



GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

A LEVEL (NEW) RELIGIOUS STUDIES

SUMMER 2019

Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at:
<https://www.wjecservices.co.uk/MarkToUMS/default.aspx?!=en>

Online Results Analysis

WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC secure website. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.

Annual Statistical Report

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

Component	Page
1A: A Study of Christianity	1
1B: A Study of Islam	9
1C: A Study of Judaism	16
1D: A Study of Buddhism	23
1E: A Study of Hinduism	30
1F: A Study of Sikhism	36
2: Philosophy of Religion	42
3: Religion and Ethics	49

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A LEVEL (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 1A: A Study of Christianity

General Comments

The paper appears to have been accessible to nearly all candidates. Although there were some excellent scripts, which demonstrated a depth of knowledge and understanding and refined evaluative skills.

Some candidates made excellent use of religious teachings, Biblical material and the view of scholars. Strong responses were well supported by a variety of evidence and/or reasoning. It was pleasing to see that evaluation skills continue to improve with most candidates, engaging with meaningful discussions in the AO2 questions. Independent thinking was evident amongst the scripts, demonstrating that candidates had engaged with the topics studied.

However, some candidates continue to treat Part (b) questions as AO1 and subsequently do not address the question as set.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 (a) Explain how the filioque controversy could create different views about the doctrine of the Trinity. [AO1 20]

This was the least popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 25.1%. The facility factor of 60.7 and mean of 12.2 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- knew what the term 'filioque' meant and the specific nature of the issue of the debate surrounding the addition of the clause performed very well.
- were able to explain the development of the doctrinal formula and comment on the differences between the East and West and reasons for the schism.
- could refer to the need for a doctrine of the Trinity and refer to the complexities surrounding issues about relationships between the persons of the Trinity.
- many referred to the differences between the immanent and economic trinity and referenced St Augustine's claims that human beings can know the Trinity from human experience.
- some were able to successfully explain the different approach taken by the Eastern Church regarding warning against understanding the nature of God as being dependent upon human experience.
- there was some exploration of modern developments of this relationship and some drew on wider Trinitarian issues.

Features of weaker responses:

- referred to general issues surrounding the understanding of the Trinity.
- lacked clarity of or, knowledge of, the filioque controversy.
- there was a lack of clarity about who proceeded from who.
- there was frequently a lack of development of responses.
- used statements of knowledge rather than demonstrating understanding.

(b) 'The monotheistic claims of Christianity are not compatible with the doctrine of the Trinity.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 63.8 and mean of 19.1 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- were able to explore traditional debates about the logical inconsistency of 3 in 1.
- many made a comparison with Hinduism and demonstrated their understanding of the monotheistic claims of Hinduism and the Trimurti.
- there was evidence of clear understanding of the heretical debates that had led to the formulation of the Nicene Creed.
- evaluated the relevance of the heretical debates in relation to the monotheistic claims of the Trinity. Demonstrated evidence of mature understanding of the debate.
- some were able to reference Karl Barth's use of the term 'seinsweise' (mode of being) and made links with the heresy of modalism.
- were able to demonstrate confidence in explaining how Barth overcame this misunderstanding of the use of the term.
- explored the role of each person of the Trinity, drew upon a wide range of scholars and made good use of Biblical material.

Features of weaker responses:

- failed to understand the complexity of the problem.
- provided responses that were more AO1 than AO2.
- only general comments about the logical inconsistency of three persons but one God.
- failed to distinguish between personhood and being.
- some candidates in referring to the Trimurti of Hinduism confused the issue with polytheism or tritheism.

Q.2 (a) Examine different responses to the issue of male language about God.

[AO1 20]

This was the most popular question from this section, with an attempt percentage of 75.0%. The facility factor of 63.9 and mean of 12.8 suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- candidates were able to refer to the specific gender issues by making strong links with Sallie McFague, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Mary Daly.
- focused on problems raised by male language and were not side-tracked into issues of women in the church.
- concentrated on the views of Sallie McFague and were able to write in detail about the aspects of her feminist theology including: panentheism, her alternative trinity, and how referring to 'God as a mother' would give imagery of God birthing his creation from the womb which made strong links to her ecofeminist views.
- were able to identify that metaphors can become idols for worship and warned against sentimentalising maternal imagery.
- brought in the feminist ideas of Rosemary Radford Ruether and Mary Daly, with many able to use Daly as alternatives to McFague.

Features of weaker responses:

- failed to see beyond the biblical patriarchal context and its implications and became side-tracked into issues of women in the church.
- lacked counter-arguments to the feminist response.
- simply mentioned 'mother, lover, friend' in a list and without explanation.
- failed to understand what McFague meant by the problematic use of metaphors.

- (b) **'If God has no gender, then God as female is not problematic.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 61.1 and mean of 18.3 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- were able to refer to a wide range of evidence from a variety of scholars.
- demonstrated good understanding of the issues raised by either using either gender when referring to God.
- arguments and evidence about gender neutrality was also well referenced.
- some referred to the attitude of Jesus towards women and teachings about God referred to the female images of God in the Bible such as 'a woman searching for a lost coin' and the notion of God comforting his people as a mother comforts her children.
- a wide range of answers referred to how God as male has been problematic in the Christian Church and identified several issues regarding the treatment of women.
- explored the challenge presented by the fact that Jesus as God incarnate was male and called God 'Abba'. Many candidates stressed that referring to God in female terms challenged tradition and doctrine.
- some commented on the need for change within Christianity to address the bias towards male terminology referring to the impact that it would have on the church generally if this was addressed.

- demonstrated a deep understanding of the problems of patriarchy and the idea that it may stem from the concept of God as male. There were a wide range of approaches to this question with the main scholars used by the strongest candidates being McFague, Reuther and Daly.
- were able to demonstrate the weaknesses to these scholars in their suggestions about the issues with God having a gender as well as their solutions.

Features of weaker responses:

- focussed on the idea of God as solely female and candidates missed the opportunity to refer to the idea that if God has no gender, then referring to God as female is not a problem.
- some candidates repeated the points that they had made in part (a) but did not evaluate the question.
- some responses were very general, focusing on the impact that male or female terms to describe God would have on men and women.
- there was a tendency to generalise discussion and many missed the opportunity to draw on the feminist theologians studied.

Section B

Q.3 (a) Explain Crossan's view that Jesus was a social revolutionary. [AO1 20]

This was the second most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 18.6%. The facility factor of 59.6 and mean of 11.9 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of Jesus as a social revolutionary. Some candidates grounded his work in a socio-anthropological approach.
- understood how Crossan's methodology contributed to his conclusion that Jesus was a social revolutionary.
- referred to Jesus' use of the open table, his itinerant lifestyle and the notion that any healing was social healing.
- also commented on Crossan's belief that Jesus as a social revolutionary adopted a kingdom lifestyle which led to him being compared to the Cynics.
- were able to explain the views of Crossan clearly and spoke in depth about the key features of his view including: not seeing the birth and resurrection narratives as having happened in history, but being later additions to express the importance of Jesus to his followers, he intended a social revolution, advocated an inherent lifestyle, served at an open table and performed miracles of social healing.

Features of weaker responses:

- focused on Jesus being a Mediterranean Jewish peasant and could explain briefly how Jesus' mission was inclusive.
- were able to list the areas that Crossan explored such as open table and social healing, but didn't really explain why this showed Jesus was a social revolutionary.

- only gave a few general points about how Jesus challenged social conventions and opted to spend time with sinners and those on the margins of society.
- some candidates confused N.T. Wright and J.D. Crossan.

(b) 'The apocryphal gospels are not a valid basis for understanding Jesus.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 56.8 and mean of 17.0 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- really engaged with the issue from candidates who had a clear understanding of the apocryphal gospels.
- made strong links with the formation of the Canon.
- had a good understanding of the reasoning behind Crossan's decision to regard certain documents as having more relevance for understanding Jesus than others.
- addressed the question by making strong comparisons of the apocryphal gospels with N.T. Wright's approach.

Features of weaker responses:

- seemed to be confused about what apocryphal gospels are.
- were able to name Thomas as an apocryphal Gospel and knew there was an issue with the age of it, but were confused about what this issue was.
- there was a lot of confusion about 'Q' some thinking it was an apocryphal gospel that could be consulted, some knew there was a link to the New Testament gospels, but in general it only seemed to add confusion to answers with some candidates failing to distinguish between canonical gospels and apocryphal gospels.
- many responses, which drew comparisons with N.T. Wright, focused too heavily on this at the expense of engaging in the discussion of the apocryphal gospels.

Q.4 (a) Examine the evidence for claiming that the UK can be called a 'Christian country'. [AO1 20]

This was the most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 63.0%. The facility factor of 56.7 and mean of 11.3 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- made good use of evidence, which was drawn from references to national trends e.g. history, monarchy, laws, Church of England, faith schools, RE on the curriculum, etc.
- examined the evidence for and against the UK as a Christian country.
- overall a wide range of evidence was used, such as the development of the English language, the geography of Britain divided into parishes, the monarchy, cathedrals and churches in every town and city, faith schools and Christian holidays.

Features of weaker responses:

- focused too much on faith schools and in doing so changed the question to suit their answer.
- there appeared to be some misunderstanding regarding the role of faith schools and the curriculum delivered therein.
- failed to refer to the statutory provision of Christian religious education in all schools both primary and secondary.
- a tendency towards generalisation and scholarship was often lacking. There were some very weak and vague points and reference to statistics made.
- were unable to judge the significance of different pieces of information (for example is the fact that the National Anthem refers to God truly indicative of the UK being a Christian country or is it merely a relic of a Christian past?)
- Some candidates' answers were limited to the reverse mission movement and nothing much else, demonstrating that they did not understand the question.

(b) 'The Christian response to the challenge of secularism has been effective.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 49.5 and mean of 14.9 for this question, suggest this was a fairly accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- had a clear understanding of what the challenges from secularisation were.
- some used scientific issues as part of this line of reasoning.
- demonstrated good understanding of strategies used by Christianity to meet secular issues.
- focussed on the responses of the various churches to secularisation and offered analysis and evaluation of these responses, exploring areas such as reverse missionaries, the Alpha course, the Charismatic movement, the Lord's Prayer advert in cinema's, Street Pastors, and sometimes challenges to secular laws referring to current case studies.
- referred to key figures such as the Queen and David Cameron promoting Christian values.
- some made strong and relevant links to the science v religion debate between Alister McGrath and Richard Dawkins.

Features of weaker responses:

- did not understand what secularisation is.
- Some gave one-sided responses focused entirely on the evidence that the UK is no longer a Christian country.
- Some responses concerned themselves with teachings from the churches that the candidates felt were outdated – particularly in relation to LGBTQI issues. Although valid, it did mean that for many their responses lacked breadth and depth.

- many candidates failed to represent the education provided by faith schools accurately, e.g. referring to faith schools as being narrow minded and bigoted in their approach to contemporary issues.

Q.5 (a) Explain how South American liberation theology has responded to the issues of poverty and injustice. [AO1 20]

This was the least popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 17.6%. The facility factor of 57.1 and mean of 11.4 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- demonstrated a good understanding of the development of liberation theology, with better responses focusing on the response to poverty.
- were able to give a thorough account of Gutierrez and Boff. This included reference to three types of poverty and base communities and were also able to comment on Pope John and 'a Church for the poor.'
- were able to develop their response further by demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the practices in place to combat poverty and injustice alongside the theological justifications for this, including reference to the Gospels for example Matthew and 'Blessed are the poor.'
- referred to Orthopraxy as a preference to Orthodoxy.
- reflected the critique of capitalism by Liberation Theology, the political out-workings of this and the establishment of Base Ecclesial Communities.

Features of weaker responses:

- did not know what liberation theology was, many responding instead from the perspective of feminist theology.
- commented briefly on the work of Liberation theologians and their support of the poor in Latin America.
- simply referred to Jesus caring for the poor.
- did not discuss both the theological and the practical elements of Liberation theology.
- failed to refer to both poverty *and* injustice.
- misinterpreted the question and responded by giving ways that the Church helps with poverty focusing on Christian Aid and Cafod.

(b) 'South American liberation theology is more political than it is religious.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 58.1 and mean of 17.5 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger answers:

- were able to discuss the influence of Marxist ideologies and the response to the Catholic Church.
- included the criticisms of Liberation Theology by the Vatican, particularly Ratzinger.

- included relevant biblical references. Most candidates were able to identify which elements of Liberation Theology drew on its biblical foundations and which were inspired by its Marxist ideology.
- drew on the responses of the Roman Catholic Church and there was a good use of quotations from Boff, Gutierrez, Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger.
- some discussed 'orthodoxy' versus 'orthopraxis' and the use of this to explain Liberation Theology as religiously based or more politically based.
- were able to evaluate the changing position of liberation theology in the Catholic Church as this, by its nature, allowed them to show the tension between politics and religion in the movement.

Features of weaker answers:

- could not discuss the statement at a deep level.
- some did not distinguish between Marxism and Liberation Theology.
- were unable to make strong biblical links with liberation theology.

Summary of key points

- Address the question that is set rather than one that is hoped for. Application of knowledge and understanding to the question will enable the candidate to achieve the higher bands.
- Remember to make appropriate links across the paper where appropriate (e.g. language about God and feminist theology, challenges from science and secularism, the formation of the Canon and the use of the apocryphal gospels.)
- Ensure accuracy when referring to scholars.
- Ensure that points made are developed rather than just listed.
- Ensure that the focus of AO2 questions is analysis and evaluation rather than just information giving.
- Include independent thought focusing lines of reasoning on the given statement.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A LEVEL (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 1B: A Study of Islam

General Comments

Candidates responded well to the paper, the second in the series under the new specification. Those choosing each question in both Sections were roughly equally spread out.

Sometimes candidates missed one or two key words in the questions or statements to respond to. Despite this, evidence of responses covering the full range of mark bands was seen, showing that candidates were able to access the questions and some to make excellent, critical and confident responses.

It was pleasing to see sources of wisdom and authority, and the views of different scholars, referred to with skill and precision by some candidates. These helped students to illustrate points they were making in their arguments and enabled them to appreciate different perspectives. Centres have evidently spent worthwhile time and effort into improving this aspect of the way they guide their candidates to craft extended responses.

There was some evidence that understanding of diversity of opinion had improved, but this could still be further developed. Many candidates qualified interpretations of Islam to the source or scholarly opinion rather than just stating 'in Islam'. Some candidates responded well to resources provided for this specification and mentioned different views including Sunni, Shi'a, reformist, traditionalist, Qur'anist, Islamic feminist, literalist and liberal. These were not all in the same response, but as and where it helped to draw out further understanding. It was not necessary to give different views 'labels' though where used accurately it sometimes helped candidates to explain the perspective they were covering.

Some students developed critical arguments more naturally than others. Writing frames using phrases such as 'I agree' and 'I also disagree'; this is a 'strong point' and this is a 'weak point', were much in evidence. Sometimes these were applied inappropriately to points which had little to do with the statement, or did not fit the deduction that they were strong or weak. This approach may be of use for some candidates, but it should be used more selectively according to the ability and needs of each candidate. Such frameworks may well restrict more able candidates.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 (a) Explain the changing roles carried out by Muslim men and women with regards to family life. [AO1 20]

This was the most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 57.1%. The facility factor of 63.7 and mean of 12.7 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

This question could be approached from different perspectives. The most common was to consider changing roles with regard to sharing responsibilities in the home, women who are more likely to take up careers, and how to balance the responsibilities of bringing up children in the faith. Some took a historical perspective about how roles changed in the past, with the coming of Islam, and changed again through Muslim history to today. This was also valid and made for some interesting and well thought out essays.

Features of stronger responses:

- clearly and overtly explained how roles had or were changing with reference to specific examples.
- considered different ways in which roles might be changing, taking some and developing a response in detail, showing breadth and depth.

Features of weaker responses:

- wrote about roles as if they were static and unchanging, defining traditional roles of men and women in the Muslim family.
- approached the question from the perspective of what roles might be defined as in Islam, rather than through examples from the experience of different Muslims.

(b) 'Islam considers women and men as equals.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 69.0 and mean of 20.7 for this question, suggest this was a very accessible question for candidates.

Debate focused on different roles and whether this meant that women were treated unequally in status. Some argued that women could be considered equal and that cultural influence meant that women's roles were different, whereas others argued that different roles did not make women unequal. A few mentioned the hadith of Muhammad in which he first stated that the mother should be respected three times before mentioning the father as evidence of the high status of women in Islam in certain roles.

Features of stronger responses:

- covered a range of aspects such as women's role in prayer, in Shariah courts, in the choice of marital partner and in careers, recognising diversity in Muslim approaches to these roles.
- were able to refer to and possibly quote scholars and their perspectives, including those of Muslim women feminists such as Haleh Afshar.

Features of weaker responses:

- did not attempt to explain why some Muslim women have different roles from men, instead describing the roles and concluding they were equal.
- did not differentiate between Islamic perspectives on how men and women should be treated, and how different Muslims consider their roles under the influence of local culture.

Q.2 (a) Explain different ways the media might misrepresent Muslims and aspects of Islam. [AO1 20]

This was the second most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 42.9%. The facility factor of 73.9 and mean of 14.8 for this question, suggest this was a very accessible question for candidates.

Many candidates were able to respond in detail to this question, referring to a range of examples. Most mentioned misrepresenting Muslims as extreme, particularly after news stories about terror related events. A few mentioned that media might sometimes report good news stories without questioning aspects of Islam. Some mentioned that spokespeople for Muslims sometimes misrepresented the views of Muslims in the UK which were more diverse than they articulated.

Features of stronger responses:

- considered a range of ways in which Muslims might be stereotyped in different media from cartoon films to news reports to social media discussions.
- recognised imbalances such as over representation of negative reports and under reporting of good news stories, referring to research and examples.
- recognised that media misrepresentation could include uncritical reports of aspects of Islam as well as negative headlines.

Features of weaker responses:

- only wrote about one or two aspects, commonly how the media might misrepresent Muslims as extreme.
- assumed media misrepresentation was only negative and did not bring out the complexity of the issues involved.

(b) 'Western perceptions of Islam are created by the media.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 68.6 and mean of 20.6 for this question, suggest this was a very accessible question for candidates.

This proved a challenging question for some candidates since the importance of the word 'created' in the statement was missed. Some responses considered how impressions could be created by media imbalance although they could also be a reflection of common perceptions gained through the experiences of individuals and communities, reported rather than created by the media.

Features of stronger responses:

- focused on the key words in the statement and discussed whether the media created or simply reported aspects of Islam which contributed to western perception.
- considered a broad range of ways in which different media, from social media to news to films, might create both negative and positive impressions.

Features of weaker responses:

- described how the media might create a negative impression of Islam, without discussion about whether this was a creation of the media or a reflection of wider perceptions held by individuals or communities.
- considered a narrow range of ways in which the media might create impressions, commonly only negative impressions from reporting of extremism.

Section B

Q.3 (a) Examine the role and importance of Jummah prayers. [AO1 20]

This was the most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 39.5%. The facility factor of 63.9 and mean of 12.8 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Many candidates were able to describe details of Jummah prayers such as its replacement of the midday daily prayer on Fridays; the understanding of Islam developed from the teachings given in the Khutbah; the strength of commitment to the Islamic Ummah developed through meeting, praying and discussion. Some mentioned the historical importance of the first Jummah prayers under Muhammad at a time when the Muslim community had left Makkah and could for the first time pray openly and in congregation at Quba and Madinah.

Features of stronger responses:

- referred specifically to the communal Friday prayers read in congregation and including a Khutbah or sermon from an Imam and often a social aspect of the gathering.
- considered the importance of Jummah in a range of situations and to different people, including women and men, children and those in Muslim countries.

Features of weaker responses:

- wrote about the importance of praying five times a day according to Salah, the pillar of Islam, and did not write specifically about Jummah prayers.
- covered only the prayer aspect of Jummah and not the sermon or social gathering; or only considered the importance for men.

(b) 'Personal prayers are of more value to a Muslim than attending Jummah prayers.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 64.3 and mean of 19.3 for this question, suggest this was a very accessible question for candidates.

Most candidates were able to formulate a discussion in response to this statement, although some were able to develop this in more detail than others. Many responses did not offer any definition of personal prayers and did not explain what might be meant by value, but the best responses fully

engaged with these words and debated with some precision what they might mean to individuals in interaction with the Muslim community.

Features of stronger responses:

- referred to a range of personal prayers including Sunnah prayers, Dua prayers, Sufi wird and other meditations and requests for guidance.
- considered the value of these prayers in the personal spiritual development of different Muslims.

Features of weaker responses:

- assumed personal prayers were only the five daily prayers prayed individually, not in congregation in the mosque.
- considered the value of prayers to be defined exclusively by how much reward they were thought to be given, in respect of building up good deeds for Judgement Day.

Q.4 (a) Explain the significance of the historical dispute which gave rise to Shi'a Islam. [AO1 20]

This was the second most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 29.9%. The facility factor of 64.7 and mean of 12.9 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Candidates tended to be stronger on aspects of the dispute than explaining the significance of these.

Features of stronger responses:

- managed to take a perspective outside the events and the time they were set in and show how they had implications for later events or modern practice. A good example of this was how the dispute over Ali's leadership has influence over the authority of leadership today; how the events of Karbala influence the Shia calendar with the importance of marking those events at the time of Ashura annually.
- gave a comprehensive account of the historical dispute from the time of the Prophet's last sermon and his disputed appointment of Ali as leader, to the first four Caliphs, to the events of Karbala and afterwards.
- explained the significance of these events by showing how they have affected certain aspects of Shi'a Muslim belief and practice up to the present day.

Features of weaker responses:

- gave a partial account of some aspects of the historical dispute, such as the disputed succession of Abu Bakr, but missed out other aspects, such as the events of Karbala, or vice versa.
- described parts of the historical dispute without explaining its significance.
- wrote in general about the differences between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims.

- (b) **‘There are no major differences between Shi’a and other forms of Islam.’
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

The facility factor of 66.4 and mean of 19.9 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Many candidates considered a range of practices such as aspects of prayer, payment of khums charity, and the role of Imams as possible differences between Shia and Sunni Muslims. Some mentioned the marking of events at Karbala and others the authority given the Shia Imams. Better answers made judgements about the extent to which those differences were major.

Features of stronger responses:

- covered a broad range of similarities and differences.
- discussed how far the identified differences were significant in terms of beliefs and practice.
- considered distinctive aspects of Shi’a Islam in comparison to Sunni and other forms of Islam, such as Sufi.

Features of weaker responses:

- misunderstood features of Shi’a Islam such as the position of Ali and Shi’a Imams.
- effectively gave a list of pre-learned differences, written in paragraph.
- did not respond to the word ‘major’ in the statement and outlined differences in general.

- Q.5 (a) Examine the hadith as a source for shari’a. [AO1 20]**

This was the least popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 29.7%. However, the facility factor of 63.6 and mean of 12.7 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Answers took various valid approaches, including outlining the collection of hadiths and their reliability in determining the Sunnah for use in shari’a interpretations. Another approach was to trace selected moral issues and explain how the hadith may be used together with other sources of shari’a to work out acceptable courses of action for Muslims.

Features of stronger responses:

- correctly identified different categories of hadith and explained them according to their reliability in terms of the content and chain of narration.
- placed the hadith within the context of sources of shari’a and outlined the relative importance and how the hadith may be used together with other sources, giving examples.

Features of weaker responses:

- gave a general answer about why the Sunnah of Muhammad is important without addressing the hadith.
- wrote about why the hadith helped Muslims in one or two ways without referring to shari’a specifically.

- (b) **‘The shari’a is just human interpretation.’
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 64.9 and mean of 19.5 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

The question was a relatively simple statement which invited a nuanced response and was an invitation to challenge the premise. Some confident and coherent answers did so whereas less confident responses argued simply for or against. Good answers discussed how shari’a was made up and the role of human interpreters as well as divinely inspired sources and methods for arriving at rulings.

Features of stronger answers:

- discussed both the concept of shari’a as divine law and the human interpretations which are made with reference to various sources, both human and divine.
- recognised the diversity of interpretations about shari’a.
- traced one or two examples of how shari’a might address moral issues such as abortion, showing how the divine source of the Qur’an could be used together with inspired human interpreters.

Features of weaker answers:

- argued simply from one perspective, disagreeing with the statement.
- did not recognise or articulate the different sources of shari’a and how they can be used together.

Summary of key points

- Every word in the question and stimulus quotations for question (b) parts is there for a reason. Candidates need to tailor their answers to the specific question set to move beyond giving generalised answers about the topic.
- Centres are advised to:
 - further develop knowledge and understanding of different viewpoints within Islam and refer to names of scholars or their approach or tradition in general, such as Sunni, Shi’a, reformist, traditionalist, Qur’anist, Islamic feminist, literalist or liberal. Although it is not essential to use labels for positions, it may be helpful at times.
 - differentiate the use of structured writing aids: ‘I agree...’ ‘I disagree’, ‘this is a weak/strong point...’; these might help some candidates, but sometimes restricted the more able from developing their own confident, critical responses.
 - ensure the Shi’a and shari’a topics are taught to sufficient depth to enable candidates to choose these questions if they so wish, as fewer opted for them.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A LEVEL (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 1C: A Study of Judaism

General Comments

It is evident from candidates' responses that all questions on the paper were accessible and answers covered the full range of responses. Where responses were good, and especially in Section A of the paper, candidates made reference to views of scholars/schools of thought as well as sacred texts and sources of wisdom, with accuracy and relevance.

It is also noticeable that the standard of responses to part (b) questions has improved, with very few candidates failing to recognise the difference between knowledge and understanding (AO1) and analysis and evaluation (AO2). There has also been an improvement in the accurate use of the views of scholars/schools of thought in responses to part (b) questions.

However, candidates should continue to be reminded to pay close attention to the specific wording of each question, as answers from the lower bands invariably failed to address the question set. It was also evident in a minority of scripts that some candidates were endeavouring to address the synoptic issue by appending points made in answer to the question with philosophical and/or ethical points, which, in many cases, did not add anything meaningful to the response given.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 (a) Examine different views within Judaism about evolution. [AO1 20]

This was the second most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 45.7%. The facility factor of 62.0 and mean of 12.4 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

The question in general was answered well, with a number of candidates producing responses which were of a very high standard.

Features of stronger responses:

- views of scholars/schools of thought were used accurately and effectively.
- views from a wide variety of Jewish denominations were included, which displayed a thorough understanding of the differences between literal, metaphorical and allegorical readings of the Torah.

Features of weaker responses:

- responses were limited to one or two viewpoints within Judaism about evolution which lacked depth and/or breadth.
- views from different Jewish standpoints were confused and/or inaccurate.

- the term 'evolution' had clearly not been understood, resulting in responses which lacked relevant information.

(b) 'Judaism is incompatible with science.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 68.4 and mean of 20.5 for this question, suggest this was a very accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- wide-ranging use of detailed evidence from Torah, Talmud and Maimonides, for example, in order to support the views being made;
- purposeful connections made with current debates within Judaism regarding embryo research and genetic engineering to improve health;
- views from a wide variety of Jewish standpoints were identified and thoroughly addressed.

Features of weaker responses:

- information about evolution from part (a) was merely repeated, and thus did not address the wider issue of the relationship between Judaism and science;
- the relationship between science and religion in general was discussed, with very little acknowledgement of Jewish views.

Q.2 (a) Examine the different ways in which Richard Rubenstein and Eliezer Berkovitz have responded to the Holocaust.

[AO1 20]

This was the most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 52.9%. The facility factor of 51.6 and mean of 10.3 for this question, suggest this was a fairly accessible question for candidates. It produced some very good responses from some candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- presented accurate and relevant information regarding the views of both Rubenstein and Berkovitz in relation to the Holocaust.
- accurate references were made to sacred texts where relevant: e.g. Isaiah 45:15 'the hiding of the face'; the Book of Job and the concept of the suffering servant.
- were able to explain Rubenstein's concept of the death of God; the Ultimate Nothing and his views on the ability of Jews to continue to find spiritual vitality through traditional Jewish observances in depth and with accuracy.

Features of weaker responses:

- a minority of candidates presented views of other theologians such as Wiesel or Fackenheim in error.
- some candidates gave an extensive account of the historical background to the Holocaust which was not required by this particular question.

- (b) **‘Holocaust theologians have been successful in addressing the challenges raised by the Holocaust.’
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 68.4 and mean of 20.5 for this question, suggest this was a very accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- the theodicies presented by Rubenstein, Berkovitz, Fackenheim, Maybaum and Weisel were analysed and evaluated critically and perceptively.
- comparisons were made between the theodicies of some of the Holocaust theologians as the means by which to assess if one or another presented a more successful standpoint.

Features of weaker responses:

- confusion about which theologian said what about the Holocaust prevented some candidates from presenting a cogent response.
- only a basic analysis and limited evaluation of Rubenstein’s and Berkovitz’s theodicies was offered in response.

Section B

- Q.3 (a) Examine the importance of Rashi in the history of Talmudic study.**

[AO1 20]

This was the second most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 24.3%. The facility factor of 53.2 and mean of 10.6 for this question, suggest this was a fairly accessible question for candidates. It produced a number of very good responses from candidates.

It was evident from the responses to this question that candidates generally have a good knowledge and understanding of Rashi and Maimonides and their importance within the history of Talmudic study.

Features of stronger responses:

- Rashi’s approach to midrash characterised by his use of peshat was exemplified well with references to his commentaries on Exodus 23:19, Leviticus 24:19-20 and Genesis 1:1.
- Rashi’s influence even to the present day was acknowledged with reference to his biblical commentary which is known as ‘Chumash with Rashi’.
- views of scholars were used accurately and effectively.

Features of weaker responses:

- too much of the response was given over to a detailed biography of Rashi which did not examine his importance in the history of Talmudic study.
- basic statements about Rashi’s use of peshat which were not exemplified by reference to specific commentaries.

- (b) **‘Maimonides deserves to be known as the most complete Jewish scholar’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 49.6 and mean of 14.9 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- Maimonides’ major works were used competently in order to exemplify the fact that he is regarded by many as a significant contributor within the history of Jewish studies;
- arguments used to oppose the statement took account of the fact that Maimonides was not without his critics;
- reference was made to current-day scholars who have described him, in various ways, as one of the most outstanding giants of Jewish thought.

Features of weaker responses:

- some candidates wrongly approached this question as if it were a Maimonides versus Rashi comparison; and, while it is valid to include Rashi as an alternative ‘complete Jewish scholar’ within the debate, the focus should primarily have been on the strengths and weaknesses of Maimonides regarding this claim;
- one or two of Maimonides’ major works were mentioned in passing, but lacked critical analysis and evaluation;
- some candidates wrongly based their evaluation upon Rashi’s contribution to Jewish studies.

- Q.4 (a) Examine the central religious role of the synagogue in Jewish festivals.** [AO1 20]

This was the most popular question from this section with an attempt percentage of 68.6%. However, the facility factor of 38.4 and mean of 7.7 for this question, suggest that candidates found this question challenging.

While many candidates produced very good answers to part (b) of this question, many failed to accurately address the focus on ‘Jewish festivals’ for part (a) of the question.

Features of stronger responses:

- the customs and rituals which take place at the synagogue during festivals such as Shabbat, Pesach, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Simchat Torah were used well in order to exemplify the role the synagogue plays in strengthening bonds within the wider Jewish community; the importance of the Torah; the opportunities for asking God for forgiveness for example.
- included reference to the importance of the mikveh in order to prepare ritually and spiritually for festivals such as Shabbat and Yom Kippur;
- attendance at the synagogue even for secularised Jews was discussed as the means by which to exemplify the continuing central role of the synagogue in bringing back even non-observant Jews into the community at festival times.

Features of weaker responses:

- failed to acknowledge the central role of Jewish festivals and included irrelevant details about the rites of passage which are celebrated at the synagogue;
- a common error was the inclusion of detailed descriptions of the ways in which Shabbat and Pesach are celebrated in the home;
- some discussed the features of the synagogue and their significance without reference to festivals;
- some discussed the central role of the synagogue for the Jewish community in general, but with only a passing reference to the role of festivals.

- (b) **‘The synagogue is the heart of a Jewish community.’
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 61.5 and mean of 18.4 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- reference was made to the diverse nature of the synagogue through a discussion of its various roles such as that of bet k’nesset, bet midrash, bet din for example;
- the importance of the Jewish home was offered and evaluated as an alternative ‘heart of the Jewish community’;
- the Torah and obedience to the mitzvot were used as evidence for their importance at the heart of the Jewish community;
- many stronger candidates did not reach absolute conclusions on this matter, but rather skilfully weighed up the relative importance of each of the elements of their argument with reference to the opinions and standpoints of the different denominations which are to be found within Judaism.

Features of weaker responses:

- There were very few weak responses to this question, however, when they arose they tended to be superficial with views given that were not sufficiently supported by reason and/or evidence.

- Q.5 (a) **Examine the concepts of Devekut (clinging on) and Tikkun (repair) as found in Kabbalah.**

[AO1 20]

This question was the least popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of only 7.1%. However, the facility factor of 79.0 and mean of 15.8 for this question, suggest that it was a very accessible question, for the small number of candidates that attempted it.

Features of stronger responses:

- the concepts of Devekut and Tikkun were discussed with competence.
- accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary such as kavvanah, Shekinah, tikkun, Sefirot was evident.

- thorough and accurate reference was made to sacred texts such as the Zohar where appropriate.

Features of weaker responses:

- there was a lack of balance in the response, with only one of the concepts being addressed;
- only limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples.

**(b) ‘Aids to worship in Kabbalah are vital in order to experience God.’
Evaluate this view with reference to Judaism. [AO2 30]**

The facility factor of 76.0 and mean of 22.8 for this question, suggest that it was a very accessible question, for the small number of candidates that attempted it.

Features of stronger answers:

- aids to worship such as The Tree of Life and meditation were used as exemplification in order to provoke discussion;
- the use of magic and the concept of the golem were noted as being outside the mainstream within Kabbalah and thus perhaps not vital in order to experience God;
- it was noted that aids to worship are not totally confined to Kabbalah, and the use of tefillin was included as the means by which to exemplify this. Stronger candidates further noted however that within Kabbalah the tefillin have a greater significance as aids to worship by acting to heal the rift between mind and action, and enabling the individual to experience God;
- the credibility of the tradition of Kabbalah within Judaism was also brought into question as the means by which to judge the validity of the statement or otherwise.

Features of weaker answers:

- There were very few weak responses to this question, however, when they arose they tended to be superficial with views given that were not sufficiently supported by reason and/or evidence.

Summary of key points

- The inclusion of accurate references to sacred texts and sources of wisdom where relevant are significant features of stronger responses.
- Candidates need to pay close attention to the specific wording of each question so that opportunities are not lost to achieve marks within the higher bands.
- In AO2 responses, the inclusion of views of scholars, especially those who have different/opposing arguments relating to the debate, are features of stronger responses.

- An ability to reflect the diversity which is to be found within Judaism is to be encouraged, and this can be especially useful in AO2 responses.
- Where there are obvious opportunities for connections to be made with the philosophical and/or ethical elements of the course then, when used accurately and in context, these are to be encouraged. However, take care that candidates do not endeavour to force connections by appending points in their responses with information which does not add anything meaningful to the answer.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A LEVEL (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 1D: A Study of Buddhism

General Comments

Overall there was a pleasing level of competency in the responses written by candidates. This appeared to demonstrate that centres had prepared candidates well. As last year, a number of candidates showed great ease and fluency in using technical Buddhist terminology.

Many responses showed a good understanding of basic and advanced Buddhist teachings, including the diversity of Buddhists traditions – knowledge of Pure Land Buddhism was regularly in evidence along with critical assessments of the writings of Stephen Batchelor. As last year, candidates would benefit from practice and familiarity with how to allocate time for each question. Whilst part (a) questions are worth 20 marks and part (b) are worth 30 marks, in some cases candidates did not serve themselves well by spending more time on part (a) than on part (b).

There were a number of impressive holistic responses to the part (b) questions. Often candidates displayed a wide range of knowledge and understanding and many were adept at putting this together in their responses in a strong discursive fashion.

Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions carefully and answer the question asked.

In part (a) questions, the wording tends to be focused on a particular aspect which requires specific AO1 knowledge and understanding of that area. In part (b) questions, the wording tends to be focused in such a way as to draw out responses with regard to a controversial topic or to a topic about which opposing views might be found.

As last year, it was most encouraging to read a number of responses where candidates had demonstrated their full engagement and interest in the topics which had been taught. Such engagement often manifested itself in the enthusiasm with which some candidates responded to questions. This certainly assisted them in reaching the higher bands through showing confidence in well-articulated views.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 (a) Examine different ways in which Buddhists meditate. [AO1 20]

This question was the most popular within Section A, with an attempt rate of 59.5%.

The facility factor of 79.2 and mean of 15.8 for this question, suggest that it was a very accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- were able to focus on particular aspects of Buddhist meditation such as samatha, vipassana, zazen, metta bhavana.
- used specific vocabulary and detail were often in evidence such as the jhanas, the hindrances, satori, koan study.
- were able to identify how Buddhists meditate in different ways according to the Buddhist tradition to which they belong or whether they are ordained or lay.

Features of weaker responses:

- overly generalised accounts of Buddhist meditation in terms of breathing, walking and sitting without making any connection to what type of meditation might be involved.
- providing insufficient breadth – perhaps mentioning only one way in which Buddhists meditate – and insufficient depth – perhaps just listing different ways in which Buddhists meditate with a simplistic description.

- (b) **‘Meditation is the most important Buddhist practice.’
Evaluate this view.**

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 77.7 and mean of 23.3 for this question, suggest this was a very accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- focused on the phrase ‘most important’ and presented impressive discussions on how – due to pratityasamutpada – no one Buddhist practice could be seen as more important than another.
- were able to juxtapose in a creative fashion the importance of meditation as opposed to – for example - dana, studying sacred texts or being involved in aspects of Socially Engaged Buddhism.
- depth and breadth of knowledge were often displayed in contrasting, for example, the practices of different Buddhist traditions whereby creating a mandala, chanting a mantra, reciting the three refuges might be seen as more or less important than meditation.

Features of weaker responses:

- limited themselves by not focusing on the word ‘practice’. These type of responses suggested that the Four Noble Truths or the Three Lakshanas were practices.
- did not show sufficient understanding of how the importance of meditation might be viewed differently throughout the fourfold Sangha and amongst ‘heritage’ and ‘convert’ Buddhists.

- Q.2 (a) Examine different ways in which mindfulness is used in contemporary society.**

[AO1 20]

This question was the least popular within Section A, with an attempt rate of 40.2%.

The facility factor of 71.7 and mean of 14.3 for this question, suggest that it was a very accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- were able to focus on mindfulness showing breadth in terms of its use in health care, schools and business.
- included the work of Kabat-Zinn and Thich Nhat Hanh in order to place mindfulness in its context within contemporary society.
- often an impressive amount of depth in the examination of mindfulness in terms of well-researched examples which included statistics.

Features of weaker responses:

- limited themselves to generic responses about mindfulness in Buddhist practice as found in the area of meditation or as referenced in the Noble Eightfold Path, with little or no reference to contemporary society.
- wrote less presenting knowledge and understanding in their responses to this question than they did in giving an analysis and evaluation of mindfulness.

- (b) **‘The contemporary Mindfulness movement is not Buddhist.’
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

The facility factor of 72.2 and mean of 21.7 for this question, suggest this was a very accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- responded to this question in a scholarly and critical fashion by citing a variety of scholars including Zizek.
- high-level discussion suggesting that the contemporary mindfulness movement is Buddhist owing to its focus on removing dukkha from people’s lives, and owing to one interpretation of the Parable of the Raft suggesting that the Buddha approved of any teaching or practice that would enable a person to attain nibbana – however that nibbana might be interpreted.
- alternatively, there was pertinent and perceptive discussion of whether the contemporary mindfulness movement was no more than a ‘self-help’ fad alongside other approaches marketed in the West.

Features of weaker responses:

- seemed unclear as to what the contemporary mindfulness movement might be and thus limited themselves to evaluating the role of generic mindful meditation in society.
- limited themselves by an either/or type of response – ‘yes it is Buddhist because...’ or ‘no it is not Buddhist because...’ - without any considered evaluation or analysis.

Section B

- Q.3 (a) Explain how Buddhists apply the dasa sila (ten precepts). [AO1 20]**

This question was the least popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 17.4%.

However, the facility factor of 83.2 and mean of 16.6 for this question, suggest that it was very accessible, for the candidates who attempted it.

Features of stronger responses:

- were able to articulate both the nature of the dasa sila and the ways in which they were applied across the fourfold Sangha.
- good used of exemplification, which helped focus explanations - for example, the first precept being applicable to all Buddhists, whereas not handling gold and silver being applicable solely to the monastic Sangha.

Features of weaker responses:

- limited themselves to providing a list of the dasa sila with little explanation.
- seemed only to be aware of one or two of the precepts and wrote only about these.

- (b) **'The dasa sila are essential for the sangha.'**
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 78.8 and mean of 23.6 for this question, suggest this was a very accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- were able to focus on the word 'essential' and considered the ways in which the dasa sila might or might not be 'essential' for the monastic or lay Sangha dependent on which Buddhist tradition might be under consideration.
- were able to develop their evaluation through questioning the legitimacy of the dasa sila for the monastic Sangha in the 21st century particularly in the West.
- some juxtaposed the dasa sila with other facets of Buddhist practice such as recitation of the Three Refuges, meditation and dana in order to place the dasa sila in context within Buddhism.

Features of weaker responses:

- restricted themselves by a generic discussion which tended to ignore the dasa sila in favour of what might be essential for Buddhists today such as belief in the Lakshanas or the Four Noble Truths.
- in some cases, there appeared to be knowledge of the Five Moral Precepts, but a lack of knowledge of the Five Additional Precepts.

- Q.4 (a) Examine how Buddhism in the West can be seen as a secular philosophy.**

[AO1 20]

This question was the second most popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 30.1%. The facility factor of 69.8 and mean of 14.0 for this question, suggest that it was a very accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- were able to give a very impressive summation of the approach taken by Batchelor to Buddhism.
- extrapolated aspects of Buddhism in the West which emphasised its secular nature including its focus on social engagement and mindfulness meditation.
- provided a very useful historical and cultural context for Buddhism in the West to support their explanation of its secular nature.

Features of weaker responses:

- seemed unclear as to what was being expected of them with reference to Buddhism in the West and contented themselves by explaining how Buddhism in general might be seen as atheistic.
- in some, much of the focus was on ways in which Buddhism – through denying the existence of an omnipotent God responsible for creation – was an atheistic way of life.

(b) 'Buddhism is not a religion.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 80.2 and mean of 24.0 for this question, suggest this was a very accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger responses:

- presented well-thought out and carefully considered responses on what makes a religion a religion, and how Buddhism might or might not be seen in that category. Here, there was often much reference to Ninian Smart's dimensions of religion.
- cited a variety of sources of wisdom to support their contention one way or the other. Such sources included apt reference to the Parable of the Poisoned Arrow and the Kalama Sutta.
- were able to present well-considered presentations of the views of Batchelor versus those of Brazier

Features of weaker responses:

- tended to focus wholly on the absence of an omnipotent God responsible for creation as proving that Buddhism was not a religion.
- attempted to present various generic pointers as to Buddhism not being a religion with a focus particularly on mindfulness, meditation and the supposed lack of belief in anything which might be termed 'supernatural'.

Q.5 (a) Examine the Awakening/Enlightenment of the Buddha.

[AO1 20]

This question was the most popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 52.5%. The facility factor of 66.9 and mean of 13.4 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- were able to focus entirely on the recorded experience of the Buddha under the Bodhi Tree.
- some were able to provide a detailed account of the watches of the night and the temptations provided by Mara – they were also able to comment on the hagiographical aspects of the narrative alongside its possible psychological dimension.

Features of weaker responses:

- ignored the focus of the question and contented themselves by providing a biography of the Buddha from his birth until the first sermon at Sarnath with only passing reference to the Awakening/Enlightenment.
- seemed unclear as to the various narratives regarding the Awakening/Enlightenment and passed from the offering provided by Sujata to the first sermon at Sarnath in no more than a couple of sentences.

(b) ‘The Four Sights are more important than the Awakening/Enlightenment of the Buddha.’

Evaluate this view with reference to Buddhism.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 66.4 and mean of 19.9 for this question, suggest this was an accessible question for candidates.

Features of stronger answers:

- were able to reflect on this question in terms of which Buddhist traditions might regard the life of the historical Buddha as being of more importance than the dhamma.
- could give a perceptive analysis of the meaning of the Four Sights and how this might or might not have shaped the dhamma in ways in which the Awakening/Enlightenment did not.

Features of weaker answers:

- some candidates contented themselves with very descriptive responses covering the events of the Four Sights and the events of the Awakening/Enlightenment followed by a brief summation.
- some candidates tended to limit themselves through not having a clear enough understanding of what is meant by the Awakening/Enlightenment of the Buddha.

Summary of key points

- Read both Part (a) and Part (b) of the question carefully before writing anything in order to be clear in your mind about what the question is asking you for in terms of knowledge and understanding for Part (a) and analysis and evaluation in Part (b).
- It is always best to write a very brief essay plan, but if not take at least a couple of minutes to note down the key points and ideas you want to include before writing your response.

- Be ready to show off your knowledge and understanding to the examiner by use of Buddhist terminology which demonstrates your grasp of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
- In the Part (a) questions, think carefully about what is being asked of you and avoid any analysis and evaluation, just focus on evidence and examples.
- In the Part (b) questions, be ready to make relevant connections through analysis and evaluation as appropriate with the various elements of the course you have studied.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A LEVEL (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 1E: A Study of Hinduism

General Comments

The examination paper included a range of questions from the specification's themes, with good coverage of topics which gave a fair choice for candidates. The paper was accessible to candidates. However, some weaknesses seem to be with us annually, such as some candidates choosing to 'describe' instead of 'explaining' when responding to AO1 questions, whilst other candidates failed to answer the question as set or did not read the question carefully enough.

There were a number of answers where there were no paragraphs whatsoever. It was as if the candidates were so desperate to write down everything they knew, that they forgot the basic rules of essay writing. This made marking very hard as it was difficult to focus on the different points or arguments being made. Paragraphing is something that needs to be reinforced as candidates may be missing out on top grades if their grammar is poor. Poor handwriting continues to be a major issue, made worse by the failure to write in paragraphs.

Specific arguments are not always obvious in the AO2 answers – candidates are still simply writing everything they know and tacking on a rather vague viewpoint at the end. Some excellent examples of candidates referring to scholarly opinion or writers such as Flood and Jamison were seen, with effective use of quotes that did relate to the answer. Some good synoptic links were made without any of the 'forced' nature of doing so that was evident last year.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 (a) Examine different paths to liberation within Hinduism. [AO1 20]

This question was the most popular within Section A, with an attempt rate of 74.6%. The facility factor of 58.4 and mean of 11.7 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

This question was generally well answered.

Features of stronger responses:

- addressed the question directly with sound knowledge and understanding.
- some impressive use of scriptural references and scholarly quotes e.g. Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita and Swami Vivekananda on Bhakti yoga.
- explained in depth the different paths of Jnana, Karma and Bhakti yoga and were able to explain the differences within the paths themselves.

Features of weaker responses:

- tended to be general and superficial in content with little or no exemplification especially when discussing jnana yoga.
- there was a tendency in some answers to confuse karma and bhakti yoga.

- (b) 'The jnana path is more difficult to follow than the bhakti path.'**
Evaluate this view with reference to Hinduism. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 57.8 and mean of 17.3 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

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

Features of stronger responses:

- were well developed focusing entirely on the issue raised by the question, were well supported, challenged and evaluated.
- some good references to sources of wisdom and beliefs and concepts within Hinduism to support arguments e.g. to Vedanta philosophy in support of Jnana needing a high level of intellect and therefore making it the more difficult path.
- responses were balanced in their evaluation of the difficulties associated with each path.

Features of weaker responses:

- lacked challenge and evaluation of the issue and contained a number of repetitions of the same point e.g. the jnana path being more difficult because it needs to be taught by a guru.
- were imbalanced and although a number of candidates could argue in favour of the difficulty of the jnana path they could not give alternative viewpoints.

- Q.2 (a) Explain different contributions made by Gandhi and Ramakrishna to the development of Hinduism. [AO1 20]**

This question was the least popular within Section A, with an attempt rate of 25.4%. The facility factor of 46.8 and mean of 9.4 for this question, suggest that it was a challenging question for some candidates.

The vast majority of students were able to explain some aspect of Gandhi and Ramakrishna's contribution to the development of Hinduism.

Features of stronger responses:

- demonstrated both broad and deep knowledge and understanding of Gandhi's contribution to Hinduism, focusing on a variety of different aspects such as ahimsa and satyagraha, universalism and Advaita Vedanta, varna and untouchability, brahmacharya ashrama and aparigraha lifestyle.

- showed a good understanding of the contribution of Ramakrishna - his development of Hinduism as a world religion, his advocacy of a universalist ideal of Advaita Vedanta his emphasis on mystical experience and the devotion he showed to Kali and his wife as Shakti.
- wrote with confidence, using concepts and technical terms with accuracy, and supported their ideas with quotes and evidence.

Features of weaker responses:

- very narrow in their focus in terms of the contributions.
- Others were very imbalanced and focused entirely on Gandhi with little or no reference to Ramakrishna.

- (b) ‘Ramakrishna was greatly influenced by Western ideas.’
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

The facility factor of 31.2 and mean of 9.4 for this question, suggest that it was a challenging question for candidates.

Most candidates were able to present some valid arguments to this question.

Features of stronger responses:

- presented clear arguments for and against the statement, with effective analysis and evaluation of viewpoints.
- arguments for Ramakrishna being influenced by Western ideas included the fact that he was influenced by Christianity and the cosmopolitanism of Western ideas.
- alternative views presented included the argument that the greatest influences on him was Hindu mysticism and the bhakti tradition.
- contained thoughtful argument and a clear conclusion.

Features of weaker responses:

- were confused as to what exactly ‘western ideas’ meant.
- others were completely focused on Vivekananda and not Ramakrishna.
- there was a considerable lack of evidence to support the views given.

Section B

- Q.3 (a) Examine the importance of the Trimurti to the Hindu understanding of God. [AO1 20]**

This question was the most popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 47.5%. The facility factor of 53.3 and mean of 10.7 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

There was a wide range in the standard of answers given to this question. Although there were some excellent answers, unfortunately some candidates simply wrote all they knew about the Trimurti. The question itself is very specific in that it asks how the Trimurti helps Hindus to understand the nature of God.

Features of stronger responses:

- contained thorough knowledge and understanding of the concept of the Trimurti, of the features of each individual god and the importance of those features in the understanding of Brahman e.g. the Trimurti representing the three main aspects of Brahman as creator, preserver and destroyer.
- they were able to discuss the importance of the Trimurti in the context of Brahman Nirguna and Saguna and how manifestations help Hindus in the understanding of the impersonal absolute.

Features of weaker responses:

- either simply described the Trimurti or explained some of their features without linking them at all to the Hindu understanding of God.
- others described or explained the main features of Vaishnavism and Shaivism. They simply did not answer the question set.

(b) 'Hindus worship more than one God.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 56.7 and mean of 17.0 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Most candidates were able to present some valid arguments to this question. However, a number of candidates did not refer to the central argument that all the gods of Hinduism are in fact expressions of Brahman.

Features of stronger responses:

- gave a range of valid arguments to support a balanced answer considering whether Hinduism is in fact monotheistic, polytheistic or henotheistic.
- were able to refer to relevant beliefs and practices within modern Hinduism and refer to the traditions of Vaishnavism and Shaivism which can be regarded as monotheistic in themselves.
- were also able to contrast this view with the belief that Shiva and Vishnu are expressions of Brahman.
- there were also informed references to ISCKON and the role of Krishna.

Features of weaker responses:

- were very superficial in nature and lacked evidence and reasoning to support the arguments given.
- there was also a lack of understanding of the terms monotheistic and henotheistic.

Q.4 (a) Explain the importance of puja in the mandir for Hindus. [AO1 20]

This question was the least popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 19.5%. The facility factor of 52.0 and mean of 10.4 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question overall. However, the responses to this question varied greatly from the excellent and detailed to the descriptive and superficial.

Features of stronger responses:

- addressed the question directly with sound knowledge and understanding of the different practices and rituals that are part of puja in the mandir and their importance.
- were able to explain and exemplify the importance of practices such as arti, darshan and circumambulation.
- were also able to discuss the importance of some of the features of puja in the mandir which are not possible in puja in the home e.g. the role of the priest.

Features of weaker responses:

- there were some very general and superficial answers.
- some simply described puja in the mandir and were more GCSE in content than A Level.
- others described puja in the home as well as the mandir which was irrelevant to the question set.

- (b) 'Puja is not a religious experience.'** [AO2 30]
Evaluate this view with reference to Hinduism.

The facility factor of 50.1 and mean of 15.0 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question overall. There were some very good responses to this question.

Features of stronger responses:

- were well developed focusing entirely on the issue raised by the question, were well supported, challenged and evaluated.
- they succeeded in effectively evaluating what a religious experience is and then discussing what aspects of puja, if any, fit the definition.
- they referred to the practical aspects of puja such as showing love and devotion through service and evaluated if this was a religious experience.
- they were also able to discuss the spiritual significance of these practical activities such as prashad and darshan and to link the practical and spiritual together to come to a balanced conclusion.

Features of weaker responses:

- lacked challenge and evaluation of the issue and had no real understanding of the meaning of 'religious experience'.
- tended to be no more than a list of points 'for' and 'against' without any real development of the arguments.

- Q.5 (a) Explain the importance of the four purusharthas to the Hindu attitude to wealth and poverty.** [AO1 20]

This question was the second most popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 33.0%. The facility factor of 60.5 and mean of 12.1 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- showed good balanced understanding of the four purusharthas and were able to discuss each one in the context of wealth and poverty.
- they also exemplified their importance with reference to each purushartha in turn.

Features of weaker responses:

- did not answer the question set and ignored completely the link to wealth and poverty apart from artha.
- simply wrote all they knew about the four purusharthas.
- there was a lack of examples and evidence to support the views presented.

- (b) **‘Moksha is the most important of the four purusharthas.’**
Evaluate this view with reference to Hinduism. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 64.9 and mean of 19.5 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Features of stronger answers:

- addressed the question directly and compared and contrasted the four purusharthas in terms of importance.
- were able to support the arguments presented with reference to Hindu teaching e.g. moksha being the ultimate goal of every Hindu.
- were also able to give contrasting viewpoints arguing that dharma for example is the most important because of its cosmic implications.

Features of weaker answers:

- were superficial and lacked evidence and examples to support the views given.
- were descriptive in nature and the knowledge presented although mainly accurate was not used to present a coherent argument.
- they were also imbalanced.

Summary of key points

- Candidates should take care to read the questions carefully and notice the key foci of each one to ensure they answer the set question.
- Candidates should be clear as to the requirements of AO1 and AO2 questions
- Candidates should justify their arguments, providing reasons or evidence to support their view; and to offer some evaluation of them.
- The views of scholars or schools of thought should be used appropriately.
- Candidates should use specialist technical vocabulary extensively and accurately.
- If relevant, candidates should make synoptic links with Philosophy and Ethics components

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A LEVEL (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 1F: A Study of Sikhism

General Comments

Generally, the overall standard was good which demonstrates clearly the high standard of teaching in most centres. Although a number of papers were poor, there were many excellent papers at the top end of the scale which showed great depth of knowledge and understanding. However, some weaknesses seem to be with us annually, such as some candidates choosing to 'describe' instead of 'explaining' while other candidates failed to answer the question as set. Others did not read the question carefully enough.

The examination paper included a range of questions from the specification's themes, with good coverage of topics which gave a fair choice for candidates. The paper was accessible to candidates.

There were a number of answers where there were no paragraphs whatsoever. It was as if the candidates were so desperate to write down everything they knew that they forgot the basic rules of essay writing. This made marking very hard as it was difficult to focus on the different points or arguments being made. Paragraphing is something that needs to be reinforced as candidates may be missing out on top grades if their grammar is poor. Poor handwriting continues to be a major issue, exacerbated by the failure to write in paragraphs.

Specific arguments are not always obvious in the AO2 answers – candidates are still simply writing everything they know and tacking on a rather vague viewpoint at the end.

Some excellent examples of candidates referring to scholarly opinion or writers with effective use of quotes that did relate to the answer.

Some good synoptic links were made without any of the 'forced' nature of doing so that was evident last year.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 (a) Examine different ways Sikhs understand the nature of God. [AO1 20]

This question was the least popular within Section A, with an attempt rate of 20.0%. The facility factor of 65.0 and mean of 13.0 for this question, suggest that it was a very accessible question.

This question was generally well answered reflecting the excellent teaching in centres on this aspect of the specification.

Features of stronger responses:

- addressed the question directly with sound knowledge and understanding.
- there was some impressive use of scriptural references and scholarly quotes e.g. the names of God such as Akal Purakh and Waheguru and the teaching of the Mul Mantra.
- explained in detail the different ways God is understood in Sikhism as both transcendent and immanent.

Features of weaker responses:

- tended to be general and superficial in content with little or no exemplification especially when discussing the different names and roles given to God in Sikhism.

- (b) ‘Without doubt the concept of God is the most important concept in Sikhism.’
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]**

The facility factor of 70.0 and mean of 21.0 for this question, suggest that it was a very accessible question.

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

Features of stronger responses:

- were well developed focusing entirely on the issue raised by the question, were well supported, challenged and evaluated.
- Referred to sources of wisdom and beliefs and concepts within Sikhism to support arguments e.g. according to Guru Nanak the purpose of human life is to enable relationship with the Eternal Spirit.
- were balanced in their evaluation with arguments presented in favour of equality and sewa being the most important concepts.
- others argued that in a religion all concepts are equally important.

Features of weaker responses:

- lacked challenge and evaluation of the issue and contained a number of repetitions of the same point e.g. that everything in Sikhism depends on God.
- were imbalanced and although a number of candidates could argue in favour of the concept of God they could not give meaningful alternative viewpoints.

- Q.2 (a) Explain different ways the concept of sewa is put into practice in the Sikh community. [AO1 20]**

This question was the most popular within Section A, with an attempt rate of 80.0%. The facility factor of 53.8 and mean of 10.8 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

This was a very popular question and the vast majority of students were able to explain some ways of practically expressing sewa.

Features of stronger responses:

- demonstrated both broad and deep knowledge and understanding of the concept of sewa, focusing on the three main aspects tan – service given physically, man – service given mentally and dhan – sharing material resources.
- Wrote confidently, using concepts and technical terms with accuracy, and supported their ideas with quotes and evidence.

Features of weaker responses:

- answers were very narrow in their focus in terms of the ways sewa could be expressed and focused entirely on langar in the gurdwara.

- (b) **‘Practising sewa is more important than believing in God.’
Evaluate this view with reference to Sikhism. [AO2 30]**

The facility factor of 60.3 and mean of 18.1 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- presented clear arguments for and against the statement, with effective analysis and evaluation of viewpoints.
- arguments included the view that sewa was the central and fundamental teaching of the gurus and one of the first duties to be taught by Guru Nanak.
- alternative views presented included the argument that there is no greater duties than nam Simran – duties to God.
- the responses contained thoughtful argument and a clear conclusion.

Features of weaker responses:

- were imbalanced and there was a considerable lack of evidence to support the views given.
- some candidates found it difficult to contrast the practicing of sewa with believing in God.

Section B

- Q.3 (a) Examine the authority of the Guru Granth Sahib in Sikhism. [AO1 20]**

This question was the most popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 53.3%. The facility factor of 50.00% and mean of 10.0 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

There was a wide range in the standard of answers given to this question. Although there were some excellent answers unfortunately some candidates simply wrote all they knew about the Guru Granth Sahib. The question itself is very specific in that it asks for discussion on the authority of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Features of stronger responses:

- contained thorough knowledge and understanding of the importance of the Guru Granth Sahib
- referred to what gives it its authority and how that authority is expressed in different ways within Sikhism e.g. it is a living Guru and has the authority of the Gurus' teachings and therefore its message has authority over the lives of Sikhs.

Features of weaker responses:

- simply described the role or use of the Guru Granth Sahib. Others described its main features. They simply did not answer the question set.

- (b) **'An understanding of the Guru Granth Sahib is the only essential requirement to be a Sikh.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 53.3 and mean of 15.9 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Most candidates were able to present some valid arguments to this question.

Features of stronger responses:

- gave a range of valid arguments to support a balanced answer considering the fundamental requirements of being a Sikh.
- were able to refer to relevant beliefs within the Guru Granth Sahib which support the statement given e.g. it teaches complete faith and devotion to God and how to achieve it and therefore it can be argued that this is the only essential guidance that is needed to be a Sikh.
- were also able to contrast this view with the need for the Rahit Maryada in contemporary society and also the requirements of the Khalsa.

Features of weaker responses:

- Weaker responses were very superficial in nature and lacked evidence and reasoning to support the arguments given. There was also a lack of understanding of the words 'essential requirement'.

- Q.4 (a) Examine Sikh attitudes to other religions.** [AO1 20]

This question was the least popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 20.0%. The facility factor of 63.3 and mean of 12.7 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- addressed the question directly with sound knowledge and understanding of how Sikhs view other religions and their attitude towards them.
- were able to refer to Sikh teaching and sources of authority to exemplify the attitudes found in Sikhism e.g. Guru Nanak's first words after

enlightenment 'There is neither Hindu nor Mussulman' and Guru Gobind Singh's words 'He is in the temple as in the mosque.'

Features of weaker responses:

- were very general and superficial answers and could not refer to any specific teaching.

(b) 'Sikhism is a non-missionary religion.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 60.0 and mean of 20.0 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- were well developed focusing entirely on the issue raised by the question, were well supported, challenged and evaluated.
- they succeeded in effectively evaluating what a non-missionary religion is and then discussing what aspects of Sikhism, if any, fit the definition.
- they referred to arguments such as Sikhism being a pluralistic tradition and Guru Nanak advocating an attitude of religious tolerance.
- in contrast it was argued that the Khalsa is exclusivist.

Features of weaker responses:

- lacked challenge and evaluation of the issue and had no real understanding of the meaning of 'non-missionary.'
- tended to be no more than a list of points for and against without any real development of the arguments.

Q.5 (a) Examine the role of the gurdwara in expressing Sikh identity. [AO1 20]

This question was the second most popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 26.7%. The facility factor of 61.3 and mean of 12.3 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- showed good balanced understanding of the link between the features and practices of the gurdwara and Sikh identity, e.g. the langar as an expression of sewa, which in turn expresses the concept of equality which is a major part of Sikh identity.

Features of weaker responses:

- did not answer the question set and ignored completely the link to Sikh identity. They simply wrote all they knew about the gurdwara. There was a lack of examples and evidence for the views presented.

(b) 'Sikhism cannot exist without the gurdwara.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 62.5 and mean of 18.8 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Features of stronger answers:

- answered the question directly and compared and contrasted whether the gurdwara is an essential institution for Sikhism.
- They were able to support the statement with arguments such as it is a place for acquiring spiritual knowledge and wisdom as well as being essential for a number of reasons for the Sikh community. They were also able to argue that many Sikh practices and festivals can be held without the gurdwara.

Features of weaker answers:

- were superficial and lacked evidence and examples to support the views given.
- they were descriptive in nature and the knowledge presented although mainly accurate was not used to present a coherent argument.
- they were also imbalanced in that they focused entirely on presenting arguments for the importance of the gurdwara.

Summary of key points

- Candidates should take care to read the questions carefully and notice the key foci of each one to ensure they answer the set question.
- Candidates should be clear as to the AO1 and AO2 questions.
- Candidates should justify their arguments, providing reasons or evidence to support their view; and to offer some evaluation of them.
- The views of scholars or schools of thought should be used appropriately.
- Candidates should use specialist technical vocabulary extensively and accurately.
- If relevant, candidates should make synoptic links with the Philosophy and Ethics components.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A LEVEL (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 2: A Study of the Philosophy of Religion

General Comments

Candidates are making considerable use of the available resources for this Component. This is enhancing understanding and answers. There is clear evidence of some excellent teaching, which is enthusing candidates to respond as they have done.

Development is apparent in many areas as the Specification moves on and candidates are more acquainted with the demands of the 'trigger' words. There is evidence of excellent evaluation with a number of lines of reasoning which reflects the paper's weighting.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 (a) Examine challenges to the objectivity and authenticity of religious experience. [AO1 20]

This question was narrowly the least popular within Section A, with an attempt rate of 48.8%. The facility factor of 48.2 and mean of 9.6 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Most candidates realised that religious experience can be challenged and were able to state what a religious experience may be considered to be.

Features of stronger responses:

- explained 'objectivity' and 'authenticity'. This helped candidates to focus their thoughts on responding to both parts of the question, which are linked.
- use was made of Caroline Franks-Davis' challenges and responses to it. These were explained rather well.
- had a wider scope rather than just referring to Franks-Davis produced a more comprehensive examination of the challenges.
- some included reference to the work of the Logical Positivists' challenge to the objectivity of religious experience.
- others made reference to Freud and this showed a useful and natural synoptic link.

Features of weaker responses:

- showed little awareness of the meanings of either 'objectivity' or 'authenticity'. This meant that the focus of the question was lost.
- were confined to perhaps two or three brief points particularly just stating 'how do we know the person is telling the truth?'

- (b) **‘Religious experience has more value for an individual than for a religious community.’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 48.7 and mean of 15.7 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Most responses grasped the idea of religious experience having value. Unfortunately, many confused the value an experience has for a community with a public experience, which altered the nature of the evaluation.

Features of stronger responses:

- answers looked at both religious experience in general and also at specific types of religious experience, such as visions and conversion.
- used the points in the Specification as a framework and subsequently had far more substance to their answers. They could write about the value of religious experience for an individual, such as renewing their faith and also the value to a religious community such as bringing increased cohesion.
- the more mature responses evaluated the comparative value to both an individual and to a religious community. Examples included referring to Muhammad’s religious experience which formed the basis of Islam.

Features of weaker responses:

- showed no awareness of the presence of frame working points on the Specification. These answers became disjointed and uninformative.
- most missed the point that a religious experience of an individual has often been the foundation upon which an entire religious tradition is built.

- Q.2 (a) Examine the term ‘miracle’ with reference to three scholars.** [AO1 20]

This question was narrowly the most popular within Section A, with an attempt rate of 50.5%. The facility factor of 56.8 and mean of 11.4 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Most responses were able to refer to what at least one scholar said, in part, about miracles.

Features of stronger responses:

- examined three scholars reasonably equally in length. Aquinas’ three types of miracle abounded but better answers need to draw out more in terms of further thoughts of Aquinas on miracles. This could include such things as ‘timeless God’ and ‘Primary and Secondary causes.’
- Hume was a popular inclusion; his definition of miracle was given as well as his refusal to accept the probability of miracles occurring.
- truly understood what Holland’s view is, saying that a coincidence can be taken religiously as a sign and called a miracle. Centres are encouraged to develop the specific details of Swinburne’s defence of miracles.

Features of weaker responses:

- were brief and/or inaccurate.
- many were confused about Holland's conclusions and were often restricted to re-telling his 'train track' story.
- Swinburne's views were severely restricted by not referring to his 'odd counter-instance.'
- his Principles of Testimony and Credulity were briefly referred to, but they lacked a context.

(b) 'All definitions of miracles are inadequate.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 54.4 and mean of 16.3 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Most responses gave a few definitions of miracles, though not necessarily different ones.

Features of stronger responses:

- referred to different definitions of a miracle, to show either their adequacy or inadequacy.
- they could contrast for example definitions of miracle that involve a break in the laws of nature and those that do not.
- Holland's contingency miracle would be an excellent starting point.

Features of weaker responses:

- often simply gave definitions of miracle as part (a) of the question.
- some made the question into one which was demanding an evaluation of whether miracles occur. The latter was widespread and affected marks substantially.

Section B

Q.3 (a) Examine the main criticisms of religion made by New Atheism. [AO1 20]

This question was the second most popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 30.1%. The facility factor of 51.7 and mean of 10.3 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Most knew that New Atheism included Dawkins, but considerable reference to other scholars was lacking.

Features of stronger responses:

- structured their answer to correspond to the points noted in the Specification. These included such things as religious belief having an 'infantile world-view' and 'impeding scientific progress.'
- developing lines of arguments based upon these categories is a relatively simple, yet effective way of teaching and learning all of the topics. This is because it gives a frame-work to candidates upon which they can structure their answer. It is a good revision tool.

- there was some mention of 'the four horsemen' most notably Dawkins. Centres could further develop the inclusion of specific reasons for rejecting religion given by other New Atheists.
- some good use was made of contemporary events to highlight the nature of the New Atheist challenge.

Features of weaker responses:

- referred to little more than the problem of evil and some comment was made about Dawkins. Whilst this is relevant use of AS material and is a reason given by New Atheists for rejecting religion, this question demands more than this. New Atheism presents a far wider challenge to religious belief.
- some paid no more than lip-service to the names of New Atheists.

(b) 'Religious responses have overcome the challenges from New Atheism.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 51.2 and mean of 15.3 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Most responses had an awareness of two religious responses.

Features of stronger responses:

- used some of the points noted in the Specification to provide a structure which is required for a good answer. Relevant responses discussed a rise in fundamentalist activity or a greater cohesion amongst religious groups as direct responses to the challenge from New Atheism.
- centres are encouraged to make further use of the work of apologists such as William Lane Craig; they could perhaps:
 - look at the work of 'Reasonable Faith.org.
 - provide an evaluation of the challenges of the New Atheist's challenges in themselves is also a mature way of approaching the question.
 - include religious responses that suggest the compatibility of religion and science rather than their opposition.
- referred to contemporary society in order to draw out challenges to religion as well as to responses to these challenges.

Features of weaker responses:

- repeated some of the challenges of New Atheism from Part (a) providing no evaluation of the effectiveness of the challenges.
- often, there was little by way of referring to religious responses to the challenges whatsoever.

Q.4 (a) Explain religious language as analogy, with reference to Aquinas and Ramsey. [AO1 20]

This question was the least popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 18.4%. The facility factor of 46.2 and mean of 9.2 for this question, suggest that it was a challenging question for some.

Most responses could explain 'analogy' in some form.

Features of stronger responses:

- understood that analogy is a non-cognitive concept, used to talk about God in a non-literal way. These responses were methodical, explaining both 'univocal' and 'equivocal' uses of language before showing where analogy 'fits into' this.
- an understanding of the 'causal link' between God and humans and the analogy of attribution and proportion were in evidence.
- Ramsey's 'models and qualifiers' were best explained when the specific analogous aspect of his contribution was understood. It is analogous as the model is that which we are familiar with and can bring about an understanding of that which we are unfamiliar with. This is done by way of the 'qualifier.' 'Disclosure' events were well explained.

Features of weaker responses:

- discussed Aquinas and/or Ramsey without really showing how using analogy in religious language can illuminate 'God-talk.'
- many could not say what 'models and qualifiers' had to do with analogy.

(b) 'Non-cognitive interpretations of religious language are meaningful.' [AO2 30].

The facility factor of 52.1 and mean of 15.6 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- could discuss whether the term non-cognitive is appropriate. They could have approached this question by way of analogy, symbol, myth or language games or a combination of any number of them.
- could then discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of these non-cognitive approaches in giving religious language meaning.
- a mature response could then compile a hierarchy of non-cognitive approaches in terms of their effectiveness in showing religious language to have meaning.

Features of weaker responses:

- showed little awareness of what this question is asking. This resulted in a confused and pithy answer.
- some only discussed the Logical Positivists gaining some steer from the word 'meaningful.'

Q.5 (a) Examine Irenaean type theodicies.

[AO1 20]

This question was the most popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 49.1%. The facility factor of 50.4 and mean of 10.1 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Most knew much of the material associated with Irenaean type theodicies.

Features of stronger responses:

- really knew the component parts of such theodicies and showed an understanding of its features too.
- referred to the contributions of John Hick, with key terminology such as 'eschatological justification' and 'the counterfactual hypothesis.'
- many were able to suggest how such theodicies may deal with different types of evil, such as moral, natural and animal suffering. This gave a clear focus to their essay showing that theodicies are indeed responses to the problem of evil.
- they suggested that such theodicies provide a response to the problem of evil due to the fact that the world was made imperfectly. This showed good awareness of the starting point of Irenaean type theodicies.
- they also made it clear that such theodicies retain the characteristics of the God of Classical Theism. That God has the power to create a perfect world, but chose not to is an important point to grasp.

Features of weaker responses:

- some confusion with Augustinian type theodicies. Also, these answers often completely missed the idea that for Irenaean type theodicies it is vital that humans have free will and that the blame ultimately rests upon them.
- the suggestion often given was that as God made the world imperfectly, then God was completely to blame for the existence of evil.
- the implications of salvation for all was omitted, that is that it justifies temporary suffering.

(b) 'No theodicy successfully defends the God of Classical Theism.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 58.6 and mean of 17.6 for this question, suggest that it was an accessible question.

Most candidates understood that at least Irenaean type theodicies could be used here.

Features of stronger responses:

- understood that the question is wider than Irenaean type theodicies and that Augustinian type theodicies could be used too.
- a description of the characteristics of the God of Classical Theism is most useful as this allows candidates to show whether either theodicy successfully defends those characteristics.

- the mature responses would methodically evaluate the attempts of both theodicies to defend the God of Classical Theism and conclude with whether one or the other (or both) succeed.

Features of weaker responses:

- restricted their answers to Irenaean type theodicies.
- AO1 information from Part (a) of the question was often repeated which was irrelevant.
- even 'simple' phrases such as 'I think this is successful because..' is a way into these evaluation questions for candidates of all abilities.
- these answers did not address whether a theodicy defends '*The God of Classical Theism*'.

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to be familiar with trigger words.
- Any material studied needs to be adapted to the question set.
- A balanced learning of the entire Specification will allow for a greater choice of questions.
- The use a variety of resources helps candidates to produce higher band responses.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A LEVEL (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 3: A Study of Religion and Ethics

General Comments

The paper produced a full range of marks and had a fairly even attempt percentage in Section A, with a slight preference for Q.2 There was a preference for Q.4 (Situation Ethics) in Section B. Most candidates balanced their time well in terms of giving more time to the Part (b) responses.

In Section B some aspects of the paper were challenging for some candidates e.g. Q.3 Finnis. This was because they seemed unsure about how to apply the theory to immigration and confused Finnis with Aquinas. Q.4(a) on Situation Ethics was generally well answered. Stronger candidates in Q.4(b) realised that the question was about 'practicality' for 'religious believers'. Q.5 on Arminius was the least popular question and proved challenging to those who could not distinguish between Arminius and Pelagius.

There were a significant number of scripts for which handwriting was a barrier to understanding and this made awarding challenging. Appropriate access arrangements should be made for such candidates.

Candidates should take care when using revision materials that they do not confuse a revision resource with information originating from the theory or a theorist, e.g. turning "agape" into an acronym to remember its features is helpful, but quoting it as what the term "agape" means is incorrect.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 (a) Explain how Robert Adams modified Divine Command Theory. [AO1 20]

This question was narrowly the least popular within Section A, with an attempt rate of 47.4%. The facility factor of 49.1 and mean of 9.8 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

However, many candidates were able to perceive the importance of showing what Divine Command Theory is and the challenges that it presents in order to demonstrate Adam's modification.

Features of stronger responses:

- included an ordered account of how Divine Command works, why the Euthyphro dilemma is a problem and what Adams did to solve it.
- were able to identify the arbitrariness problem as a specific issue that precipitated Adams' modification.
- could speak about goodness being grounded in God's nature.

Features of weaker responses:

- could state the Euthyphro dilemma, but not explain its contents or why it was a problem.
- were unable to distinguish between Adam's version and the original Divine Command Theory.
- were confused about Adams's views, claiming he argued that we don't have to obey all God's commands anymore or as having presented the Euthyphro dilemma as his modification.
- attributed Divine Command Theory to Aquinas or the Euthyphro dilemma to Aristotle.

(b) 'Morality is whatever God commands it to be.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 51.3 and mean of 15.4 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- produced an organised discussion that ranged through the Euthyphro dilemma, but was not limited to it,
- were able to relate their points back to whether morality was commanded by God or came from an alternative source.
- considered whether it was necessary to believe in the literal interpretation of scripture to hold this view.
- showed understanding that just because individuals have desires that are contrary to divine commands, does not mean that the divine commands are not objectively moral.
- considered the pluralism objection as a problem if God commands morality.
- were able to draw on other areas of knowledge in their evaluation such as the verification principle or other meta-ethical considerations.

Features of weaker responses:

- missed the point of the question and considered whether we should do what God commands.
- were side-tracked with discussions about free will and predestination.
- did not understand that regardless of whether humans have ethical systems that they construct, the question remains how do we know that they are moral or good?
- tended to list arguments for and against the question rather than engaging in analysis and evaluation.
- some re-wrote their AO1 Part (a) response without including further analysis and evaluation (AO2) of the statement.

Q.2 (a) Explain Virtue Theory with reference to Aristotle.

[AO1 20]

This question was narrowly the most popular within Section A, with an attempt rate of 52.0%. The facility factor of 52.0 and mean of 11.5 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Candidates were generally well versed in Aristotle's virtue theory, with some producing acceptable accounts of Jesus virtues in addition. There were a significant number of excellent accounts of Aristotle's virtue theory that were accurate and wide ranging, fully understanding the nature of this ethical theory.

Features of stronger responses:

- clearly focussed on Aristotle, even if and where they included ideas on Virtue Theory from elsewhere.
- appreciated the focus of this theory upon the character of the moral agent rather than the working out of moral actions e.g. hexis and the typical personal characteristics of the competent, etc.
- provided clear and accurate understanding and exemplification of the virtues and how they lead to a flourishing life for both the individual and society.
- discussed features of the mean in detail with examples of excess and deficiency as well as differentiating between intellectual and moral virtues.

Features of weaker responses:

- were unable to differentiate between Aristotle's Virtue Theory and Aquinas' Natural Law.
- believed that Aristotle was a contemporary of or influenced by Jesus or Christian teaching.
- struggled to appreciate this theory as community focused rather than ego centric.
- were unable to use technical vocabulary associated with virtue and often incorrectly applied technical terms such as deontological to it.

(b) 'Virtue Theory offers little guidance when making moral decisions.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 54.9 and mean of 16.5 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- challenged the meaningfulness or relevance of the question or considered whether it mattered.
- understood the nature of virtue theory as not in the business of offering specific guidance or rules
- could weigh against other ethical theories and how they guide ethical decision making.
- offered extensive scholarly support for their arguments from across the papers and critiqued these views in the light of the question.
- may have recognised that it could be a positive thing that Virtue Theory offers little guidance.

Features of weaker responses:

- mistaking Aristotle's Virtue Theory for a religious/deontological approach that has the God of classical theism as the ultimate goal.

- slipping into a general evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of Virtue Theory rather than a consideration of whether it offers guidance.
- tended to illustrate their points with worked examples that focused exclusively on courage, showing no understanding of how the virtues all work together holistically in a person to help them demonstrate virtuous behaviour.
- missed the idea that Virtue Theory is concerned with a virtuous society rather than exclusively individualistic.

Section B

Q.3 (a) Apply Finnis' Natural Law to the issue of immigration. [AO1 20]

This question was the second most popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 25.1%. The facility factor of 52.8 and mean of 10.6 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

In general, answers varied a great deal in approach to application of the basic goods to the issue of immigration. Some answers drew upon specific examples from the goods (sometimes in isolation) to justify their answer as a basic 'for' and 'against', whilst others differentiated between immigration and uncontrolled immigration in supporting or damaging the goods generally. The most sophisticated answers appreciated the holistic nature of the goods. Such answers reflected on the idea that some types of immigration were more likely to harm or enable participation in the basic goods as a whole, and for the common good of society.

Features of stronger responses:

- focused, not only on the basic goods, but also considered how to apply practical reason to ensuring the common good and the role of authority in the process.
- appreciated the holistic nature of Finnis' theory.
- recognised that there was a difference between controlled immigration and uncontrolled immigration and that there were a variety of reasons why people might wish or need to immigrate.
- recognised the need for an authority to organise the common good and construct immigration policies that uphold all the goods.
- could demonstrate how immigration may or may not enable participation in the goods.

Features of weaker responses:

- did not consider the complexity of the issue of immigration e.g. that accepting refugees is not the same as allowing uncontrolled immigration into an area.
- focused on one or two of the goods in isolation and presented a simplistic style 'for' and 'against' response.
- were unable to appreciate that Finnis' Natural Law is about the foundations behind the need for authority and thus the creation of laws regarding immigration policy.
- saw the nine requirements of practical reason as another set of laws rather than the way to adjudicate the reasoning process of how to ensure the basic goods were accessible.

- confused Aquinas with Finnis.
- did not understand that Finnis takes a deontological approach of jurisprudence whereby his system is the basis for laws that are upheld by a suitable authority. Therefore, there must be laws governing immigration under different circumstances which allow everyone to participate in the range of goods.

(b) 'Finnis' Natural Law is not an effective way to make moral decisions.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 48.5 and mean of 14.6 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- recognised that there were a range of suitable activities that could uphold the goods and that people could legitimately choose from a range of good options.
- understood the role of law within the theory as organising and upholding all the goods for everyone.
- were able to constructively explain why Proportionalism or another ethical theory might be more effective e.g. by allowing the choice between two evils.

Features of weaker responses:

- could not decide whether Finnis' theory was teleological or deontological and were unclear regarding the place of law within this theory.
- tended to argue that the goods were in conflict with each other but were unclear regarding how or why.
- became embroiled in lengthy examples regarding capital punishment or immigration with no clear point to be made.
- spent most of the answer evaluating the effectiveness of alternative theories to Finnis' Natural Law.

Q.4 (a) Examine why Fletcher used 'agape' as the basis for Situation Ethics.
[AO1 20]

This question was the most popular within Section B, with an attempt rate of 67.2%. The facility factor of 58.3 and mean of 11.7 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Most candidates understood the direction of the question, but not all understood which content that the question required.

Features of stronger responses:

- were able to focus on the 'why' aspect of the question.
- clearly identified the explicit rejection of legalism and antinomianism and explained agape as the 'middle way' between ethical extremes.
- appreciated the biblical context of agape.
- appreciated the movement of the New Testament away from the 613 mitzvot of Judaism and thus Fletcher's rejection of alternative rule-based systems such as Natural Law.

- drew on the story of the taxi driver and Fletcher's understanding of conscience to help develop the idea of why he chose agape as the basis for his ethical theory.
- drew on selected principles from Fletcher, such as justice or personalism, to illustrate why he chose agape.

Features of weaker responses:

- struggled to include Biblical evidence as a source of Fletcher's priority for agape.
- did not understand that the question wanted to know *why* agape was used and just described what agape is, working their way through the 10 principles and defining them.
- many were unclear regarding the role of conscience in Fletcher's theory and saw it as innate knowledge from God, rather than the process of deliberation.
- listed one of the 10 commandments as love for neighbours.

(b) 'Situation Ethics is a practical way for religious believers to make moral decisions.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

The facility factor of 48.5 and mean of 14.6 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Features of stronger responses:

- understood the meaning of the word 'practical' as usable in the real world and constructed their arguments accordingly.
- understood that part of the question referred to 'religious believers', so that their responses considered whether a Christian (or other believer) might be able to create moral, real-world solutions to ethical dilemmas.
- made use of the working principle of pragmatism and worked examples to demonstrate how practical (or not) Situation Ethics is.
- gave some consideration to who was referred to by the term 'religious believers'.
- made use of scholars like Barclay or Robinson to support their arguments regarding its practicality for religious believers.

Features of weaker responses:

- struggled to demonstrate that they understood what practical means.
- struggled to understand agape as non-emotional and an action rather than a feeling. Thus, many argued that agape causes feelings of love to cloud judgement.
- many did not identify pragmatism as a working principle and fundamental to what agape should be
- tried to make meta-ethical points with the use of emotivism and intuitionism that did not relate to how useable or functional the theory was, but related more to the definition of good
- some were too dependent upon a set structure which limited the scope and variety of points that they were able to demonstrate within their answer.

- challenged situation ethics in terms of allowing any act including rape, murder or even genocide, without an awareness of how these actions may lack the necessary agapeic qualities to make them morally acceptable.

Q.5 (a) Examine Arminius' concept of free will. [AO1 20]

This was the least popular question within Section B, with an attempt rate of 7.6%. The facility factor of 50.2 and mean of 10.0 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

However, the mean for this question was lowered as a result of the issue that many candidates who attempted this question were unclear about who Arminius was, and as a result only achieved lower band marks.

Features of stronger responses:

- there were some thoughtful responses that contrasted Calvin with Arminius throughout.
- some insightful references to 'middle knowledge' and Luis de Molina or 'Molinism' in justifying the dilemma of an omnipotent God and the existence of free will.
- referred to the Synod of Dort.
- used and defined accurate technical vocabulary throughout their response.
- understood the difference between Arminius and Pelagius or Libertarianism.

Features of weaker responses:

- often confused Arminius with Pelagius, Irenaeus or Augustine and so made errors regarding Arminius' teaching.
- many were unable to speak of the total depravity with which Arminius considers humans to be born with via original sin, yet the grace of free will that is bestowed upon us being prevenient grace.
- did not include significant detail in terms of the features of Arminius' doctrine.

(b) 'Arminius' concept of free will is totally unconvincing.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

The facility factor of 48.5 and mean of 14.6 for this question, suggest that it was a fairly accessible question.

Features of stronger answers:

- some chose to evaluate the word 'totally' in their response and consider whether it was slightly unconvincing rather than totally unconvincing.
- considered the problem of an omnibenevolent God that allows humanity to be born totally depraved.
- explored the qualities of the Theistic God (e.g. omnibenevolence, omnipotence, omniscience) and whether they could be maintained under Arminius' theology.

Features of weaker answers:

- those who had confused Arminius with Pelagius or Augustine in part (a) of the question tended to struggle with this response for the same reason.
- focused primarily or exclusively on secular responses to the freewill debate with little or no reference to the issues raised by Arminius.

Summary of key points

- Candidates should pay attention to the key words within the question and ensure that their writing is directed towards it.
- It is vital that candidates can distinguish between the approaches of different scholars.
- Use of writing frames is helpful for some candidates, but can be a straight-jacket for many, leading them away from the question or from more sophisticated analysis and evaluation.
- A good working knowledge of the specification will enable candidates to choose the most appropriate materials for analysis and for synoptic links where appropriate.



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