep the Ten Commandments. It was pleasing to see the informed understanding regarding the diversity of practices and beliefs within Judaism. Many responses included an informed understanding of the role of pikuach nefesh.

Q.2 **(a)** **What do Jews mean by 'synagogue'? (2)**
This was well extremely well answered with the vast majority of responses referring to synagogue as a house of assembly that is used for prayer and study. It was disappointing that a minority of responses referred to it as 'a Jewish church'.

(b) **Describe a Jewish marriage ceremony. (5)**
There were many disappointing responses to this question. Many descriptions seem to have been influenced by marriage scenes portrayed in a recent film. There were many references to bride and groom never having met before the ceremony and going into side rooms to consummate the marriages. Few responses referred to the practices of the nuisin such as the chuppah, signing of the ketubah, placing of the ring or the seven blessings. Although many responses were aware something was broken at the end of the ceremony few identified this was usually a glass and there were references instead to plates, bottles and sets of crockery. Some candidates gave detailed descriptions of music, dance and food which might form part of the celebration after the ceremony. These details were beyond the remit of the question.

(c) **Explain how Jews might keep the kosher dietary laws. (8)**
The majority of candidates engaged with this question which differentiated very well. Many candidates referred to a range of practices such as eating only kosher foods, not mixing meat and milk, looking for kosher labels on food products, eating only in kosher restaurants and only eating meat prepared according to shechitah principles. There was often a good use of key religious language in responses. Unfortunately, some responses gained no credit as they focussed their response on **why** Jews might keep kosher dietary laws.

(d) **Pesach (Passover) is the most important Jewish festival. (15)**
Although this was the final question it was pleasing to see the quality of response from many candidates. Within their responses many candidates insightfully referred to different celebrations which could be considered more important. It was pleasing to note how candidates referred to a range of relevant content specification within their justifications.

Particularly pleasing was the understanding shown of the key concepts of other festivals and to evaluate why these might make those festivals more or less important. Many responses referred to the importance of atonement as at Yom Kippur, or creation as at Rosh Hashanah.

The question demanded evaluation and analysis rather than detailed descriptions of festivals. Some candidates tried to show diversity in their answer with spurious references to diverse views of Orthodox and Reform upon the question focus. References to diverse practices between Ashkenazi and Sephardic traditions would have been more appropriate. It was disappointing to read references, made by a significant minority, to the importance of Passover because some believe it was the Last Supper of Jesus. Candidates must not 'Christianise' their responses in this paper.

Summary of key points

- Candidates generally engaged well with all the questions.
- Insightful understanding of key Jewish beliefs and concepts.
- Credit can only be given to responses relating to Judaism. Examples from other religious and non-religious traditions are not usually relevant.
- (d) question responses generally incorporate a range of views with an increase in coherent arguments. There is less reliance on formulaic answers that can sometimes limit the argument and evaluation.
- Sophisticated use of religious language
- Generally a good understanding of diversity within Judaism is demonstrated.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCSE

Summer 2022

COMPONENT 3: STUDY OF A WORLD FAITH – SIKHISM

General Comments

The responses indicated that all questions were accessible. The responses also indicated that the paper differentiated well with a wide range of outcomes. The vast majority of candidates attempted all the questions, apart from 1(c). Many candidates did not attempt this question or failed to access this question, even though the topic is taken from the specification. Some candidates failed to use subject specific vocabulary.

Generally, the (a) or key concept was answered well, expressing a developed definition or an appropriate example. Most candidates attempted question 1(b), but sometimes providing explanation about what a gurmurkh is and not describing how to become gurmurkh. However, there were a number of candidates who did not attempt question 2(b), maybe due to a gap in their learning as a result of disrupted learning during the pandemic. Those that did attempt 2(b) either were very generic or explained the question instead of describing it. However, there were some detailed answers, showing they could access this question. The 1(c) (explain) question was the biggest hurdle for candidates, as it was asking for very specific knowledge about the teachings of the Mool Mantra. Some interpreted the question as the uses of the Mool Mantra instead of the teachings, whereas in 2(c) candidates provided some successful answers, showing good knowledge of the Sikh belief system. There were some candidates who did not attempt the (d) (evaluation) question, though the majority did, showing a development of knowledge, good use of evaluation, subject specific vocabulary and quotes. There were some errors of understanding, specifically with the relationship between the Khalsa and the Sangat, but most candidates could attempt his question well. Again, the majority of candidates attempted the question for 2(d), showing a clear understanding of what makes a Sikh. They provided really thoughtful discussions, providing effective juxtapositions with good subject specific vocabulary and accurate use of sources of authority.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a) What do Sikhs mean by 'Mukti'?
The vast majority of candidates were able to answer this question concisely and accurately. Many used subject-specific language such as 'spiritual liberation'. A few candidates were not explicit in their answers referring only to 'breaking the cycle' but this question was accessible to all candidates. Some candidates gained one mark by stating that Mukti is 'liberation', with no further elaboration.

(b) Describe how a Sikh can become God-centred (gurmukh).
Most candidates answered this question. The full range of marks was awarded. The majority knew what gurmurkh means and could give at least a brief explanation of how Sikhs can become God-centred. Strong candidates considered a range of different ways, including sewa, running the langar and meditating on God's name (Nam Japna) or other worship practices.

Many compared gurmurkh with manmukh, with clear examples of how the state of manmukh can be prevented e.g. avoiding the five evils, daswandh and following Sikh teachings. Some candidates explained the benefits of joining the Khalsa in order to become gurmurkh. Some answers were correct but very brief; only outlining one or two ways in the vaguest of terms, using little subject specific vocabulary, gaining the middle band marks. Sewa and langar were the most frequently cited ways to become gurmurkh. Some candidates included non-creditable material such as *why* it is important to become gurmurkh; thereby failing to address the question.

(c) **Explain the Sikh teachings of the Mool Mantra.**
A number of candidates failed to attempt this question. This could be due to gaps in learning. There were a range of answers and all the bands were reached within this question, highlighting accessibility, but there were many answers that were not credited as they did not refer to the teachings of the Mool Mantra. Some candidates discussed other Sikh teachings e.g. equality, the lives of the gurus, sewa, how to run the langar. Some candidates interpreted the question as the 'uses' of the Mool Mantra, not the teachings of the Mool Mantra. Strong candidates provided up to five teachings from the Mool Mantra in detail, giving the Sikh terms for each one, and then relating them to wider Sikhs beliefs about the attributes of Waheguru, such as immanence and transcendence, omnipotence, omniscience and eternal. They did not deviate from the question. Weaker answers gained a few marks for knowing Ik Onkar and explaining briefly what it means.

(d) **'Without the sangat there would be no Sikhism'.**
The full range of marks were awarded for this question. However, there were some candidates who did not attempt this question. Overall, the question was answered reasonably well, with most candidates understanding the concept of sangat as the community of Sikhs who worship together. Those who did not know what the sangat was often mistook it for just being the Khalsa itself and so lost many marks. The best answers explained all the benefits of being part of a community and linked this to communal worship, including festivals and rites of passage such as Naam Karan. They explained the importance of the sangat for young Sikhs learning about their faith and for support, friendship and a sense of identity. They linked the concept of sangat to Guru Nanak and used relevant quotes about the sangat from the Guru Granth Sahib.

The main alternative view was the argument that Sikhs can worship at home on their own, with reference to Sikhs having copies of the Guru Granth Sahib in their home. There was also the argument that some Sikhs may not live near a gurdwara and so are not part of the sangat through no fault of their own. Less persuasive but still creditworthy was the argument that being a member of the Khalsa is more important than being part of the sangat, although some candidates did not realise that Khalsa members are also members of the sangat.

Q.2 **(a)** **What do Sikhs mean by 'gurdwara'?**
Most candidates were able to describe the gurdwara as a Sikh place of worship, accessing full marks. Some provided elaboration by giving key features of the gurdwara such as the Guru Granth Sahib. A small number of candidates wrote that the gurdwara means 'gateway to the Guru' without stating that it is a place of worship.

(b) **Describe the features of the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar.**

A number of candidates failed to attempt this question. Weak answers tended to focus on the colour of the Temple and that it had 4 entrances or described some features without using technical language. Stronger answers were able to convey other key features such as the Langar, the Test Room, Adi Granth, Guru's Bridge, Ragis, Amrit Sarovar etc. Some candidates focused on explaining the importance of the Golden Temple rather than addressing the question asked.

(c) **Explain the importance of meditating on the name of God.**

Most candidates attempted this question. High achieving candidates answered this really well, with good use of technical language – they explained the benefits of Nam Japna, linking it to gurmukh, karma and achieving Mukti. Some candidates showed an excellent knowledge and understanding of Naam Simran and Jivan Mukti. They also explained how meditating brings Sikhs closer to God and allows them to be in touch with the divine spark. Quotes from the Guru Granth Sahib were used. Weaker answers lacked specific detail, sometimes explaining meditation in general and how it is good for well-being, or only exploring the idea of bringing Sikhs closer to God.

(d) **'You are not Sikh unless you are part of the Khalsa'.**

Again, there were a number of candidates who failed to attempt this question. However, those who did demonstrated the ability to form reasonable judgements. Stronger candidates identified a range of benefits of belonging to the Khalsa, including the obeying of stricter rules, showing more commitment and dedication, following the example of Guru Gobind Singh and the Panj Pyare, a quicker way to become gurmurkh and achieve mukti, and the best way to defend Sikhism. These candidates also referred to practices such as wearing the 5Ks but then explained why these might make a Sikh more devoted. Relevant quotes were included from the Guru Granth Sahib. The alternative view was also persuasively argued by many candidates. The best answers used many key terms such as amritdhari and sahajdhari. The most common argument was linked to equality and the fact that all members of the sangat, whether Khalsa or not, can carry out worship, sewa, langar etc, without distinction between different groups. The fact that the first nine human gurus were not members of the Khalsa was also explained. Weak answers provided a description of the Khalsa with some inaccuracies about the gurus who were involved in instating the Khalsa.

Summary of key points

- Don't write an explain answer in a describe question.
- Focus on what the question is asking.
- Revise all areas of the specification.
- Use ample subject specific vocabulary to reach the higher levels.
- Well-developed reasoning for arguments, with evidence/quotes/practices enhance a (d) Question.