



GCE AS Examiners' Report

Religious Studies
AS Level
Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.edugas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner Eduqas

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Executive Summary

The historical decrease in entries for this qualification has continued this year. There has been a 7% decrease in the proportion of male candidates and also a decrease in entries from both Academy and FE centres. Overall performance this year was not as high as in 2024 but is in line with historical performance in years prior to this.

Positive aspects candidates' examination responses this year:

- In the vast majority of questions, across all Components, the mean scores in part (b) AO2 questions (which assess analysis and evaluation) were higher than for those achieved in AO1 (which assess knowledge and understanding) part (a) questions. This demonstrates that candidates understand in the main the requirements of these type of questions and have dealt well with this higher order skill overall.
- In Component 1a (Christianity) candidates demonstrated better use of accurate scriptural references.
- In Component 1b (Islam) candidates generally demonstrated strong subject knowledge and understanding, make good use of appropriate of specialist vocabulary. They were also able to confidently define key terms and reference scholars or schools of thought.

Issues for centres to consider:

- In all Components having a clear knowledge and understanding of key subject terminology is essential. For example in Component 2 – understanding the term 'theodicy' is essential in order to successfully address Q1. In Component 3 – understanding the term 'pragmatism' (what is practical) is one the keywords needed to help to address Q1a and Q2a (see Areas for Improvement 1: classroom resources).
- The fact that the mean scores for AO1 (which assess knowledge and understanding) part (a) questions were lower than the AO2 questions (which assess analysis and evaluation) suggests some candidates did not have a clear overview of a sub-theme from which they could select relevant information (see Areas for Improvement 2: classroom resources)
- A significant issue is that some candidates' attempt to address the questions they wish had been asked rather than the actual question set, leading to lower mean scores for part (a) AO1 responses. For example in Component 1a (Christianity) Q2a and Q5a, and Component 1b (Islam) Q1a, Q2a, and Q3a, rather than focusing on the specific requirements of the questions (see Areas for Improvement 3: classroom resources)
- Poor handwriting was noted as a barrier for some candidates, suggesting the need for appropriate access arrangements to be made by centres. Assessors cannot award for material they cannot read (see Areas for Improvement 4: classroom resources).

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Learning key terminology withing the specification	Guidance For Teaching Document	Useful resources and a key word glossary.
Identifying key command words and phrases within each question	Guidance For Teaching Document Exam Walkthroughs	Useful resources and a list of the question command words and their meanings Shows how to break down each question, plan and select relevant information to address the question.
Gain a clear knowledge and understanding of each subtheme within the specification	Knowledge Organisers	Useful summaries of each sub-theme on a page of A4.
Access arrangements for candidates with poor handwriting.	Special Requirements (edugas.co.uk)	Information on the support available and the procedures required.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
GCE Advanced Subsidiary
Summer 2024
COMPONENT 1A: AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

Overview of the Component

Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

Part (a) of each question tests candidates **AO1 skills** - knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Part (b) of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills** - analysis and evaluation, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q.1 Theme 2b: Religious concepts – The Trinity
- Q.2 Theme 2c: Religious concepts – The Atonement
- Q.3 Theme 3c: Religious life – Key moral principles
- Q.4 Theme 1c: The Bible as a source of wisdom and authority in daily life
- Q.5 Theme 4a: Religious identity through diversity in baptism

Context

- there were 20 more entries for this Option than in 2023.
- based on prior GCSE attainment, 10.7% of age 17 candidates were from the top three deciles. This is significantly below the level seen in 2023, where it was 26.4%.
- overall performance in this paper is slightly lower than that achieved in 2023
- due to the relatively small number of entries for this Option only limited comments can be made.

Positive feedback

- candidates are generally getting better at including accurate and relevant references to scripture
- candidates are also getting better at AO2 responses, with many sound arguments in their part 'b' responses. This is reflected in the fact that the means score for nearly all the part (b) AO2 questions (apart from Q4) in this paper were higher than the AO1 mean scores for part (a) questions.

Issues for centres to consider:

- fewer candidates than usual appeared to refer to key scholars specifically listed in the specification.
- some candidates wrote in more general terms and appeared to be answering a question they wish had been set rather than the one that was on the paper. For example:
 - focussing generally on atonement rather than the question set in Q2a.
 - writing at length about the features of baptism ceremonies rather than addressing the specific question for Q5a.

Dealing with the above concern would help to improve candidates' mean AO1 scores for part (a) questions.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 This was the least popular question in Section A with the lowest mean scores in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- made accurate and relevant reference to scripture
- addressing all three areas highlighted in the question – ‘origin of the Holy Spirit’, ‘doctrine of the Trinity’ and the ‘filioque controversy’.
- included reference to various Church councils.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- need to understand the meaning of ‘filioque’ and how it contributed to the Great Schism
- needed to give greater focus to the origin of the Holy Spirit in their responses.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- gave accurate information about the concept of the Trinity, upon which arguments were based
- provided a real focus on the idea in the question of ‘impossibility’, rather than whether it is just preferable.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- do not provide only simple explanations of the Trinity, with little or no analysis or evaluation
- provide a wider range of arguments when attempting to address the question.

Q.2 This was the most popular question in Section A and also achieved the highest mean scores in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- focussing on the specific demands of the question and selecting appropriate theories of Atonement to address the question set, e.g, the death of Jesus as a substitution.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- less generalised content on Atonement.
- more focus on the concept of divine forgiveness
- greater clarity on the substitution model.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- sophisticated and sustained lines of argument
- real interrogation of the incompatibility of the two elements within the question ‘impossible to understand the God of Christianity’ without ‘understanding the doctrine of the Trinity’.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- less repetition of the same material
- developing more insightful and developed lines of reasoning, rather than simply stating an argument.

Section B

Q.3 This was the least popular question in this Section with the second highest mean scores.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- scriptural references to regard for truth, e.g. Jesus declared to his disciples, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life, no-one comes to the father except through me’
- exploration of the concept of truth contained in the Bible rather than just biblical teaching about truth-telling.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- being able to explain the moral principle of ‘regard for truth’.
- support the information supplies with further biblical references
- provide greater clarity of explanation.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- good knowledge and understanding of the principle of ‘love of neighbour’ upon which they based some of their arguments
- a range of references to love rather than just referring to the Parable of the Good Samaritan
- a range of moral principles used in addition to ‘love of neighbour’.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- provide greater depth of analysis and evaluation – do not treat this question as an AO1 question
- develop arguments based on sound knowledge and understanding rather than superficial knowledge (e.g. arguing that the Ten Commandments are the basis of Christian faith).

Q.4 This question was the second most popular question in this section and the question with the lowest mean marks in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- referred to a wide range of moral advice, such as the Beatitudes, Jesus' two greatest commandments, the Ten Commandments, Psalms and Proverbs
- explained approaches to understanding biblical teaching, such as divine verbal inspiration and sola scriptura.
- provided a clear explanation of the authority of the Bible.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- greater clarity of explanation of the material related to the question, as opposed to mere description
- avoid lengthy retelling of biblical parables.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- clear, sustained arguments
- valid arguments about meaning and purpose in the Bible
- useful comparisons to address the 'only' part of the question well.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- greater development of the arguments for part 'b' rather than just 'listing' AO1 type points
- include alternative sources of authority to the Bible.

Q5. This question was the most popular question in this section, but candidates did not perform as well in this question as Q4.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- thorough knowledge and understanding of content, e.g. linking baptism to the Jewish covenant of circumcision
- accurate and relevant reference to key scholars.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- a greater recognition of the command word 'examine' and what this entails and less irrelevant content, e.g. description of what happens in a baptism ceremony
- greater use of scriptural references.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- focussed on the word 'symbolic' and its meaning
- made accurate and relevant reference to key scholars.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- require a better knowledge and understanding of the content upon which AO2 arguments are based
- need to focus on the specific question set.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
GCE Advanced Subsidiary
Summer 2024
COMPONENT 1B: AN INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

Overview of the Component

Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

Part (a) of each question tests candidates **AO1 skills** - knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Part (b) of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills** - analysis and evaluation, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q1 Theme 4a The role of the masjid (mosque) in Islam
- Q2 Theme 4c Ramadan and Id-ul-Fitr
- Q3 Theme 1b The significance on the development of Islam of both the Hijrah and the life and teachings of Muhammad in Madinah
- Q4 Theme Salah (prayer) and other forms of prayer
- Q5 Theme 3b Hajj (pilgrimage)

Context

- there was a slight decrease of 44 candidates in the entries for this Option
- based on prior GCSE attainment, 13% of age 17 candidates were from the top three deciles. This is an increase from 5.3% from 2023.
- performance of matched and all candidates was comparable to the outcomes seen in both 2023 and 2022.

Positive feedback

- many candidates had sound subject knowledge and understanding of the topics covered and were able to use appropriate, specific vocabulary in order to refer precisely to practices and beliefs.
- confident handling of AO2 discussions was seen in the best responses. Those who were able to grapple with key terms did well. Evidence of definitions and then discussion around them was one way in which candidates successfully deployed their evaluation; another was to briefly set out positions by a scholar or school on thought to add to a discussion. These do not necessarily need to be quoted, but a brief reference can help a candidate achieve the highest band, where used within a confident, coherent argument.

An issue for centres to consider:

- some candidates did not always focus their answers on the specific aspect of the topic required by the question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 This was the most popular question, with the highest mean scores in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated knowledge and understanding of several different features and were able to provide an explanation of their importance, especially within the context of the early community of Muslims in Madinah, e.g. meeting place, a place where Muhammad preached, etc.
- included the importance of public, congregational prayer after the example of Muhammad.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- the need to focus on several functions of the first masjid.
- include the most obvious or important function: providing a safe space for congregational prayer.
- explore a broader range of functions such as political, military, social and legal.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- realised the significance and nuance of the word 'retained' and set the response in terms of context and time period, e.g. that the functions of prayer services were retained, but the military and political functions have been largely lost although not completely, depending on the part of the world and context
- considered the needs of Muslim communities and their contexts, such as modern multicultural contexts, and how these affected the functions required of mosques

- considered mission (dawah) to provide guidance for life in multi-faith modern societies, in a different context yet with some similarity to responding to a new situation in Madinah
- referred to a broad range of functions, including prayer, guidance, social and political functions.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- consider both sides of the argument, which go beyond suggesting functions did not change because Islam did not change.
- consider changes in context or time, referring to the word 'retained'.
- develop short answers and consider several different functions.

Q.2 This was the least popular question and also slightly lower mean scores compared to Q1.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- referred to a range of traditions from ritual to social gatherings. This also included Id prayers, in some detail; clothing traditions; food and family meals; gifts; visiting grave for some
- brought out the significance of community engagement in various aspects of the festival, e.g. they mentioned shared meals and sharing food with those who were alone or in need, as well as traditions to support particular charitable campaigns at this time
- referred broadly to different traditions which not all Muslims might follow, reflecting the diversity that exists within Islam.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- refer to both religious traditions and social traditions
- demonstrate the community role in relation to traditions
- refer to the 'maintaining' aspect of the question.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- were able to define what is a 'religious' and what is a 'social' occasion.
- engaged with the word 'equally' and discussed whether the two aspects could be exactly or roughly equal.
- challenged the premise of the question that religion and social aspects could be divided and argued that this was an artificial separation for a holistic faith and worldview in which religious and social custom were one and part of the same thing
- considered the overlaps between the two and the implications for following Islam as a whole.
- questioned social occasions in modern times which might have little to do with Islam, although others argued that Islam includes such joyful occasions as an essential part of life's balance.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- need to address the 'religious' and 'social' aspect of the question.
- must fine-tune their arguments to specifically address 'equally'.
- refer to what Islam suggests 'should' be the purpose of the festival, rather than what Muslims do.

Section B

Q.3 This was the least popular question in this section with the lowest mean scores.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- confidently elaborated the context, including the infuriation of the pagans to the challenge posed to their ancestral beliefs
- linked the persecution to the question of the survival of the fledgling community of Muslims, such as the torture of Bilal and the banning of public prayers in Makkah, forcing Muslims to pray in secret and creating the scene for the move to Madinah
- considered how persecution meant the arrangements for the move were restricted, and the arrival in Madinah required more support
- portrayed how Islam itself was at risk due to the threat of the pagan Arabs in Makkah and it was important to safeguard the future of the mission by moving to a new context which was more welcoming in Madinah.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- linked the persecution to the Hijrah, rather than describing both as separate events.
- give more detailed context of the Hijrah and in what sense it was an escape.
- provide a wider context of the mission of Muhammad and Islam's struggle to survive and flourish.

Q.4 This was by far the most popular question in this section but did not achieve the highest mean scores.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- considered the influence of Jummah prayers in a variety of different ways, such as faith, education and social support
- focused the answer on the Ummah (Muslim community), such as the traditional separation of men and women in Jummah prayers and the creation of a strong faith identity separate from mainstream society
- explained each point made rather than just giving a description.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- need to focus on the influence of the Jummah prayers on the Ummah, not just describe them
- need to focus on the influence of the Jummah prayers for the community, not the individual.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- understood the qualifying words ‘in the lives of Muslims’ and addressed them recognised that the question could be addressed in terms of Islamic legal frameworks, but that it also allowed candidates to take account of the lives of Muslims. This allowed for a wider range of interpretations about what is important in terms of influence, education, personal devotion and so on according to different individuals.
- understood and used technical vocabulary well, considering the importance of the actions of performing each according to Islam
- considered several factors such as motivation, learning about faith, as well as satisfying Islamic law requirements.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- need to go beyond agreeing with one side or the other of the statement only, to form more balanced and nuanced arguments.
- need to address the specific aspect of the statement relating to ‘the lives of Muslims’, beyond a legalistic interpretation.
- need to go beyond the importance of just salah when drawing comparisons.

Q5. This was the second most popular question, with the highest mean scores in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- the purpose of Hajj (pilgrimage) was interpreted by candidates both as the Hajj overall within the faith and practice of Muslims, and different stages of Hajj and their inclusion in the pilgrimage as they had different purposes
- set Hajj within the context of Islamic practices and their importance for Islamic beliefs, to bring out purpose
- considered the purposes of stages of Hajj, showing a detailed examination of each part with regard to the purposes
some paid attention to detail and explained the purpose in visiting, for example, the passageway between the two mountains and gave the purpose as increasing understanding of the tradition regarding Hagar
- others delved into the purpose of renewing faith and increasing commitment to Islam by receiving the boost given by standing at Arafat and receiving forgiveness in order to make a fresh start
- considered a range of purposes including for religious reward as well as social and individual reasons.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- explain the purposes behind any Hajj rituals described.
- add a broader range of purposes to Hajj, e.g. fulfilling and completing the Five Pillars.

(b) What worked well –characteristics of successful responses:

- considered different ways in which the Hajj might be important in different contexts.
- made comparisons for importance in terms of the way it strengthened each, in the context of the Islamic faith.
- provided a clear, evaluative conclusion, weighing up both and making an overall judgement.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- develop evaluative comparisons rather than treating individual and community separately.
- produce a balanced, nuanced or fine-tuned argument rather than a simple agree/disagree – yes/no framework.
- provide a clear conclusion which is consistent and linked to the preceding paragraphs.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
GCE Advanced Subsidiary
Summer 2024
COMPONENT 1C: AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

Overview of the Component

Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

Part (a) of each question tests candidates **AO1 skills** - knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Part (b) of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills** - analysis and evaluation, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

- Q1 Theme 3a The Four Noble Truths
- Q2 Theme 3b The Eightfold Path – key moral principles
- Q3 Theme 2a The nature of ultimate reality: the three lakshanas: dukkha, anicca, and anatta
- Q4 Theme 4b Meditation
- Q5 Theme 1b The Awakening/Enlightenment of the Buddha

Context

- there were 12 more candidates than in 2023 for this Option.
- based on prior GCSE attainment, 15.5% of age 17 candidates were from the top three deciles. This is a slight increase from 11.1% in 2023.
- performance in this Option overall has decreased compared with 2023 but increased when compared to 2022.
- there are only a relatively small number of entries for this option and so only limited comments can be made.

Positive Feedback

- candidates on average (apart from Q2b) achieved higher mean scores in their part 'b' than their part (a) responses.

Issues to consider for centres

- some candidates did not always focus their answers on the specific aspect of the topic required by the question. For example, Q1a, Q2a and Q3a were all very specific in what they required candidates to refer to in their response. They need to select the relevant information from what they have learnt and apply it to the specific requirements of the question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 This was both the most popular question in this section and the question with the highest mean scores in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- made clear links to both sections of the question entwining them in their explanations. They were able to express each type of dukkha (dukkha-dukkha, Viparinama-dukkha and sankhara-dukkha) and show how this is expressed in the Four Noble Truths.
- were able to express how the concept of dukkha cannot be reduced to simply the word suffering.
- explained each type successfully using examples, e.g. through the medical metaphor to good effect.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- need to be able to explain the three types successfully
- should focus on the Four Noble Truths with clear reference to dukkha

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- made excellent use of sources of wisdom as evidence for the points made.
- focussed on the Four Noble Truths as a basis of Buddhism and referred to the idea of them being the first teachings.
- were able to engage with the use of 'all' in the question and exploring the limits of the Four Noble Truths, e.g. claimed that they are only relevant to Theravada Buddhists and specifically monastic Buddhists. Understood the varying views within the diversity of Buddhism. e.g. Theravada, Mahayana, Tibetan use and perceived significance of the Four Noble Truths.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- need to ensure that they remain focussed on the key elements of the question, bringing these into the analysis and evaluations made. For example, as 'essential Buddhist teachings', rather than just referring to the strengths and weaknesses of the Four Noble Truths.
- must ensure their response is AO2 based and focused on analysis and evaluation of the Four Noble Truths rather than an AO1 description or explanation of them.

Q.2 This was both the least popular question in this section and the question with the lowest mean scores in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- explained the Path by exploring how this was used by a variety of Buddhists. Diversity was demonstrated by referring to its' use by Theravada to Mahayana Buddhism, and from monastic to lay Buddhists
- were able to express the three goals: prajna, sila and dhyana
- demonstrated how the Path is used, e.g., monastic and meditation practices.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- define what 'diversity' means
- demonstrate an understanding of what types of diversity exist in Buddhism with reference to the Eightfold Path
- selected relevant information from what has been learnt, do not simply write about the Eightfold Path.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- the most successful responses were those that identified the three elements of the Path and explored the merits of each in their own right and comparatively in terms of their effectiveness in the pursuit of awakening
- could identify that Buddhism considers each element of the Eightfold Path to be without hierarchy and the need to use all elements
- made links to specific elements of the Path such as meditation as a way promoting better behaviour through loving kindness.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- do not focus solely on behaviour (sila) as means to achieve awakening
- do not limit arguments by failing to identify the link to the Path and other Buddhist practices (e.g. meditation) and teachings.

Section B

Q.3 This was the second most popular question in this section and the question with the lowest mean marks in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- explored both elements of the question and successfully referenced both dukkha and annica with reference to the Dhammacakkapavattana.
- identified the lack of the word anicca in the text and could explain how it can still be identified as a concept, using examples such as the observations of sickness, old and death.
- used scripture to fully explain each of these two concepts.
- engaged with the difficulties of translating and explaining dukkha and referred to scholars such as Harvey.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- need to expand on the basic point made that the two elements could be found in this text
- need to fulfil all elements of the question, not just refer to anicca, dukkha or the Dhammacakkapavattana in isolation.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- engaged with the various aspects of the three lakshanas and analysed each area as an individual concept and collectively
- compared the lakshanas to other important teachings found in Buddhism
- made use of scripture such as the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, and scholars such as Harvey to enhance their lines of reasoning
- some were able to argue against there being a 'most important teaching' as this does not align with Buddhism.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- must gain a secure knowledge and understanding of the three lakshanas (and not just dukkha and anicca) so they can answer this type of question and not attempt to focus the answer almost exclusively away from the lakshanas.

Q4. This was the least favourite question in this section with the second highest mean scores in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- were able to place meditation generally as part of the Eightfold Path and not the singular way to achieve awakening, showing an understanding of its role in the bigger picture of the path to awakening
- made links to awakening using specific areas of vipassana meditation such as the development of an awareness of the whole body and thought patterns
- could identify that this is a difficult form of meditation to master and was part of a journey from simpler Samatha meditation that could take years to master.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- need a secure understanding of vipassana meditation
- must focus on how vipassana meditation helps to cultivate qualities than lead to awakening, instead of just focussing on it as a form of meditation.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- argued that the importance of the use of meditation in the Buddha's Awakening
- analysed and evaluated whether meditation was important for every Buddhists or just some Buddhists. For example, monastic use of meditation compared to lay use
- could identify schools of thought which emphasise the strong need for meditation.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- analyse and evaluate the importance of meditation for 'all' Buddhist using AO2 skills, rather than simply explaining the importance of meditation which is an AO1 skill.
- focus on the word 'all' in the question instead of answering a different question about how important meditation is in general.

Q.5 This was the most popular question in this section and also achieved the highest mean scores in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- showed accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of the Awakening with reference to specific elements discussed in the religious account. This ranged from starting the account from the prophecy given to his mother before birth, to the point at which he sat under the Bodhi tree.
- could identify the encounter with Mara and give specific examples.
- were able to express the moment of realisation of the Buddha's Awakening and the three insights.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- focus on the specific demands of the question and not on the whole life of the Buddha, with very little depth
- need to refer to the immediate stages before the Buddha's Awakening and the interactions with Mara
- need to address the Buddha's Awakening instead of just ending the explanation with his choice to sit beneath the Bodhi tree.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated the ability to compare and analyse the various aspects of the life of the Buddha to the Awakening specifically and then analyse and evaluate the impact each had on other Buddhist teachings and people. For example, the hagiographical nature of the Awakening compared to the empirical benefits of following the Path for monastics today.
- used scriptures such as the Buddhacharita and the Jakarta tales, as well as scholars such as Cush as evidence.
- explored the diversity of potential opinion on the significance of the awakening for different schools of thought.
- used the thread of the significance of the Awakening throughout their response as the basis of their critical analysis and evaluation.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- focus on the Awakening being the most significant aspect of the Buddhism or not, not the general story of the Buddha's life
- do not focus on comparing the Awakening account to various (or few) other aspects of Buddhism with little or no attempt to analyse or critically evaluate why they are more significant.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
GCE Advanced Subsidiary
Summer 2024

COMPONENT 2: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Overview of the Component

Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

Part (a) of each question tests candidates **AO1 skills** - knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Part (b) of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills** - analysis and evaluation, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q1 Theme 3B: Religious responses to the problem of evil (i)
- Q2 Theme 3A: The problem of evil
- Q3 Theme 4A: The nature of religious experience
- Q4 Theme 1B: Inductive arguments – teleological
- Q5 Theme 2A: Deductive arguments - origins of the ontological argument and
Theme 2B: Deductive arguments - developments of the ontological argument

Context

- entries have fallen for this qualification from 2022 to 2024
- the average mark for matched candidates has decreased slightly compared with the base year of 2023. However, outcomes are higher than were seen in 2022.

Positive feedback

- many candidates demonstrated strong AO1 knowledge and understanding skills , and part (a) responses (apart from Q3) were generally more successful than part (b).

An issue for centres to consider:

- some candidates tended to write about what they wanted to discuss rather than the specific demands of the question, this was particularly evident in questions Q1b, Q4a, and Q5a and Q5b.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 This was the least popular question in this section, with the highest mean scores in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- accurate and detailed presentation of key Augustinian elements such as; creation as 'good', evil as a privation of good or 'privatio boni', free will, the Fall (of angels and mankind), corruption of nature, original sin, referred to atonement and the 'felix culpa' to illustrate God's loving nature, etc.
- showed how Augustinian type theodicies could address the problems of natural and moral evil
- outlined the above with a focus on how Augustinian type theodicies justify God's omnibenevolent and omnipotent nature
- included biblical quotes and/or examples (often St Augustine's own) to illustrate and highlight key features of Augustinian type theodicies.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- focus on the specific demands of the question - some responses confused either elements of or in the entirety, Augustinian type theodicies for Irenaean type theodicies
- avoid wasting time explaining the problem of evil rather than focusing on Augustinian type theodicies
- candidates should not limit the scope of their responses and not just focus only on one Augustinian element e.g., the Fall, failing to address the breadth and wider scope of Augustinian type theodicies.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- focused on the 21st Century context of the question, for example with reference to scientific discoveries, secularism, climate change and global atrocities such as genocide
- were able to cite strengths and successes of Augustinian type theodicies in the 21st Century as well as weaknesses, such as the basis in scripture and relevance of baptism and atonement for modern day Christians
- weighed up strengths and weaknesses rather than just describing them, resulting in more successful evaluation.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- focus on the specific demands of the question - lower band responses often did not address the 21st Century context of the question, many candidates within the mid-range bands were able to accurately explain general strengths and weaknesses of Augustinian type theodicies but did not always elaborate sufficiently on their points
- don't waste time on unnecessary explanations of features of Augustinian type theodicies in terms of AO1 information (often a repeat of part (a). This does not demonstrate the AO2 skills of analysis and evaluation

- avoid confining answers solely to outlining the general failures of the theodicy. To truly evaluate, these need to be weighed up and backed up by clear reasoning
- reduce unnecessary description of the problem of evil which often came at the expense of answering the question.

Q.2 This was the most popular question in this section, with the lowest mean scores in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- explained the problem of evil with reference to specific examples such as natural and moral evil, and different arguments such as the logical and evidential problems of evil
- excellent explanation of Epicurus' trilemma and Mackie's inconsistent triad, and the implications of potential solutions
- some responses also referred to the paradox of omnipotence and issues of free will
- some candidates showed excellent insight into the arguments of Rowe and Paul. For example, acknowledging that Rowe could see that some suffering may have a purpose behind it, if it lead to a greater good. For Paul, recognising the issue of the lack of free will in premature deaths
- developed points to show how the various types of evil and suffering pose a challenge to the qualities of the God of classical theism.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- address the main focus of the question - a minority of responses explained Augustinian and Irenaean type theodicies instead of addressing the problem of evil
- avoid limiting the scope of answers unnecessarily, some candidates only referred to one aspect of the problem of evil, often the logical problem or sometimes just Mackie's inconsistent triad
- some mid-range responses limited the scope of their response, for example, by only referring to one aspect or type of problem of evil
- show more accuracy when referring to scholarly arguments. For example, when discussing Mackie's inconsistent triad some candidates erroneously put 'omniscience' rather than 'evil exists'. With regards to evidential arguments, the unnecessary and pointless suffering that Rowe raises in reference to examples of innocent, animal and immense suffering was often missing. For Paul, the issue of the lack of free will in premature deaths was often not evident
- develop points further. Lower band responses often showed little or no awareness of issues that the different types and problems of evil and suffering raised with regard to the qualities of the God classical theism.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- did not describe Irenaean type theodicies or the problem of evil in their answer but referred to specific relevant elements to justify their reasoning, analysis or evaluation
- when referring to other theodicies or arguments, carefully selected pertinent elements, for example, arguments of Rowe and Paul as a means to undermine the defence of God's omnibenevolence or omnipotence, or aspects of Augustinian type theodicies as a means to argue there are more or less successful defences
- considered the value of developments of Irenaean type theodicies such as the arguments of John Hick or the Free Will Defence in relation to the question.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- include more accurate content for the specific question - less successful responses often confused Irenaean and Augustinian type theodicies
- rather than just cite general strengths and weaknesses of Irenaean type theodicies, use selected points to show awareness of how these related to or defended the qualities of the God of classical theism.
- don't waste time describing or explaining the problem of evil or Augustinian type theodicies in terms of AO1 information but use key elements of this information as a means to analyse and evaluate the success of the theodicy as a defence of the God of classical theism.

Section B

Q3. This was the second most popular question in this section, but with the lowest mean marks in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- contextualised visions and conversions as forms of religious experience and provided an introduction to the nature of such experiences, for example with reference to the works of Augustine, James or Otto
- did not cite everything they knew about religious experiences but selected pertinent material and made effective use of examples to illustrate chosen points. For example, the descriptions St Teresa provided of her visions to illustrate the nature of imaginative or non-corporeal visions or the characteristic of visions as noetic
- considered the requirements or impact of such experiences, for example the role of prayer or the 'fruits' of such experiences in terms of impact.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- show more insight into different types of visions and conversions
- lower band responses simply defined these types of religious experience and narrated examples of visions and conversations. Pertinent development would be, for example, to show awareness of sudden, gradual, passive and active conversions
- make better use of examples by using them to exemplify scholarly thought.
- consider the impact of visions and conversions on individuals and communities.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- offered a well-balanced view of the arguments both for and against the validity of religious experiences
- made effective use of a range of scholars and different arguments to support their evaluation, such as Franks-Davis, Freud and Persinger. Occasionally, reference was made to Swinburne's principles of testimony and credulity, to good effect
- developed points raised regarding the validity of visions to link to the issue of communicating religious teachings and beliefs
- drew on a range of examples from different religious and sacred texts to exemplify and illustrate points
- referred to other types of religious experience and compared their validity as a means of communicating religious teachings and belief with visions, to determine whether visions were the least valid or not. Pertinent types included conversion, prayer and mystical experiences.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- develop or link points raised regarding the validity of visions to the context specified by the question - in 'communicating religious teachings and belief'. Mid and lower range band responses often focused only on the validity or authenticity of visions and did not address the full scope of the question
- weigh up points for and against the statement to develop evaluation, some responses just repeated criticisms and challenges to visions or religious experience more generally without explaining or showing awareness as to how these strengthen or undermine validity, or link to the issue of communication
- include a wider range of points, lower band responses often described a couple of examples of visions in terms of AO1 style information and simply stated this supported or challenged the statement, without showing or explaining why in any meaningful depth
- consider the unknowable nature of God, or the idea that other types of religious experience could be considered to have more validity as a means to communicate religious teachings and belief.

Q4. This was the least popular question in this section, but with the second highest mean marks in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- accurately addressed Aquinas' argument of things lacking cognition being directed towards their telos through the archer and arrow analogy, relating this to God and the universe
- developed Aquinas' argument with reference to design qua regularity, providing examples from the natural world
- clearly outlined and illustrated Tennant's anthropic argument, making good use of various examples to illustrate, such as the Goldilocks zone of planet Earth and the thickness of the ozone layer.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- outline both Aquinas' Fifth Way and Tennant's anthropic argument as only Aquinas' argument was referred to by some candidates
- don't refer to Tennant's Aesthetic argument which is not what the question required
- provide accurate information, some candidates confused Aquinas' Fifth Way with his cosmological arguments or wrote about Paley's watchmaker analogy
- exemplify key features with examples and relate these to God and the universe.

(b) What worked well –characteristics of successful responses:

- use a range of challenges and responses to good effect, reflecting the scope that the question invites. For example, challenges arising from inductive reasoning, a posteriori nature, the problem of evil, science etc.
- made good use of modern teleological arguments and scholars to illustrate how certain challenges can or cannot be overcome and are therefore effective or not effective.
- considered the effectiveness of challenges to the level of proof and probability that teleological arguments offer and the impact of this for different audiences such as theists and atheists.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- use selected aspects of arguments or challenges to explain or show how challenges are effective or ineffective, or that arguments can respond successfully, rather than wasting time just describing challenges or arguments in terms of AO1 information.
- show more accuracy when referring to challenges and teleological arguments - some candidates referred to cosmological arguments, challenges to deductive a priori arguments, or were sidetracked by responses to the problem of evil, without linking back to the question.
- consider the scope of the question and select pertinent content to support evaluation and conclusions made.

Q.5 This was the most popular question in this section, with the highest mean marks in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- selected pertinent information for the nature of the question, with awareness that the trigger word was 'outline.' These responses often outlined key features of ontological arguments generally, before relating this to the specific contexts of Anselm and Descartes and referred to Anselm's Proslogion 3 and Descartes' approach to his ontological argument.
- successfully outlined Anselm's Proslogion 2 argument that it is greater to exist in reality than just in the mind, before moving on to outline Descartes' argument for God as a supremely perfect being with reference to the example of triangles
- contextualised the arguments of Anselm and Descartes and their differences, within their wider body of work and timeframe. For example, with reference to faith seeking understanding and the fool from Psalm 14:1 for Anselm, and methodological scepticism and the Trademark argument for Descartes.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- focus on what the question is asking. Some responses wasted time referring to Malcolm's ontological argument or Kant's challenges which were not relevant. Other also referred to cosmological arguments or wasted time describing the history of ontological arguments and their challenges without focusing on the scholars specified.
- demonstrate understanding by outlining features correctly, many weaker band responses were confused and inaccurate in how they outlined Anselm and Descartes' arguments. For example, referring to Aquinas' third way rather than Anselm's Proslogion 3.
- use examples (such as triangles, mountains and valleys, the painting analogy etc) and philosophical concepts (such as a priori and deductive) to develop points and add to the understanding demonstrated.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- provided a comparative evaluation, contrasting the two types of arguments throughout
- drew on a wide range of selected points to show scope in their consideration of the various merits and weaknesses of each argument
- more successful evaluation went beyond general strengths and weaknesses, drawing on the persuasiveness of the philosophical approaches of arguments and the arguments' response to various challenges. For example, reference was often made to strengths or weaknesses resulting from a priori or a posteriori and inductive or deductive natures.
- challenges to teleological arguments such as those from Hume and the problem of evil often featured.
- weaknesses of ontological arguments such as those raised by Gaunilo and Kant were also often considered

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- need a secure knowledge of the teleological and cosmological arguments, so they can make the link between weaknesses for one argument and the impact of this on the success of the other.
- comparative evaluations were more able to demonstrate higher band response descriptors that stand alone evaluations where arguments were tackled separately, one at a time
- consider the scope of the question and avoid limiting the response to one or two specific points. For example, some responses limited their scope by focusing on the problem of evil as a challenge to design arguments but did not then link this to any impact on the persuasiveness of ontological arguments
- focus on the stated arguments and variations thereof - some responses contrasted to ontological arguments with cosmological arguments, which was not the question.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES
GCE Advanced Subsidiary
Summer 2024

COMPONENT 3: AN INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION AND ETHICS

Overview of the Component

Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

Part (a) of each question tests candidates **AO1 skills** - knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Part (b) of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills** - analysis and evaluation, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q1 Theme 3C: Fletcher's Situation Ethics: application of the theory
- homosexual relationships
- Q2 Theme 3C: Fletcher's Situation Ethics: application of the theory
- polyamorous relationships
- Q3 Theme 4B: Mill's development of Utilitarianism.
- Q4 Theme 1A: Divine Command Theory
- Q5 Theme 2A: St Thomas Aquinas' Natural Law:
- laws and precepts as the basis of morality

Context

- entries have fallen for this pathway from 2022 to 2024.
- the average mark for matched candidates has decreased very slightly compared with the 2023. A similar trend is observed in the outcomes for all candidates on this component. This could in part, be linked with some candidates finding it difficult to apply ethical theories in Section A. This is something we will address in our [Professional Learning events](#) in the next academic year.

Positive Feedback

- On average (apart from Q1) candidates performed better in their part (b) AO2 responses than they did in part (a) AO1 responses.

Issues for centre to consider:

- some candidates would achieve greater success in their part (a) AO1 responses if they focussed on the key terms and command word given in the question, rather than writing all they know about a specific topic. The strongest responses were the ones most able to focus on the key words in the question, such as 'deontological / teleological', 'absolutism', etc.
- there are an increasing numbers of scripts for which handwriting was a barrier to awarding. Appropriate access arrangements should be in place for such candidates.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q1. This was the least popular question in this section, with the lowest mean scores for this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- candidates were clear about the meaning of the word 'agape' and were able to correctly define it.
- were able to take examples of Fletcher's fundamental and working principles, define them and show exactly how these principles could be used to decide about same sex relationships.
- many were able to show that because Situation Ethics is a relativistic theory, the response depends upon the situation and that it is not possible to come to an overall ruling about the morality of same sex relationships.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- many candidates simply said that homosexual relationships brought about love and so were acceptable, without further development.
- some responses did not give any exemplification of Fletcher's principles to show how they might assist in making decisions about same sex relationships.
- some responses chose to simply list all of Fletcher's ten principles rather than applying them to the moral issue.
- others wrote all they knew about Situation Ethics and then left a little time at the end to give an example of application, or they integrated the application of the theory as they explained. The integrated approach was more sophisticated and often led to the awarding of higher bands
- some candidates need to get a clear understanding of Situation Ethics – they conflated agape and happiness or understood the Christian basis of Situation Ethics as a sign that Fletcher forbade same sex relationships.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- there were some good responses that considered whether any virtues, acts or even beings (such as God) could be considered intrinsically good and in what way these might relate to agape
- other ethical theories were effectively used, such as Ethical Egoism, to argue that nothing is intrinsically good at all, or used Utilitarianism to say that happiness is the only intrinsic good.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- gain a clear understanding of the term 'intrinsic'.
- support any claims made by using examples or clear reasoning
- clearly distinguish between 'agape' love and any other kind of love, such as love for friends, family or sexual partners.
- don't waste valuable time writing general, descriptive introductions or repeating information from their AO1 response which is not necessary in an AO2 response.

Q2. This was the most popular question in this section, with the highest mean scores for this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- were able to briefly specify what a polyamorous relationship is and even suggest some of the features of such a relationship which mean that it is a subject for moral debate
- made use of quotes from scripture or religious authorities to demonstrate the traditional, legalistic response to sexual relationships that Fletcher rejected
- either made explicit and implicit use of the working and fundamental principles of Situation Ethics that demonstrated how to treat polyamorous relationships or were able to demonstrate how to best demonstrate 'agape' in such relationships.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- demonstrate a clear understanding of relevant terms such as polyamorous, pragmatism, consequentialist and altruism. For example, some candidates confused polyamory and polygamy, often believing that polyamory is illegal in the UK or that the Bible expressly commented on polyamorous relationships, when they meant polygamous.
- need to be able to demonstrate that Fletcher felt that sexual relationships usually had nothing to do with law – the most practical way to be loving is to allow freedom to choose how people want to lead fulfilling lives provided it is consensual, private and between adults.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- scholarly arguments that were supported by quotes or reasoning from authorities and philosophers.
- arguments were supported with evidence from the principles themselves. For example, pragmatism is a central feature of Situation Ethics and was sometimes identified as evidence that Situation Ethics was practical.
- demonstrated a logical flow in their response so that there was a sense that any argument presented was analysed and evaluated thoroughly to see if it held up to scrutiny.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- demonstrate a clear understanding of the term 'practical'
- when trying to justify immoral acts such as 'murder' using Situation Ethics it needs to be supported with reasoning or exemplification, in order to justify when or how it could ever be 'agapeic'.
- be able to differentiate between Situation Ethics and antinomianism and then to highlight this as an example of a 'practical' problem when attempting to use Situation Ethics.
- ensure that any arguments given have been clearly linked to the question set – e.g. some stated that as we live in a secular society non-religious people would not want to follow this theory. However, they did not supply any reasoning or justification for this argument.

Section B

Q.3 This was the least popular question in this section, with the second highest mean scores for this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- dealt with both the teleological and deontological aspects of the theory throughout their response
- exemplified the difference between higher and lower pleasures as a teleological element of the theory and to refer to the harm principle as an example of a deontological feature.
- understood the difference between Bentham and Mill's approach and only used Bentham to demonstrate how Mill's development introduced more deontological elements. They did this without unnecessary, lengthy explanations of Bentham.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- demonstrate a clear understanding of the terms deontological and teleological
- don't just provide a detailed explanation of Mill's higher and lower pleasures in isolation
- show how Strong or Weak Rule Utilitarianism has a connection with what they had been describing about Mill's Utilitarianism and not treat it as a separate and unconnected issue.

(b) What worked well –characteristics of successful responses:

- recognised that this question did not limit answers to only talking about Mill.
- weighed up the definition of ‘moral behaviour’ as being different for Bentham and Mill than for, say, Aquinas or Fletcher. This meant that they were able to conclude that the answer depended upon how you defined ‘moral’.
- conclusions often showed that the answer depends upon which version of Utilitarianism is being considered – Act or Rule.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- focus on the question and whether Utilitarianism promotes moral behaviour, not on whether it is a likeable theory or not.
- make their lines of argument clear
- do not just provide a list of good and bad features about Utilitarianism rather than engaging fully with the question set.
- fully engage with the question set – don’t just provide a list of good and bad features about Utilitarianism
- exemplify the points raised with examples of dilemmas, and how moral or immoral behaviour might occur.

Q.4 This question was both the most popular question in this section and the question with the highest mean scores in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- began with a succinct and accurate introduction of what Divine Command Theory is, thus setting a solid foundation.
- gave some good examples of pluralism from across different faiths and different denominations.
- dealt with the arbitrariness problem by clearly pointing out that there may be no basis for a command other than whim and emphasised the lack of reason or basis for God’s decision beyond his power to do so.
- excelled in discussing the various interpretations of different laws from within a religion as well as between different faiths to highlight the point that it is difficult to know which command is correct when there is conflict.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- need to be clear about the relationship between the arbitrariness problem and the Euthyphro dilemma, so that they don’t spend time outlining the Euthyphro dilemma and then repeated themselves by covering the arbitrariness problem separately.
- within the arbitrariness problem, to refer to the issues caused by God commanding cruelty rather than evil. This is because under Divine Command Theory, if God says something is good then it is good not evil.
- refer to a range of challenges to Divine Command Theory (there are 3 listed in the specification) rather than just the arbitrariness problem.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- avoided restricting themselves to the two issues raised in part (a).
- made use of Adams and Bagginis to evaluate the success of the arbitrariness problem.
- attempted to compare and contrast other ethical theories in an evaluative style to see if their approach was better.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- focus on analysing and evaluating the theory, rather than just reproducing AO1 type material.
- provide a clear understanding of why the God of classical theism cause issues with regards to God as being both the origin and regulator of morality.
- clearly reasoning how or why this or any other theory may be out of date.
- providing reasoning and/or evidence to support the lines of argument provided.

Q.5 This was the second most popular question in this section, with the lowest means scores in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- read the whole question, beyond the phrase 'Aquinas Natural Law' and knew what 'moral absolutism' meant and were able to develop an answer focused on the question set.
- The best responses drew out the first three of the four levels of law, the different types of precepts, goods and acts.
- were able to express what it was about a specific feature of Natural Law that was absolutist, picking out elements of the theory that they felt best demonstrated this.
- were able to use examples to illustrate the points made.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- avoid writing about Aquinas' Natural Law without mentioning absolutism once or without isolating features that were absolutist.
- use examples to illustrate the relevant points being made
- avoid referring to features of Natural Law that are perceived to be 'relative' as well.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- concentrated on whether a moral agent needed to believe in God to be able to use Natural Law to guide their behaviour.
- understood the significance of the word 'meaningless' in the statement
- used a range of examples used to show how non-believers – atheists or humanists might still hold the same ethical values as believers – e.g. that killing is generally wrong, thus allowing Natural law to be meaningful.
- were aware that there were a range of possible views on this question and explored these.

The main areas of improvement for less successful responses:

- should be able to identify the areas of common morality between believers and non-believers and give examples to support such an idea.
- try to explore the goal of morality and consider where aims between believers and non-believers might differ.
- discuss the use or role of reason in Natural Law – that some non-believers did not need to use *recta ratio* or were not motivated to use it, whilst other non-believers might state our ability to reason makes us different from animals.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

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