



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

RELIGIOUS STUDIES AS

SUMMER 2018

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GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Summer 2018

COMPONENT 1: OPTION A - AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

General points

Once again this unit was a very popular choice by centres this year. On the whole the paper was answered well and was accessible to the majority of candidates who were entered for the examination. The paper allowed for clear differentiation of responses. At the top end there were a number of candidates that achieved full marks and at the lower end some candidates whose knowledge base was limited and who offered very little in the way of reasoned argument. There were also a significant number of high/mid-range answers. The rubric of the paper was observed by all, selecting one full question from Section A and another full question from Section B. There appeared to be no candidates who did not follow this by mixing up questions.

The question paper had two sections. In the first section the most popular answer by far was question 1 on baptism and there were very few answers on question 2 Easter celebrations in the Eastern Orthodox church. All option questions gained responses from candidates, with questions (3) and (4) being popular option choices amongst candidates

The standard of answers displayed the full range and as with the previous series what was noticeable was the sustained quality of section (b) [AO2] evaluation answers that has been improved upon from the Legacy. It is evident that centres are well aware of the essential need to focus on thorough preparation in developing critical analysis skills for this Specification to reflect the weighting of AO2. On the whole candidates showed a good understanding of how to respond to the different demands of the assessment objectives and examination technique was generally good. Part (b) was sometimes better than part (a), with some good purposeful discussion.

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

Section A

1. (a) **Outline the arguments supporting infant baptism and adult baptism in Christianity.**

[AO1 25]

This was the popular question by far. The questions asked for the arguments supporting infant and adult baptisms. On the whole this question was answered very well. Most candidates were able to clearly examine the different reasons for both infant and adult baptism. Reference was often made to key scholars in the debate, for example Augustine's argument based in the idea of original sin, or Barth's support for adult or believer's baptism. Best answers also used direct quotations from the Bible and were able to explain how they support infant and adult baptism. Weaker candidates were able to identify the basic arguments of the need to cleanse original sin and that adult baptism is a choice. There were a few weaker candidates who simply focused on baptism as a generic rite rather than infant and adult baptism as two separate occasions. More biblical support may have added depth to the answer. There was, overall, surprisingly little on the Holy Spirit and John the Baptist.

Features of stronger answers

- Could clearly outline the different arguments presented by theologians e.g. Augustine, Zwingli and Barth.
- Used biblical quotes and references to passages that supported either side of the arguments.
- Managed to explain the differences between the views of Zwingli and Augustine on the role and importance of infant baptism and made reference to Anabaptists and Barth in supporting adult baptism.

Features of weaker answers

- Lacked detail and failed to explore the arguments in depth.
- Inaccurate use of scholars, confusing and conflating different views.
- Generic responses that drifted into personal evaluation.

1. (b) **‘Baptism is nothing more than a symbolic act.’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

This question was attempted well with candidates presenting clear evidence and arguments for and against baptism being symbolic. The best answers made reference to key scholars and Bible passages to support their answer. Weaker candidates made reference to baptism being a family occasion or party with no religious meaning. Stronger candidates focused more on a discussion of the arguments rather than getting bogged down in detail of explaining them. There could have been more focus on ontological change and the spiritual meaning of baptism.

Features of stronger answer

- Clear critical analysis of the significance of different views about a sacrament and an evaluation of the significance of baptism for both faith and as a religious experience.
- Used subject specific language well and theological terms.
- Effective appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the different understandings so as to draw a reasoned conclusion.

Features of weaker answers

- A brief ‘shopping list’ of reasons for and against the statement with little or no analysis of the reasons presented as fact.
- A weak conclusion that often did not reflect the reasoning or evidence that was presented.
- Generic responses that drifted into descriptions of baptisms today.

2. (a) **Explain how Easter is celebrated in the Eastern Orthodox church.** [AO1 25]

This was not a popular question. Answers could have focused on Easter Day, the Easter Holy Week or Easter and Lent. Opportunity to answer from breadth or depth was available. Those candidates that answered were able to identify the key events that took place during Easter in the Eastern Orthodox Church, most making reference to holy week, how Lent is different and the events of Easter day. Weaker candidates found this question difficult but were able to write about fasting and liturgical colours. These answers were quite vague and lacked specific details.

Features of stronger answers

- Could clearly outline the elements of Easter that were specific to Eastern Orthodox.
- Used subject specific language well.
- Managed to explain the significance of the practices.

Features of weaker answers

- Lacked detail and failed to explore any significance of the events described.
- Inaccuracies and conflation.
- Generic responses that drifted into a discussion of Easter in general.

2. (b) 'A member of the Eastern Orthodox church would not recognise Easter celebrations in a Western church.'
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

The responses to this question were generally poor. The best answers were able to give clear similarities and contrasts between the two different celebrations; however, weaker answers tended to drift into an explanation of how Easter is celebrated, more often than not, in the Western church. As such, answers were largely descriptive, had no depth and lacked biblical support.

Features of stronger answers

- Could clearly outline the different aspects as well as the similarities as a basis for their evidence and arguments.
- Used subject specific language well.
- Managed to evaluate the different views and form a reasoned conclusion.

Features of weaker answers

- Failed to come to terms with the demands of the question by drifting from the critical analysis into descriptive answers.
- Generalisations about similarities that obscured the differences.

Section B

3. (a) Explain the following Atonement theories:
(i) Christus Victor, and
(ii) the death of Jesus as a moral example. [AO1 25]

This answer differentiated clearly between those candidates that had a clear understanding and others who conflated theories or who did not have a depth of understanding. Better answers focused on the question and wrote in depth about the theories of Christus Victor and Christ and a moral example, with many making links to the ransom model and how Christus Victor was a development of that. Christus Victor was nearly always answered with more depth than Christ as a moral example, but this was acceptable and could still gain full marks. Weaker answers either got the different theories confused or simply produced a list of the different theories, some of which were irrelevant to the question set. Some answers also thought Christus Victor was a person and the concept of Jesus as a moral example was totally missed with many candidates going into detail about Jesus' teachings on love your neighbour and how he was a moral example for everyone because of this.

Features of stronger answers

- Focused on the two theories asked for in the question.
- Clearly defined 'atonement' as a springboard for developing the explanations.
- Managed to explain at least one example in great depth.

Features of weaker answers

- Confused atonement theories or wrote about the wrong ones.
- Not referring to the role of the devil at all in Christus Victor.
- Poor understanding of the moral example.

3. (b) **‘Christian explanations of the Atonement are totally contradictory.’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Answers for this question were significantly better than the (a) part because it did allow for a broader consideration of the atonement theories. Better answers referred to a range of theories with many recognising the contradictory nature of the theories and were able to also see similarities. Weaker answers tended to spend too much detail explaining an atonement theory rather than critically analysing it by selecting appropriate aspects and then evaluating these in relation to the question.

Features of stronger answers

- Could clearly outline the different atonement theories as a basis for analysis and evaluation.
- Were aware of clear differences and specific ambiguities both within and between theories.
- Had enough scope for a developed conclusion.

Features of weaker answers

- A lack of understanding of the differences.
- Focus on explanation rather than evaluation.

4. (a) **Outline ways in which the Bible is used as a source of authority in Christian daily life.** [AO1 25]

This question asked for an outline of ways in which the Bible is used as a source of authority in Christian daily life. There was opportunity for a range of examples such as theology, religious instruction, rites of passage, moral teaching, personal devotion, beliefs, creating unity in a Christian community, comfort, encouragement, meaning and purpose etc. Answers tended to focus on the 10 commandments and the Golden Rule or Greatest Commandment. As such, answers tended to limit themselves.

Features of stronger answers

- Provided a range of ways.
- Understood how the use of the Bible was diverse.
- Made good use of biblical texts.

Features of weaker answers

4. (b) **‘The Bible provides the best guide to the meaning and purpose of life.’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Generally better answered than the (a) section, again due to the range of possibilities available. Better approaches used the understandings of the Bible as revealed by God as a basis to explore differences within Christianity but also beyond. Weaker answers just generalised about how the Bible was the word of God and reveals truth and all Christians see it as authoritative without real questioning and had no real awareness of the different Christian understandings available.

Features of stronger answers

- Used different interpretations of the Bible to evaluate.
- Compared to contemporary world views e.g. scientific.
- Could differentiate between 'the best guide' and a suitable, good or appropriate guide in relation to its own purpose.
- Used biblical references well.

Features of weaker answers

- Random answers with generalised examples.
- Little reference to salvation or morality.
- Very little reference to specific biblical examples.

5. (a) Examine the religious life of the New Testament community of believers with reference to Acts 2:42-47. [AO1 25]

This was probably the least popular question. Better answers had a good knowledge of the contents of Acts 2:42-47 and focused on the breaking of the bread, the sharing of resources, the devotion to the apostles teaching and fellowship/prayer. One or two candidates actually made reference to the kerygma! The mission/growth aspect was often overlooked ('adding to their numbers') and also the roles of 'signs and wonders'. Some answers had no real awareness of the specifics of the passage in question and generally wrote about Acts or the Apostles.

Features of stronger answers

- Good knowledge of the contents of Acts 2:42-47.
- Explained some key aspects in depth.

Features of weaker answers

- Little knowledge of specific contents.
- Generic responses that drifted away from Acts 2:42-47.

5. (b) 'Contemporary Christian churches have very little in common with the New Testament community of believers.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

This was answered reasonably well. Good answers often made comparisons between the New Testament community of believers and the contemporary Church. Many candidates could identify specific similarities e.g. breaking of the bread, Christian charities that could support mission/service but could also appreciate that there were many differences as well. Not many answers used questions as to the reliability of Acts 2:42-47 as a realistic comparison.

Features of stronger answers

- Good comparison with the contemporary Church.
- A range of examples offered in support of arguments presented.
- Could also see some level of disparity between 'then' and 'now' e.g. validity of miracles.

Features of weaker answers

- General discussion that drifted off the focus of the evaluation
- Focused more on a comparison and had little awareness of any differences

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GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Summer 2018

COMPONENT 1: OPTION B - AN INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

General points

The standard of responses was generally high and many candidates were able to refer in depth to the subject they were writing about, illustrating their answers with references to quotes from Qur'an, hadith, scholars or episodes from the life of the Prophet or Islamic history.

Features of the best responses included clear definitions of the terms in the question, and maintained focus on those terms throughout the essay. These responses were clear, coherent and focused exactly on what was required. Usually each paragraph began with a sentence relating the content to the question, then backed up each point made with information and explanation.

The best responses to AO2 questions went beyond a simple agree/disagree format, but recognised the nuances of each side and added comments about whether they felt an argument was strong or weak. Candidates who recognised exceptions and built up a discussion, confidently referencing evidence to support their case, were able to score high marks and provide excellent responses.

Weaker answers sometimes took a formulaic approach and tried to fit any question to a discussion about the importance of the five pillars or main beliefs, even where this was not asked. Other features of weaker answers were lack of reference to, or understanding of, the key words given in the question.

Section A

1. (a) Examine Islamic teachings about tawhid (oneness). [AO1 25]

Overall, the standard of answer to this question was good. Many candidates could explain the concept of tawhid and explored different ways in which this could be understood. The better answers were able to discuss the complexities that a belief in tawhid could present, such as imminence and transcendence.

Features of stronger answers

- Explained the unity of God in Islamic beliefs and how this manifests itself in the practice of Muslims.
- Considered the implications in developing Taqwa (God-consciousness) in daily life.
- Referred to various issues such as the oneness in creation, comparison with other beliefs and contrast to shirk (association of others besides God).
- Referred to quotes about tawhid, such as from Qur'an or hadith.

Features of weaker answers

- Wrote only about the Shahadah in Muslim practice
- Described the story of the clearing of idols from the Ka'ba without much explanation
- Did not back up or expand on basic points with reference to quotations or episodes from Islamic history

(b) 'Islamic teachings about tawhid are totally coherent.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Most candidates grasped the basic concept of the argument and provided reasons as to why tawhid may be coherent. The better responses were able to critically assess the issues of the coherence of tawhid the implications they have on Muslim life. Weaker responses were not able to understand the concept of coherence and this led to a response that did not meet the demands of the question.

Features of stronger answers

- Defined the word coherent in a succinct opening paragraph
- Considered a broad range of angles to discuss this question, such as how can God be both immanent and transcendent? Compassionate and Judge? Controller of fate and giver of free will?
- Discussed Qur'anic references to physical features of God
- Made reference to different views such as Sufi or Shia or practices such as celebration of the Prophets birthday and the implications for understanding tawhid.

Features of weaker answers

- Did not understand or refer to 'coherent'.
- Gave a simplistic answer agreeing with the quotation.
- Covered only one or two angles of teachings about tawhid, or did not include many details.

2. (a) Examine Islamic teachings about malaikah (angels).

[AO1 25]

The majority of candidates chose to answer this question. The overall standard of response was good. The stronger responses were able to explain in detail the different teachings on malaikah with reference to appropriate scripture to demonstrate the depth of their understanding. The mid-range candidates could identify different angels and their roles, but did not necessarily have the same depth in their response. Some gave a response which covered angels in general whilst others focused on particular angels. The weaker responses were very generic in form and lacked detail.

Features of stronger answers

- Detailed the names and roles of several angels.
- Explained the qualities and roles of angels.
- Clearly defined the differences between God, angels and Prophets, and how communication from God and humanity occurred.
- Gave examples of episodes and quotations where relevant.

Features of weaker answers

- Did not define the qualities of angels.
- Were unable to name any angels.
- Only wrote about one angel, usually Jibril.
- Described an episode without explaining the teachings about the role of angels.

2. (b) 'Islamic teachings about malaikah are not important for Muslims today.' Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

Most answers offered a balanced response to the statement. Many candidates were able to offer other reasons for giving and why these were/were not important for Muslims today. They discussed the role of the recording angels and the angel of death and these responses in general were very good. Weaker responses were only able to offer simple reasons with a lack of explanation or analysis.

Features of stronger answers

- Explained that the final revelation had already been given so there was no need for angels to bring any more.
- Explained the essential role of angels in future events of Judgement.
- Understood the variety of personal opinions about angels amongst Muslims, and how prominent their thoughts about angels might be according to their varying degrees of practice.
- Considered the importance of angels as supporting influences and worrying recorders of deeds. They debated how far this encouraged Muslims in their practice.

Features of weaker answers

- Wrote about whether or not angels were important in the past.
- Compared angels to the 5 Pillars of Islam.
- Took a simple view that this belief could not be questioned.

Section B

3. (a) **Explain how Muhammad established the basic tenets of Islam in Madinah following the Hijrah (migration).** [AO1 25]

Few candidates chose this question. The stronger responses were able to offer many different ways in which Muhammad established Islam in Madinah and why this was important. Weaker responses struggled to understand the word 'tenets' and generally wrote about the move to Madinah and some aspects of what happened there.

Features of stronger answers

- Defined 'tenets' of Islam at the start of their essay, with a brief sentence or two with an overview about the Madinah period.
- Explained the different ways in which Muhammad led the Madinah community with reference to the tenets he established.
- Gave details of tenets in a broad range of areas, including religious practice, political, social and economic affairs.
- Gave detailed accounts including a quote or reference to the establishment of principles in the Madinah community or state.

Features of weaker answers

- Confusion about or avoidance of referring to the term tenets.
- Factual description of the move to Madinah and main events rather than focusing on the principles.
- Lack of detail about the stages in the development of the early Muslim community as they moved from Makkah to Madinah.
- Reference to basic practices such as prayer, but they lacked development in explaining broader principles such as equality in the Charter of Madinah.

3. (b) **'Madinah remains the ideal model for the Islamic community today.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

There were a few good answers that were able to provide some points of critical analysis but these were not common. The better responses were able to use scripture to exemplify their points. Most candidates discussed the fact that society today is completely different from then and therefore saw the Madinah model as not relevant today.

Features of stronger answers

- Considered the significance of the word 'model' and discussed whether this meant general principles or specific practice.
- Made reference to the Constitution of Madinah as a model.
- Discussed how far the 'model' originated at Makkah, not Madinah.
- Discussed various interpretations such as reformist and Islamist and their different views about literally applying, or reforming, the Madinah model for today.

Features of weaker answers

- Offered no definition of the Madinah model.
- Took a narrow focus of the model referring to the 5 pillars and little more.
- Only considered one point of view, agreeing with the quote.
- Confused what happened in Makkah with Madinah.

4. (a) Explain how the Hajj unites the Ummah (Muslim community). [AO1 25]

Candidates with the best answers covered the journey of Hajj and linked each section to the unity of the Ummah. Mid-range candidates discussed key areas of Hajj and attempted to show how these displayed unity – Arafat being a popular example. The weaker answers were basic descriptions of Hajj and lacking the link to unity.

Features of stronger answers

- Defined Hajj, unity and Ummah in the opening part of their response.
- Related each stage of Hajj to unity, making the point clearly at the beginning of each paragraph.
- Illustrating the points made with details from each stage of Hajj, showing breadth and depth.

Features of weaker answers

- Wrote a description of the main stages of Hajj.
- Did not address the concept of unity.
- Confused daily prayers with rituals carried out on Hajj.
- Wrote a response about the 5 pillars in general.

4. (b) ‘Hajj is more important for the individual than for the Ummah.’ Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Candidates discussed many different reasons why Hajj is more important for the individual than the Ummah. The stronger candidates saw the benefits that Hajj could have for both the individual and the Ummah, and were able to analyse which side had more impact. More often than not they concluded that it was the individual. The weaker candidates were able to say why Hajj was good but not necessarily clearly distinguish between individual and Ummah.

Features of stronger answers

- Focused on the benefits of Hajj for both the individual and the Ummah in more or less equal measure.
- Explained the significance of Arafat for Judgement, and renewing personal practice
- Considered equality and possibly referred to Malcolm X.
- Challenged the division of individual and community importance.

Features of weaker answers

- Wrote an essay about the importance of Hajj compared to the other Pillars of Islam.
- Compared Hajj to Muslims beliefs about God and other beliefs.
- Described aspects of Hajj without evaluating importance.
- Confused Hajj with Umrah (the lesser pilgrimage) and visiting Madinah, which is not part of Hajj.

5. (a) Explain how Ramadan helps develop Muslim spirituality. [AO1 25]

This was the most answered question on the paper. Candidates appeared to understand what Ramadan is and the many different ways that it developed Muslim spirituality. The stronger candidates were able to offer a comprehensive approach to the different elements of spirituality and clearly explain how these affect observance of Ramadan. The mid-range candidates could outline several ways in which Ramadan helped a Muslim spiritually and offer some explanation to accompany this. The weaker candidates presented an outline of Ramadan and drawing on an element of spirituality.

Features of stronger answers

- Defined and explained spirituality.
- Covered several different aspects of spirituality.
- Backed up their answer with quotations and references to practices, including brief quotes from the Qur'an or hadith.
- Considered a breadth of practices including fasting from food, politeness to others and attention to giving or sharing food to develop selflessness.

Features of weaker answers

- Described what happens during Ramadan.
- Did not refer to the term 'spirituality'.
- Focused on rules or outward signs of Ramadan.
- Gave vague or inaccurate accounts of Ramadan.

5. (b) 'Morality is more important than fasting for Muslims.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Candidates seemed to respond well to this question. The better answers were able to make that between morality and fasting and argue that neither was more important than the other as actually the two concepts intertwine. Generally, candidates argued that morality was more important as this is something that should be focused on all year round. The weaker responses often lacked depth of explanation and were simple statements as to why morality or fasting should be considered to more important than each other.

Features of stronger answers

- Explained the links between morality and practices during Ramadan.
- Discussed various issues including the influence of Judgement upon Muslims actions for both fasting and morality.
- Considered those unable to fast but still able to undertake moral actions
- Referred to Muhammad's condemnation of hypocrisy.

Features of weaker answers

- Attempted to compare fasting to the other pillars of Islam rather than morality.
- Did not understand or explain the word 'morality'.
- Described importance without referring to the relative importance of each.
- Did not reach any conclusion.

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GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Summer 2018

COMPONENT 1: OPTION C - AN INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

General comments

Due to the small candidature for this Option only a limited commentary can be made on candidate responses.

The standard was generally very good with some candidates responding extremely well to the questions set. Responses at the top of the range displayed detailed knowledge, understanding and awareness of Judaism as well as excellent evaluation and analysis skills. Such responses were well structured, making excellent use of key terms, extensive vocabulary and scholarly awareness.

Weaker candidates failed to address the requirements of the questions set fully.

All questions on the paper were attempted with questions 1 and 5 the most popular.

Section A

1. (a) Explain Jews beliefs about humanity. [AO1 25]

Most candidates were able to explain that there is a diversity of opinion on this topic. All candidates explained that humanity was created in the image of God. The best responses were able to discuss ideas relating to humanity from the perspective of Rashi, Maimonides and Rambam, with detailed awareness of the ideas regarding intellect and human abilities.

Very few were able to use the Hebrew term 'tzelem' [Image] when discussing this element of the question. Not many responses discussed the idea of pikuash nefesh which was expected.

Weaker responses gave a basic synopsis of the role and creation of humanity.

**1. (b) 'It is impossible for Jews to truly know God'.
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]**

Generally this question was answered well, with candidates being able to construct balanced responses on the whole. Candidates tended to discuss ideas relating to meetings key figures had with God, how through study and reading the Torah an awareness of God could be gained. Many also discussed the idea of blind faith. Higher level candidates included the ideas of Maimonides as a line of reasoning.

2. (a) **Explain Jewish beliefs about the afterlife.** [AO1 25]

This question was generally not answered as well as expected. Many responses were superficial with basic ideas as a main focus. Good responses discussed ideas regarding the historical developments of ideas regarding the afterlife and how this idea has evolved. Most were able to use key phrases such as Olam Ha-Ba, Gehinnom and Gan Eden correctly and effectively. The best responses also included references to different views within Judaism as well as making reference to Maimonides and Midrash.

2. (b) **'Jewish Beliefs about the afterlife have no relevant for Jews today.' Evaluate this view.** [AO2 25]

Generally these responses were well balance with some good ideas. Although mainly the responses focussed on how living a good life would ensure a better next life. Good responses made reference to the importance of mitzvot and repentance during festivals and this did lead on to some discussion about the relevance of judgments for Jews.

Section B

3. (a) **'Examine the diversity of views within Judaism regarding the mizvot.'** [AO1 25]

This question was answered well on the whole with the diversity aspect of the question remaining a key aspect of the responses witnessed. All candidates were able to explain correctly the meaning of mitzvot and that these were commanded by God. Orthodox references were made to the direct word of God, how rabbis have continued to discuss the mitzvot and the Halakhah. References to Reform Judaism included references to the Pittsburg platform and the need to re-evaluate mitzvot during each age. References were also effectively made to specifics within the law such as Kashrut which enhanced many responses.

3. (b) **'Mitzvot do not contribute effectively to spirituality within Judaism.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Most candidates discussed mitzvot as the foundation of faith and necessary guidelines. Many made reference to the sincerity of keeping mitzvot. Good responses made reference to Hasidism and the role that mitzvot play in their duty to God. There was also reference to Reform views and their view that they remain faithful to their faith despite their adaptation of laws. Weaker candidates made a basic reference to other aspects of the faith that contribute to spirituality such as prayer without developing these ideas further.

4. (a) **Examine the role of the synagogue within Judaism.** [AO1 25]

This question generally produced good responses. The best responses included references to many aspects of the synagogue and its usage as well as reference to the community cohesion element. Many were able to discuss the mikveh in detail. Weaker candidates listed the uses without examining the role fully. Most were able to discuss the basic roles of the synagogue such as worship, prayer and during festivals. Very few responses mentioned the role of the rabbi or the chazzan. Many responses did not allude to the temple in Jerusalem which would have been expected at some level.

4. (b) **'The synagogue is the heart of the Jewish Community.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Most candidates focused on the ideas of the Synagogue as central location for prayer, worship and festivals. Generally the arguments focused on the centrality to the faith of the synagogue where all main aspects of the faith are conducted. Other arguments concentrated on the role of the home; however for Orthodox Jews the synagogue remains of great importance. Many also discussed the ideas of Jews only visiting the synagogue during major festivals, but still very much identify as Jews and therefore the synagogue is not the only important aspect of the faith

5. (a) Examine the covenant between God and Abraham. [AO1 25]

This was a very popular question in Section B. Responses varied on the whole from very detailed awareness of the relevant covenant to very basic narrative accounts of Abraham's life. Most candidates were aware of the relevant aspects of Abraham's life which lead to the covenant with the better candidates using these as scaffolds to discuss elements of the covenant and the importance within Judaism. All candidates had some grasp of the covenant, especially with reference to circumcision, with the best candidates explaining in detail what this entailed, with continued reference to the question. Some were also able to mention, without being anecdotal the previous covenants.

5. (b) 'The covenants only exist to control believers.' Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

This question was not answered as well as Q5 (a), but many candidates had structured effective responses. Most candidates were able to explain the context of the covenant and the link with God. Better candidates made links between the Mosaic covenant and the previous lifestyle of the Jews and the need for control and how this was a positive step. The more detailed responses made links with the mitzvot and the idea that if you keep a certain faith, all aspects should be adhered to not only some aspects. Weaker responses included a description of the covenants without any link to the question set.

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GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Summer 2017

COMPONENT 1: OPTION D - AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

General comments

Candidates have demonstrated that they can produce essays of both breadth and depth. Many of the comments from last year's examiners report have clearly been acknowledged by teachers and implemented in the teaching of this year's candidates. For example fewer students are confusing the terms, Buddha and Buddhist.

Candidates have increased the use of scholarly reference where applicable and references to sacred texts have also increased. The use of scholarly quotations could still be improved with those looking to achieve the highest bands. Quotes however must be explained and not simply added in without context, they need to be purposeful.

Questions 1 and 5 – were answered in a very similar way. Candidates (and centres) need to make a clear distinction between the concepts of punya and karma

However, there are still many candidates simply listing arguments for and against without making links between them or analysing the point itself. Candidates need to develop a more mature style that expresses clear lines of thought, that comes to a justified evaluation. This evaluation does not need to come at the end of the response, it is just as valuable at the start of the essay as long as it is confident and purposeful. When making a point about the statement, it needs to be justified by evidence and examples. Too many students seem to think that asserting their opinion at various places throughout the essay counts as analysis or evaluation and this is not the case. Part (b) questions are often filled with description instead of evaluation. This wastes time and cannot be credited like it would be in an A01. This, unfortunately, is often repeated content of the part (a) answer.

The best candidates identified the crux of the question and tailored their knowledge to fit succinctly. Weaker candidates used the knowledge they had but only in the way they had learnt it. As such some answers seemed to answer a slightly different question; perhaps a focus on application of knowledge and understanding to the question is necessary for future candidates.

Section A

Although this was a popular choice for candidates, it was not answered well on the whole. Candidates often did not get past the simple definition of karma, and then possibly showing that karma can affect the next life. There was a lack of breadth demonstrated in candidates' responses candidates.

1. (a) Examine the notion of Karma. [AO1 25]

This was a popular choice for candidates but it was not answered well on the whole. Candidates often did not get past the simple definition of karma, and then possibly showing that karma can affect the next life. There was a lack of breadth and so candidates seemed to run out of things to say. This question produced short answers.

Features of stronger answers

Those that reached the higher bands managed to offer a deeper explanation of the notion of Karma and could identify that it is about motive as well as just actions. These candidates often related it to the Bhavacakra and the three poisons. Some made links to punya and tried to create analogies that explained the notion of karma as a force not a reaction from a being; thus acknowledging the difficulty in explaining the concept.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker answers lacked both depth and breadth. They focussed on karma as simply action and reaction rather than engaging with the idea of motives and purpose. Some tried to explain it only in terms of punya, straying from the question asked.

1. (b) **‘Belief in Karma makes no sense in the modern world.’
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 25]

This question was not answered exceptionally well. The majority of the responses focussed on the idea that karma is not believable in the modern world to anyone but Buddhists, but that maybe it should be believed in because that would make the world a better place.

Features of stronger answers

Candidates engaged with the question and discussed who would agree and disagree with the statement. Stronger candidates demonstrated clear analysis and managed to step away from the trap of listing points for and against the statement. Most engaged with the scientific correlation between karma and cause and effect. One student related it to Aquinas second way.

Features of weaker answers:

Weaker candidates did not generate many points and tended to list them. These candidates went off on a tangent and concluded with the idea that karma is good, but only for Buddhists. Some of these students failed to analyse and simply gave A01 descriptions.

2. (a) **Examine the characteristics of bodhisattvas.** [AO1 25]

The best answers showed a clear knowledge of the bodhisattva path. A number of candidates whilst answering this question confused the practises and beliefs of Mahayana and Theravada Buddhists.

Features of stronger answers

These answers demonstrated a deep knowledge of the ten stages and ten paramitas. The best candidates could list them and explain them and then demonstrate them with an example of Avalokitesvara or Manjusri. They showed knowledge of the vow a bodhisattva makes and possibly quoted. They could identify the difference between a celestial Bodhisattva and a living bodhisattva of this realm.

Features of weaker answers

These responses failed to explain fully what a bodhisattva was and many believed that they were buddhas on earth that had achieved enlightenment but rejected it. Some responses compared arhats with bodhisattvas and thus failed to give enough information on bodhisattvas specifically. Weaker candidates were unable to list the paramitas, bhumis or to describe the vows.

2. (b) **‘All Buddhists should aspire to be bodhisattvas.’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Many candidates gave responses that included several points from the mark scheme. The better essays identified a problem with the statement’s use of the word ‘all’ and explained that Buddhists cannot all be put into one group. They demonstrated that the religion is a diverse one and then went on to explain how some Buddhists would follow the arhat path instead.

Features of stronger answers

Stronger candidates evaluated the statement’s language. They demonstrated diversity within Buddhism and gave examples to back this up. Very few candidates managed to make any statements about any other Buddhists apart from Mahayana and Theravada Buddhists.

Features of weaker answers:

Weaker candidates did not manage to analyse well. There were candidates that did not come to any conclusion. They fell into the trap of listing arguments for and against without making links or analysing the points they had made. Many candidates simply discussed the pros and cons of arhats and bodhisattvas.

Section B

3. (a) **Examine the account of the birth of the Buddha.** [AO1 25]

Candidates fell into one of two camps with this response. Candidates have either responded with a description of the biography or engaged with the biography and provided explanations of the symbolism involved.

Features of stronger answers

These candidates have engaged with the ideas of ritual purity and symbolism within the legendary account. Maya's dream and the symbolism of the white elephant, within Indian society, or the idea that the birth was pure, from her side, are things that stronger candidates identified. Candidates could have mentioned the full moon and the link to Vesak.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker candidates focussed on the story and left out any attempt at evaluating the symbolism. There were many candidates that did not seem to understand that the question required a focus on the birth. There were responses that discussed the Buddha's life from birth to enlightenment and some that did not talk about the birth at all.

3. (b) **'The biography of the Buddha is nothing more than fiction.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

This question was not answered as well as Q3 (a). Candidates had three main arguments; the truth of the biography is not something that we should question as it does not aid the quest for enlightenment; the dharma is the most important aspect of Buddhism and it is not affected by the validity of the biography; and examples that prove its fiction.

Features of stronger answers

The stronger arguments fully engaged with the points mentioned above and then went on to fully analyse and evaluate the points made.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker candidates identified various factors within the story that allude to the biography being fiction. They may have given examples. These candidates did not manage to include many points from the mark scheme. There were many candidates that did not manage to get down more than two points.

4. (a) **Explain how the medical metaphor illustrates the Four Noble Truths.** [AO1 25]

This question was answered well and was very popular. Many students reached the higher bands as they managed to explain in detail the Truths and their corresponding parts of the medical metaphor.

Features of stronger answers

The students that achieved the highest marks developed their essays with reference to scripture and well explained terminology. For example, some candidates explained the different types of dukkha and used examples. They also explained the difficulty in translating the word dukkha. The best responses clearly described the role of a physician and gave modern examples.

Features of weaker answers

The weakest of arguments did not make links to the physician argument and simply recounted the Four Noble Truths. Some unfortunately confused the four sights with the Four Noble Truths.

4. (b) **'Belief in the Four Noble Truths is essential for all Buddhists.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

This was answered quite well and generally followed the same pattern. Candidates first gave the positive elements of the four noble truths and then countered it with other elements of Buddhism that are more essential to Buddhists.

Features of stronger answers

The better responses really analysed the statement; firstly questioning the word essential. They then went on to question how essential the Four Noble Truths were before offering other, more essential parts of Buddhism. For example, the four sights are more important as they came first and led to the Four Noble Truths. Some candidates looked at the viewpoints of various different groups of Buddhists.

Features of weaker answers

The weaker candidates lacked focussed analysis and evaluation, instead they offered a variety of elements of Buddhism that could be considered more essential.

5. (a) **Explain the role and importance of punya (merit) in Buddhism.** [AO1 25]

This question was the least popular of the five questions. This was answered well on the whole by those who attempted it. Responses generally referred to identifying what Punya is; why it is essential and how it can be acquired.

Features of stronger answers

The better arguments identified the sangha as the 'field of punya' and the greater punya acquired by transferring to those who follow the eightfold path. Some managed to discuss the Mahayana bodhisattvas and the power of their punya, however this was only a handful of candidates.

Features of weaker answers

The weaker candidates simply identified the meaning of punya and gave examples of how it could be transferred.

5. (b) **'Punya should always be transferred.'**
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

Responses to this questions were generally neither outstanding, not poor. Many candidates explained that punya does not diminish once transferred and gave the example of the candle flame. A popular point that was made was the idea of transferring merit to those who have died to ensure that they achieve a better rebirth.

Features of stronger answers

The better arguments gave many points and analysed them carefully. Many candidates that fall into this category identified most of the points within the mark scheme. Few candidates questioned the wording of the statement. Failing to question the right of anyone to say what Buddhists should or shouldn't do.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker candidates generally just listed a couple of benefits of transferring punya and a couple of weaknesses. They generally failed to analyse these points and they became a list or a two sided argument.

EDUQAS

GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Summer 2018

COMPONENT 1: OPTION E - AN INTRODUCTION TO HINDUISM

General comments

The paper was accessible to the vast majority of candidates and answers spanned the range of bands with some excellent responses showing clearly that candidates had been well prepared. However, as usual there were some responses which failed to address the question set. It is imperative that candidates read the question carefully and focus on the specific thrust of the question especially in part (b). This was particularly true in question 2 where it specifically asked for personal worship. Some candidates included congregational puja in the mandir as part of their answers. In this context it is important that centres focus on the detail of the specification content. It was pleasing to see again this year that many evaluative answers were well structured. However there were a number who seemed to have moved back to the traditional for and against method of response. This leads to a more restrictive evaluation of the issues raised.

On an administrative note a number of candidates persist in not filling in the box noting the questions that they have answered on the front of the answer booklet leaving the examiner to do this. Some candidates did not use (a) or (b) to differentiate between the different parts of the question they were answering leaving the examiner to guess where one finished and the other began. Although this was clear in the majority of cases this was not always the case.

Section A

- 1. (a) Examine the spiritual significance of Durga Puja. [AO1 25]**

Features of stronger answers

Stronger responses addressed the question directly with sound knowledge and understanding focusing directly on spiritual significance – the aspect of the mother goddess, the power of Shakti, the control of material desires and the spiritual values that shape Hindu identity. There were some excellent use of examples from the festival and an explanation of their spiritual significance to Hindus.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker responses did not focus on the question set and gave a general description of the festival of Durga Puja. Others included all they knew about the festival with no reference whatsoever to the demands of the question. It then became a matter of luck whether they mentioned anything creditworthy in the context of the question set.

1. (b) **‘Celebrating mythical events on festival days have little value in today’s world.’**
Evaluate this view with reference to Hinduism. [AO2 25]

Features of stronger answers

Stronger responses were well developed focusing entirely on the issue raised by the question, were well supported, challenged and evaluated. There were some good use examples of mythical events such as the story of Rama and Sita and the use of these mythical events to teach morality. There was also a reasoned discussion on whether an event had to be historically verified to be of any value.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker responses lacked challenge and evaluation of the issue and contained a number of repetitions of the same point. They did not focus on the specific demands of the question and ignored the words ‘mythical events’ and chose to discuss whether festivals in general had any value in today’s world.

2. (a) **Examine the nature and importance of personal worship in Hinduism.** [AO1 25]

The focus of the question was personal worship and the two aspects of that worship – nature and importance. There were two main weaknesses to the responses given – the word personal being ignored completely and either nature or importance being omitted. This again shows the importance of reading the question carefully and highlighting the key words.

Features of stronger answers

Stronger responses answered the question directly and referred to different types of personal worship such as puja, arti and darshan. They were also able to explain the importance of personal worship – the relationship between devotees and deities, the seeking of blessings, the experience of the presence of God, the giving of spiritual focus to their lives.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker responses failed to answer the question directly, rather drifting into relating all they knew about worship. There was also a lot of irrelevance as some candidates chose to write about congregational puja.

2. (b) **‘Puja is the most important way of expressing Hindu identity.’
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 25]

Features of stronger answers

Most candidates were able to present some valid arguments to this question. Stronger responses presented strong arguments to support the view that puja gives Hindus a sense of identity. They were able to give examples of the positive impact of puja on identity – reminding them of important aspects in their religion, part of a Hindu’s daily life, the home shrine being an identifying feature of a Hindu’s home and puja in the mandir being a public expression of identity. They were also able to argue that there are other valid ways of expressing identity such as festivals, dress and following key beliefs.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker responses ignored the issue of identity and discussed the importance of puja in general. They also listed anything and everything in the arguments that there are more important things in Hinduism than puja.

Section B

3. (a) **Examine the relationship between Brahman and atman in Hinduism.** [AO1 25]

There was a wide range in the standard of answers given to this question.

Features of stronger answers

Stronger answers contained knowledge of monism, monotheism, dualism, non-dualism, Advaita, Dvaita, Shankara and Madhva. Impressive responses identified the variety of beliefs between Brahman and atman and many included the 'salt' analogy. There were also good references made to the Upanishads.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker answers showed very limited knowledge of the topic and did not address the question set and focused more on Brahman and atman rather than the relationship between them. Many digressed into wider areas and described the Trimurti in detail which was barely relevant to the question.

3. (b) **'It is impossible to worship an impersonal God.'** [AO2 25]
Evaluate this view.

Features of stronger answers

There were some excellent responses from candidates providing strong, well developed and clearly supported arguments which they evaluated. There was extensive use of Brahman Nirguna and Brahman Saguna and also the thinking of Shankara and Madhva. Candidates argued for a personal God as exemplified by the multiple aspects of Brahman such as the Trimurti. There were also some good references to Shaivism and Vaishnavism.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker candidates repeated content from part (a) without presenting critical argument. They merely gave the meaning of Brahman and the meaning of atman without any attempt to link them to the problems or lack of problems of worshipping an impersonal God. This exemplifies a weakness across all questions – the inability of some candidates to use their knowledge and understanding to create relevant arguments or evaluative comments.

4. (a) **Examine the Hindu concepts of ahimsa and satyagraha.** [AO1 25]

The responses to this question varied greatly in quality.

Features of stronger answers

Stronger responses addressed the question directly with sound knowledge and understanding of both concepts and how Gandhi developed one from the other and therefore the relation between them in terms of belief and practice. There was also some good use of quotes and Gandhi's use of both concepts religiously and politically. There were some imbalanced answers which were far stronger on ahimsa than satyagraha.

Features of weaker answers

There were some very general and superficial answers to this question. It was surprising to see a number of answers which did not specifically explain the meaning of ahimsa or satyagraha whilst others had very little knowledge and repeated the few basic points made. Others concentrated completely on ahimsa and ignored satyagraha completely.

4. (b) **‘The ideal of ahimsa is not practical in today’s world.’** [AO2 25]
Evaluate this view.

Again the responses to this question varied in quality.

Features of stronger answers

Stronger responses - answers were well developed focusing entirely on the issue raised by the question, were well supported, challenged and evaluated. There were some good use of quotes to support arguments. Many referred to Gandhi’s example and that Hindu communities have successfully combined the principle of ahimsa with life in the modern world. They were also able to evaluate the problems of practising ahimsa in the face of extremism, terrorism, fanaticism and oppressive dictatorship in the modern world.

Features of weaker answers

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

5. (a) **Explain the authority and use of the Vedas in Hinduism.** [AO1 25]

Overall, this was a disappointing question in terms of the responses given.

Features of stronger answers

Stronger responses - showed good understanding of both parts of the question. There were good references to the origins of the Vedas in the context of their authority as well their importance to Hindu identity and way of life. There were valid references made to their use during rites of passage in the home and temple. There were a number of imbalanced answers which focused more on the authority than the use.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker responses - at AS level more is expected than merely describing the content of the Vedas which is what some did, ignoring the fact completely that the question focussed on their authority and use.

5. (b) 'Hindu texts are still relevant today.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

Features of stronger answers

Stronger responses answered the question directly and were able to refer to not only the Vedas, but other Hindu texts and their relevance and use today. References were made to the Ramayana and Mahabharata as sources of belief and practice. They were also able to offer valid counter arguments such as the Vedas not being read or understood by the majority of Hindus and many seeing the more mythological elements in Hindu texts as being irrelevant in a scientific world. A few strong, well developed and evaluated arguments were offered.

Features of weaker answers

Some candidates found it difficult to present any valid argument for or against the statement given. Others evaluated a completely different question – whether Hindu texts were believable in the modern world.

EDUQAS

GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Summer 2018

COMPONENT 1: OPTION F - AN INTRODUCTION TO SIKHISM

Please note that as there were only a few candidates entered for this Option it is not possible to produce a detailed report.

Please refer to the mark scheme for further details on possible responses.

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Section A
EDUQAS
GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES
Summer 2018

COMPONENT 2: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

General comments

Candidates are making considerable use of the wide range of resources available. This is enhancing understanding and answers. Centres are also making use of the fact that much of the content was inherent in the legacy specification. There is clear evidence of some excellent teaching which is enthusing candidates to respond in the way they have to the questions set. Candidates have been prepared well to meet the demands of the paper and thankfully 'rubric' was not an issue.

We would however ask examination officers to remind candidates of the need to insert the question numbers completed on the front of their paper. This will considerably reduce the amount of administration that examiners have to carry out.

Section A

- 1. (a) Explain the different cosmological arguments for the existence of God presented by Aquinas and Craig. [AO1 25]**

The majority of those who answered this question were able to identify that Aquinas had three ways to his cosmological argument. Most were identified in the correct order.

Features of stronger answers

Examples were given, particularly dominos (they need to note this is not Aquinas' own example) and some, yet relatively few referred to such concepts as 'actuality' and 'potentiality'. There were some excellent explanations of Craig's position, with succinct summaries and references to why there must be a personal creator.

Features of weaker answers

Few candidates referred to the Universe. It seems this should be a given, but often many stop at 'everything inside the Universe needs a cause', without getting to the most important point. Less well known was Craig's cosmological argument which did at times make the answer imbalanced.

1. (b) **‘The Kalam cosmological argument is convincing.’
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 25]

Features of stronger answers

Where candidates looked specifically at aspects of the Kalam argument then they did it very well indeed. Some referred to the inductive nature of the argument or to its rejection of actual infinity. There of course was scope to look at unconvincing aspects of the cosmological argument as a whole, of which Kalam is a part, but the question must be differentiated from ‘is the cosmological argument convincing?’ Those candidates that recognised this scored more highly.

Features of weaker answers

Without an understanding of the Kalam cosmological argument it was very difficult for some candidates to evaluate at all. Many included general challenges to the cosmological argument.

2. (a) **Outline the different teleological arguments for the existence of God presented by Aquinas, Paley and Tennant.** [AO1 25]

This question was often done superbly well.

Features of stronger answers

Candidates wrote with accuracy about Aquinas’ 5th way using his archer and arrow analogy to good effect. Thankfully they related this analogy to God and the Universe. The same applies to Paley, with the watchmaker analogy (please note it was nowhere other than a heath; there were some wonderful places where a watch was supposedly found!) To really make the point that Paley wanted to make, reference was made to the stone also as a contrast to the watch.

Features of weaker answers

Often candidates wrote about both Tennant’s anthropic and aesthetic principles, but few acknowledged any reference to evolution in the anthropic principle nor did they suggest that aesthetics are not necessary for survival. Simply mentioning examples such as the eye or the watch without reference to their complexity which is likened to the Universe, is a weakness.

2. (b) **‘Paley’s view of the teleological argument is convincing.’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Features of stronger answers

Where candidates looked specifically at aspects of Paley’s argument then they did it well. Some referred to the efficacy or not of the analogy between the watch and the Universe. Hume’s criticisms abounded, which were pertinent to the rejection of the analogy. There was of course scope to look at unconvincing aspects of the teleological argument as a whole, of which Paley is a part, but the question must be differentiated from ‘is the teleological argument convincing?’

Features of weaker answers

General evaluation of all teleological arguments was not particular enough. Repetition of AO1 material was quite common as candidates searched for material to write.

Section B

3. (a) **Examine the ontological argument with reference to Descartes and Malcolm.** [AO1 25]

Features of stronger answers

Many candidates validly introduced the ontological argument as deductive and based on logic. They then proceeded to set out a summarised version of its deductive nature which is valid. Answers showed understanding by using Descartes’ analogies of the triangle and the mountain and the valley. There were some fabulous explanations of Malcolm’s version.

Features of weaker answers

A fairly large number unfortunately wasted a considerable amount of time examining Anselm’s ontological argument. Some referred to Descartes’ definition of God as a ‘supremely perfect being’ though there were very few references to God’s essence, nor was there much understanding of the basics of Descartes’ view. Malcolm was generally tagged on at the end with few candidates really getting to grips with a complete examination of God as an unlimited being and the choice between his existence being either impossible or necessary.

3. (b) **‘Kant’s challenge to the ontological argument is not effective.’
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 25]

Features of stronger answers

Kant’s challenge that existence is not a predicate was generally well understood. It was pleasing that an example such as the thalers was included, that is that thalers in existence add nothing to those that are not. We read the car example often (please note this was not Kant’s example, but I am sure as a notion he would agree with it.) Davis’ counter-challenge to this though is that existence is a predicate as it has the property of ‘purchasing-power’. Use could also be made of Kant’s challenge regarding the noumenal world.

Features of weaker answers

General challenges to the argument were made. Whilst the main challenge to the argument is that existence is not a predicate it ought to be directly linked to the specifics of Kant’s challenges.

4. (a) **Examine the problem of evil with reference to Mackie and Rowe.** [AO1 25]

Features of stronger answers

There were some excellent examinations of the inconsistent triad, referring back to Epicurus. Use could be made of Mackie’s views on ‘unqualified omnipotence’ though to include ‘the paradox of omnipotence’. It is always evidence of a good answer that candidates are able to say that Rowe could see that some suffering may have a purpose behind it.

Features of weaker answers

The majority of candidates who did this question could refer to the idea of the inconsistent triad and apply the correct statements to the points of the triangle. Some erroneously put ‘omniscience’ in there and omitted ‘evil exists’ though. In the main it rarely went further than that. Rowe’s example of animal suffering was included, but candidates need to put his argument in the wider context of ‘intense human and animal suffering’. Some included Paul in this part which was irrelevant.

4. (b) **‘Modern problem of evil arguments prove that God does not exist.’
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 25]

Features of stronger answers

Paul was used to good effect here. There was a place for using theodicies here but only if they were used as a rebuttal of modern problem of evil arguments. Generally the better answers used theodicies appropriately. Useful evaluations of Mackie, Rowe and Paul are things that Centres could consolidate.

Features of weaker answers

Just including theodicies 'stand-alone' was not answering the question set. Unfortunately, generally weaker candidates wrote about 'modern problems' and wrote about gun and knife crime, for example. An evaluation of the efficacy of the arguments of Mackie, Rowe and Paul is what was needed.

5. (a) **Examine the nature of mysticism with reference to transcendent, ecstatic and unitive experiences.** [AO1 25]

Features of stronger answers

Relatively few candidates were able to examine these in detail. Perhaps giving specific examples would be pertinent such as referring to Rumi or St. Teresa of Avila.

Features of weaker answers

There were comparatively few of these answers in terms of being able to give a comprehensive analysis of the response. Of course a mystical experience can include more than one of these experiences but separating the three aspects in terms of an examination makes for a better answer. Many completely misunderstood 'unitive experiences' as being those in a group.

5. (b) **'Mystical experiences are the most valid type of religious experience in communicating religious teachings and beliefs.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

Features of stronger answers

An evaluation of other types of religious experience, possibly drawing on a variety of sources would make for an answer of substance. Showing that a mystical experience can be comprised of other types of religious experience would also help. Some pointed out that the ineffability of mystical experiences could mean that they could perhaps communicate nothing.

Features of weaker answers

There was little evaluation of mystical experiences with inclusion of challenges to them by Caroline Franks Davis for example. Not many candidates were able to look at other types of religious experience and compare their validity with mystical experience. Pertinent types would have been conversion and prayer, for example.

EDUQAS

GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Summer 2018

COMPONENT 3: AN INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION AND ETHICS

General Comments

In general, candidates responded well to this paper. There were some very strong candidates with well-developed evaluation skills. However, a limited number of candidates only answered one half of the examination paper, thus limiting their access to the full range of marks. Many candidates had a good working knowledge and understanding of the ethical theories and were able to describe their features with some accuracy.

Section A

1. (a) Explain the four levels of law in Aquinas' Natural Law. [AO1 25]

This was a fairly straightforward question that was answered well for the most part and was the most popular choice for candidates.

Features of stronger answers

The best answers demonstrated the relationship between the four levels of law and how each lower level was ultimately a reflection of Eternal Law. The strongest answers also exemplified their responses effectively where appropriate and were able to explain Aquinas' understanding of the place of law in God's created order along with the purpose of the law. Some candidates did muddle the definitions of the different laws or missed out eternal law altogether and some talked vaguely about moral law without understanding that their definition was of Aquinas' Natural Moral Law.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker candidates did not write very much or gave an explanation of the whole of Natural Law, with its precepts, acts and virtues rather than answering the question. To some extent, a brief description of the precepts could be awarded for, where it was demonstrating Natural Law as the third level of the hierarchy. Where this was not the case, little could be awarded. Candidates could also make sure that they use the correct terminology for the laws, some talked about external law, teleological law or even brought in ideas from Situation Ethics or Utilitarianism. Others did not clearly understand the difference between Natural Law and Human Law or muddled the relationship within the hierarchy.

1. (b) **‘Human law should be completely based on Natural Law.’
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 25]

Features of stronger answers

Some candidates who had misunderstood the part (a), managed to do well in this part (b). If they had understood the meaning of human and Natural Law, then they were able to exemplify well and link their ideas to modern ethical dilemmas such as abortion and euthanasia. Some candidates muddled the question and considered whether Natural Law should be completely based on human law or whether you can follow Natural Law if you are obeying human laws.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker candidates were not able to exemplify well on this question and whilst some were able to offer lines of argument not all evaluated them successfully. Many wasted time with a lengthy introductory paragraph explaining Natural Law or telling the examiner what they were going to evaluate and this reduced the actual amount of evaluation taking place. In addition, many lengthy conclusions did not conclude at all, but recapped what had been said in the main response, thus considerably limiting the ability to gain award.

2. (a) **Explain the virtues and the acts within Aquinas’ Natural Law.** [AO1 25]

The biggest challenge that candidates faced here, was trying to avoid conflating Aquinas’ virtues with Virtue Theory from Aristotle.

Features of stronger answers

Stronger candidates were able to identify Aquinas’ four cardinal virtues and three revealed virtues as distinct from Aristotle’s Virtue Theory. The stronger candidates then went on to describe and exemplify the different between interior acts (our intentions) and exterior acts (the act itself.) Ideal answers went on to explain how both needed to be good in order for behaviour to be truly moral, and understood that a good exterior act with a poor interior act was still a good action, but would not lead a person towards the beatific vision. A few candidates effectively showed how this could be applied to double effect and this was credited.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker answers included descriptions of Aristotle’s or Jesus’ virtues or of Situation Ethics. Some simply wrote a long essay substituting the word virtue or act for precepts. Some candidates still struggled to remember which virtues applied to Aquinas and tended to dip back into a description of the golden mean or see fortitude and courage as separate virtues. Others wrote about real and apparent goods instead of acts. Weaker candidates also attempted exemplification of the acts, but struggled in that they allowed a person to be euthanised if the intention was good. Many missed out the acts altogether or did not know what this referred to and so gave a general run through of the primary and secondary precepts instead.

2. (b) **‘The deontological nature of Natural Law means that it works in contemporary society.’**

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

Features of stronger answers

The strongest candidates answered this well, using key terms correctly and giving exemplification. These candidates were able to present an argument and then evaluate its effectiveness in response to the question. They also were able to focus on the deontological nature of Natural Law rather than simply the strengths and weaknesses of Natural Law in general. Some candidates did not focus on this aspect of the question and some even argued regarding the teleological nature of Natural Law. Where candidates did this as a way of showing that the deontological nature holds it back, but the teleological features save it, (or vice versa) this was awarded.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker candidates did not always appreciate the extent to which contemporary society faces problems with Natural Law that Aquinas would not have foreseen. Those who used examples regarding murder, rape or war, did not demonstrate the contemporary problems. Those who noticed that the nature of war had changed, or that abortion and other medical procedures are now different and throw up new problems that a deontological theory cannot resolve, performed better. Others argued about deontological theories in general, without reference to Natural Law.

Section B

3. (a) **Explain why Fletcher rejects the ethical approaches of legalism, antinomianism and the role of the conscience.** **[AO1 25]**

This was the least popular question. It could be interpreted in two ways; either candidates thought the question asked why Fletcher rejected conscience, or they thought that a description of the role of conscience was required. Either approach was credited if candidates answered correctly

Features of stronger answers

Many candidates did a good job of detailing the antinomian and legalistic parts of the question, but struggled with conscience despite it being on the specification. Very good answers pointed out that Legalism went against Fletcher's principle of personalism and were able to say why. They also showed that antinomianism was not pragmatic as it did not work towards a loving outcome. Strong answers showed that Fletcher rejected a traditional understanding of conscience, such as you might find in the church, as the voice of God, or an intuitive standard of goodness to measure our actions with. They also recognised that Fletcher saw conscience as simply the process of doing ethics and weighing up what to do, thus this interpretation of conscience means it is essential for Situation Ethics as one must weigh up how to act in each situation.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker candidates confused conscience with consciousness. Some weaker candidates spent a long time simply describing Situation Ethics. Some description could be awarded for where it helped to demonstrate why Fletcher rejected it. Some tried hard to deal with the conscience, but did not really understand what Fletcher felt the conscience was.

3. (b) **‘Following Situation Ethics leads to immoral behaviour.’
Evaluate this view.** [AO2 25]

Features of stronger answers

The best responses applied the appropriate principles of Situation Ethics and how this related to whether this led to moral or immoral behaviour. Generally, candidates were able to make good use of examples and spoke about the practical nature of agape or the fact that from Fletcher's definition of what is moral or good, it is impossible that following agape can lead to anything other than moral behaviour. Other good responses counter argued by saying that great and loving intentions can lead to horrific acts that other theories would regard as immoral.

Features of weaker answers

Many candidates included an account of Situation Ethics in this answer which was unnecessary, even though they hadn't done so for the part (a). Weaker students did not evaluate their ideas but simply gave an argument in support of the question and then an unrelated argument against the question. Others used Mill in response to this question, which was awarded if they focused on ways of weighing up the morality of experimentation in each case, rather than application of his harm principle or other rules.

4. (a) **Apply Act Utilitarianism to the ethical issue of animal experimentation for medical research.** [AO1 25]

Features of stronger answers

Better answers showed awareness of the contents of the hedonic calculus as they applied it rather than simply spending time describing it at the start. Those that recognised that this was a complex issue that was difficult to assess, and why, were awarded appropriately. Strong candidates recognised that both Bentham and Mill did consider the suffering of animals in their evaluation of moral issues and included this in their application.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker candidates failed to actually apply much or any of the hedonic calculus or any Utilitarian ideas to the problem of animal experimentation. Candidates could have considered each individual act of testing or could have recognised the impossibility of this venture and considered whether we assess each drug / treatment or each disease or something else. Many chose to give a rundown of Bentham's Utilitarianism. Some candidates had a good try at applying the utility principle to animal testing and were awarded but did little else and showed no real understanding of the issues that a Utilitarian might weigh up. Some did not mention Utilitarianism at all and simply gave a description of animal experimentation.

4. (b) **Following Act Utilitarianism results in injustice.'**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

This tended to be answered better than the part (a) overall.

Features of stronger answers

A few gave some good arguments concerning human rights, although not all candidates appreciated that human rights were a kind of rule or inviolable principle that might need to be overridden if it suited the majority. Where candidates mentioned scholars like Mill, this was credited when they were using him to evaluate whether there was a more just method of applying Utilitarianism. Some recognised the fact that you can't please all the people all the time so it is just to serve the majority. Others even referred to that fact different forms of Utilitarianism developed to deal with the perceived injustice of Act Utilitarianism, e.g. Singer's version championing the rights of animals as well as humans.

Features of weaker answers

Weaker candidates failed to identify what the term 'injustice' meant. Once candidates have considered that justice is fair treatment or results and thus injustice means that people are treated unfairly, they might make some better arguments. Weaker candidates often seemed unprepared to weigh up how fair it is that we prioritise the happiness of the majority over the minority or mistakenly said that the minority were not considered.

5. (a) **Explain the challenges to Divine Command Theory.**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 25]

This question was quite popular, and candidates were mostly able to address the three main challenges listed in the specification. They were credited if they were able to give other challenges as well or instead

Features of stronger answers

Good answers were able to explain how one strand or 'horn' of the Euthyphro dilemma led to the arbitrariness problem and were able to explain both 'horns' or strands of the dilemma. Good responses also were able to accurately state why the dilemma was a problem for the qualities of the Theistic God and thus for a definition of what is good. The best answers generally included all three challenges from the specification and understood that this was a meta-ethical problem rather than a normative one.

Features of weaker answers

In some cases, too much time was spent in re-telling the story of Euthyphro from Plato rather than actually explaining the dilemma. Weaker candidates were only able to give one branch of the Euthyphro dilemma rather than both. Quite a few candidates mistakenly attributed the Euthyphro dilemma to Robert Adams instead of Plato.

5. (b) Divine Command Theory is a better approach to ethics than Ethical Egoism.'

Features of stronger answers

Candidates were able to argue either way in terms of which approach to ethics was better and had some good ideas. The best answers compared and contrasted the theories enabling evaluation to be clear and the best candidates were able to exemplify their points. For instance, some pointed out that whilst one challenge to Egoism is that it is damaging to society, in fact it might be better than Divine Command here. This is because it emphasises the usefulness to the individual of working on a project as a union of egoists and is unlikely to be judgemental or condemning as Divine Command would be when people chose to reject rules.

Features of weaker answers

Many weaker answers gave lengthy explanations of Egoism and Divine Command theory before they began the evaluation. It is vital that candidates practice evaluating in an answer rather than just stating strengths and weaknesses. The band descriptors ask for candidates to engage with the topics for high-level response and this means that if they are arguing that Divine Command Theory is better because it offers clear rules that are universally applied, they can counter by saying why this line of reasoning maybe strong and what the problems there are with it. Equally, if they were to argue that Egoism is self-centred and doesn't consider the needs of others, they should be able to say why the needs of others should be considered and why, in fact, this might not be a problem after all.



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