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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
ROUTE A  
ROUTE B**

**GCSE**

**AUTUMN 2020**

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# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

November 2020

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

#### General Comments

The report should be read in conjunction with the mark scheme which contains the assessment criteria and indicative content for each question.

This paper was sat in unique circumstances as a November 'resit' paper. As such, the entry numbers were significantly lower than the usual numbers for a summer series. A result of this was there were fewer responses reflecting particular faith traditions. This was specifically so regarding diminished representation of Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism.

There was a pleasing engagement with questions with no examples of 'spoilt' exam papers. Even where responses were not correct it was evident that candidates had tried to apply knowledge that might be relevant. Each question differentiated well. It was pleasing to see how many candidates engaged with the exam paper, with few missed responses. Where these occurred they were often the result of running out of time as detailed below.

Many responses showed an understanding of contemporary global, ethical and philosophical issues. These were often contextualised to demonstrate the impact of faith on actions and values using a wide range of appropriate religious terms. It was particularly pleasing to note the understanding shown in the vast majority of responses of different opinions and beliefs within one religious tradition. This was particularly apparent in responses relating to Islam and Christianity, where many candidates demonstrated a thorough understanding of different beliefs and practices between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims and also different denominations within Christianity.

Candidates are expected to make reference to sacred texts where appropriate. The form of reference is not dictated and direct references are not needed. What is important is that the sacred text is contextualised to show clearly the rationale for its inclusion.

Although candidates are only required to refer to include Humanism in responses to Theme 2, many selected to do so in all the d questions. Where relevant, such views can gain credit. There was a common understanding that Humanists were not theists but for some candidates that resulted in a view that, as they don't believe in a deity then they can do what they like and have no beliefs. This was particularly apparent in 1d when many responses indicated that interfaith marriages would not create any challenges for Humanists.

The requirements of each type of question are detailed below. There were common errors when candidates failed to meet the demands of the rubric of the question. In particular, some candidates failed to recognise the focus of 1c was on 'women in worship' as opposed to the role of women generally. A similar lack of focus was evident in some responses regarding the focus of 4c on 'racial prejudice.' Some responses discussed prejudices generally without specific reference to racial prejudice.

The rubric demands for answering 'c' questions was sometimes not met. As detailed below 'c' questions usually require responses from two different religious traditions. There is no need to write a general introduction to the issue nor to include any evaluation or analysis.

Although the overall standard was pleasing it was disappointing to see how many candidates failed to complete the exam paper due to pressures of time. In some cases this was due to mis-timing of previous questions. This was particularly the case where candidates write in great detail in 'a' and 'b' questions – both of which are low tariff.

### **Comments on individual questions/sections**

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

- (a)** Questions. These questions are always based on the key concepts for each unit. Candidates are required to give a definition of one of the key concepts for the unit. For this paper definitions do not need to be placed within a religion specific content. Generally, these were answered well. Many candidates had appeared to have learnt a set definition, while some wrote from their own understanding in their own words. Either is acceptable. Often candidates supported their definition with an example which, as indicated in the mark scheme, gains some credit. However, for full credit there has to have been some form of definition. The only requirement for full marks is an extended and correct definition. It is important to remember that in addition to answering 'a' questions the use of key concepts can be credited, where used appropriately, as part of the criteria for 'b', 'c' and 'd' questions which require the use of 'religious/specialist terms'. This cross transference of key concepts was not always evident in candidates' responses.
- (b)** Questions. These questions require candidates to select and then describe relevant information using specific religious language to respond to the question. For some candidates' responses were overly lengthy for the number of marks available and this occasionally impacted on candidates being able to give 'd' questions the amount of time necessary and the ability to finish the paper. Candidates are only required to describe or give facts about and there is no necessity for any form of explanation or evaluation. Candidates are expected to refer to a source of authority, where relevant. For some questions a reference to a sacred text might be more relevant than others. References to sources of authority do not need to be confined to sacred texts. Relevant sources of authority could include references to God; Jesus; the prophets; sacred scriptures; conscience; family; religious leaders; religious founders etc.
- (c)** Questions. These questions usually require candidates to demonstrate an understanding of an area of specification content from religion(s) or religious tradition(s). There is no need for a line at the beginning of the response to explain the topic being addressed.

Candidates answered these questions in a variety of ways. Some candidates lost marks as they failed/forgot to write about the second tradition. Some inserted the heading of the two traditions they had studied and wrote relevant details under each heading. This approach usually resulted in more focussed answers which met the rubric demands. Some candidates tried to answer from the two traditions simultaneously pointing out similarities and differences. Sometimes this produced a highly convoluted response which appeared to take an excessive amount of time. In a few responses the two traditions were not identified and it was difficult from the generic details given which traditions were being referred to. It was apparent that some candidates believed they had to compare the two traditions in their responses and therefore sought to make them polar opposites.

It is recognised within the marking criteria that there will sometimes be overlap between particular traditions beliefs regarding a certain issue and that a response will be judged upon the evidence, including the specific religious language and interpretation of sources of authority. A wide range of religions/ traditions and denominations are accepted for credit however no credit is awarded for references to Humanism and other non-religious traditions in responses for 'c' questions (due to the wording of the questions asking specifically for religious responses)

- (d) Questions. This question requires an extended piece of writing and carries half the marks for each of the unit. It is important to remember that for this particular paper evidence is not limited to religious and non-religious beliefs, it can come from philosophical, ethical and social contexts.

It was pleasing to see that many candidates were aware of the demands and prepared themselves before embarking on their response. Sometimes this was evident by highlighting key words or the use of planning tools such as mind-maps. It was apparent that the vast majority of candidates were aware the response requires a quality of argument which incorporates selection of relevant evidence rather than an opportunity to 'describe all you know'. **It is the argument and evaluative discussion which makes this question different to the demands of a c question.** Candidates are expected to select evidence to reinforce and exemplify their arguments. This is a very different skill to explaining about a teaching. Sometimes it appeared that responses contained too much information but little was developed or contextualised into an evaluative discussion. Some candidates explained the views of three different religions in successive paragraphs. Such a format often limited responses to an explanation rather than an analysis of arguments. Many responses included analysis and judgement although some were underdeveloped.

Some candidates began each paragraph with a connection to the preceding argument e.g. 'Further evidence for this argument would be' or 'On the other hand some Christians would consider this contradictory because...'. Some candidates made reference to each point in terms of it being a strong or weak argument. For this to be creditworthy an explanation must be given as to why it would be considered a weak or strong argument rather than a reiteration of the point made. There were some excellent responses in which candidates had selected three or four areas for discussion and used those as a foundation for their argument and analysis.

As previously cited, a significant number of candidates failed to attempt or complete 4d. It was evident that they run out of time. A lack of time also had an impact on the structure and quality of writing, as some candidates obviously rushed their answer with no time to consider a structure of their argument or re-read their answer.

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

## Comments on individual questions/sections

1a- There were very few non-responses to this question and the majority of candidates were able to give a clear definition. A minority of candidates failed to give a correct definition and referred to adultery as a stage of reaching adult hood or once a teenager has had sexual relationships. Definitions do not need to be set into a specific religious context although relevant examples of such would be credited. The majority of responses gave an extended definition with reference to sexual relationships extra to a marriage or normal commitment. Some responses gave far more details including references to sacred texts. As laudable as this is, for some candidates, it resulted in an inability to complete the exam paper due to time constraints.

**Q.1 (b)** This question could be answered with reference to a (or more) specific religious traditions or to believers in general. It was very pleasing to note how candidates engaged with this question with few non-responses or incorrect answers. The majority of responses included references to the teachings of sacred texts or sources of authority e.g. Prophet Muhammad. There were references to perceived punishments in some religious traditions for co-habiting and interpretations of what is meant by 'adultery' within some religious contexts. Many responses considered the role of God in selecting marriage partners and how that role is not fulfilled through cohabitation. There was a good use of religious language with responses often indicating specific denominational reasons relating to specific religious beliefs .

**(c)** Some candidates began their response by outlining their perceived role of women in society. A significant minority of candidates did not focus their response on worship and wrote lengthy answers expressing stereotypes or faulty construction of schemas of understanding of religious practices e.g. 'Roman Catholics believe that a woman can't be a priest because they believe that women should submit to their husbands as Eve came from Adam's rib' and ' In Judaism women prepare all the meals meaning they're considered as servants to the husband and the family.'

However, there were some excellent detailed answers which used appropriate religious language and contemporary references such as the role of Libby Lane and the increase of women leading worship in Islam.

**(d)** Candidates engaged well with this question and there was some insightful expressions of the impact of belief. A minority of candidates misread the question and focussed entirely on interfaith wedding services was pleasing to see candidates applying their knowledge and understanding from other parts of the Philosophical and Ethical component and indeed from their studies of Component 2 and 3. There were some very insightful comments showing a considered and sophisticated understanding of the impact of faith and belief. Many responses referred to potential difficulties regarding worship using detailed and appropriate evidence such as dietary requirements, festivals and the raising of children. Some responses referred to challenges within wider family expectations such as the role of caste, astrology and arranged or assisted marriages. There were a wide range of sources of authority referred to such as sacred texts, religious leaders, members of the family and the role of conscience.

It was disappointing that some candidates demonstrated an excellent understanding of the impact of faith and a consistent use of appropriate religious language but failed to give a thorough analysis. There were occasions when a response containing less knowledge and understanding but a greater depth of analysis gained higher marks than responses which demonstrated copious amounts of knowledge and understanding but limited analysis.

There were many different structures used by candidates to answer the question. As the question required a definite line of argument candidates who arranged their response as religion 1, religion 2, and then a comparison of the two perceived religious responses often failed to reach the high bands. Such a structure also was prone to result in stereotypes as candidates tried to make the attitudes from the two traditions as polar opposites.

Again, there were some responses which cited stereotypes and misconceptions as sources of evidence to justify an argument. A common example made reference to women who married Muslim men would not be allowed to work and be forced to wear hijab.

This question attracts the spelling, punctuation and grammar marks. It was evident (from the crossing outs) that many candidates were aware of the importance of correct spelling in their response. However, there were often weaknesses regarding lack of punctuation.

- Q.2**
- (a)** The majority of candidates were able to give a clear definition. Again, some candidates wrote more than the required amount of details to gain full credit.
  - (b)** There were a significant number of non-responses for this question and many wrong answers. In each of the religious traditions in the specification reference is made to the requirement to study 'Peter Singer's views on speciesism' within the Origin and Value of Human Life content. A minority of responses gave detailed descriptions with references to the bias of people regarding their own species and Singer's belief that animals should have the same rights as humans.
  - (c)** There was a good response to this question with many candidates showing a good understanding of the impact of belief on attitudes to caring for the environment. Many references were made to the role of duty and stewardship and connected to appropriate sources of wisdom. It is expected in questions such as this that to reach higher bands there will be references to appropriate teachings from sacred texts. There is no need to write out the text. Some candidates made an appropriate reference e.g. to the creation in Genesis but then 'made-up' what they thought a quote might be. There were many relevant examples as to how actions of religious believers exemplified their attitudes to the care of the environment. Where there were similarities between the two selected traditions (e.g. Anglican and Catholic) many candidates used distinctive language e.g. references to the encyclicals of Pope Francis.

A minority of candidates interpreted the question as to the world around them including humanity. Where relevant explanations in such answers were given, they were credited.

- Q.2 (d)** The vast majority of candidates engaged with this question with a very small number of non-attempts or one paragraph answers. A minority of candidates focussed the whole of their response on abortion. The question asked if euthanasia was 'never right'. Some responses failed to address this at all and instead gave an explanation (often very detailed and accurate) of each of the religious traditions beliefs about euthanasia. Again, there were examples of highly detailed knowledge and understanding but limited analysis and evaluation.

Responses showed that candidates understood what was meant by the key concept of euthanasia. Many responses included references to at least two religious traditions and one none-religious tradition. There was often an informed use of relevant religious teaching. It was pleasing to see many responses which understood the impact and context of textual sources and were therefore able to use them in an informed way to justify their analysis and evaluations.

Some responses purported a humanist viewpoint but without giving any evidence to reference to a frame of rationality or decision making process.

- Q.3 (a)** All candidates responded to this question with the majority able to give a correct definition of 'free will'. A minority of candidates confused free will with freedom and went on to give explanations of the connections between freedom and human rights.

- (b)** There were some disappointing responses which did not reflect the demands of the question. The question reflected the specification requirement in each religious tradition to study 'examples of forgives arising from personal beliefs.' Many candidates wrote in general about forgiveness or gave informed teachings about forgiveness from a particular religious tradition. Neither interpretations met the demands of the question. Some candidates referred to a number of examples but without giving a description of any.

There were however some excellent responses in which the relationship between personal beliefs and act of forgiveness was described. Relevant examples included references to Martin Luther King; Gee Walker, stories from sacred texts and the Imam at Christchurch Mosque. Some pupils referred to personal examples which were credited if they described the example and indicated the impact of personal belief on their actions.

- (c)** The question differentiated well with very few non-responses. Some candidates made direct and detailed references to the aims of punishment. These could only be credited if they were incorporated correctly into a religious attitude. Within Christianity there were many references to God as being the eternal judge and punishment through heaven or hell. Many references to 'an eye for an eye' were cited but there were few expression of the context of the quote. Many candidates selected a response from Islam for their second tradition. The majority of these failed to correctly refer to the teachings of the Quran but to describe practices in some Muslim countries. Amputation was often cited as a religious form of punishment in Islam. There were some appropriate and informed references to the role of Shariah.



**Q.3 (d)** There was an extremely pleasing standard offered by many responses to this question and how relevant knowledge was applied from their component 2 and 3 study. Significant religious understanding was shown by many candidates with extensive use of appropriate religious language and references to sources of authority. Many responses were justified with reference to the story of Job, the inconsistent triangle, the Exodus Paradox and the role of Satan/Shaytan. There were fewer instances in this question of candidates framing their answers through the response of Tradition 1, Tradition 2 and a Non-religious tradition. Instead there were more examples of the argument dictating the religious evidence being used. This not only helped create greater analysis but also kept a focus on the question.

**Q.4 (a)** There was a good response from the majority of candidate. Many were able to give a clear definition that was often supported by a relevant example. A minority of candidates perceived having human rights as being synonymous as being able 'to do whatever you want'.

**(b)** This was generally well answered although there was evidence that some candidates were under time pressures. Responses referred to the importance of charities either within one specific religious tradition or within religious traditions generally. There was often a good use of religious language with many responses identifying the giving to charities as a duty through tithing or as a pillar of faith. A minority of responses failed to focus on the demands of the question which required a description of the importance of charities and instead focused upon the actions of a charity without indicating why those actions were important.

**(c)** There were an increase of no-attempts and shorter answers which was possibly due to timing pressures. Some responses explained issues of prejudice and discrimination or the work of campaigners rather than the focus demanded by the question. Many answers referred appropriately to the creation of humans as detailed in sacred scripts. Credit could not be given to references of Humanism within responses to this question

**(d)** It was disappointing to see so many candidates who, due to time pressures had to rush the response or not have the time to respond at all. Of those who did respond there was often little structure to the answers with points reiterated or left unjustified.

Many responses included references to the importance of mission and evangelism in some religious traditions. It was pleasing to see the variety of contemporary examples that candidates used to justify their answers. These included references to Malala Yousafzai, wearing of Hijab in France and the teaching of creationism in schools. Many references were made to specific justifications for the arguments but these were often under-developed and lacking analysis. A range of sources of authority were referred to such as the law, the Pope and conscience. In the more effective responses there was a chain of logical argument which often referred to the importance of the declaration of Human Rights as a source of authority and proceeded to discuss the importance of free will. Many candidates referred to positive and negative impact of censorship.

## Summary of key points

- Candidates should ensure they follow the demands of the question. This is especially the case in 'c' questions.
- Candidates should plan their timing of responses to ensure they complete the whole of the exam paper.
- Incorporation of key concepts in 'b', 'c', and 'd' questions will be credited where relevant as examples of specialist language.
- 'D' questions require discussion, analysis and evaluation of the statement in order to reach upper mark bands.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

November 2020

### COMPONENT 2: CHRISTIANITY C120U20-1

#### General Comments

The paper allowed for differentiation across all questions. There were examples of some excellent, high band responses which demonstrated a thorough understanding and knowledge of the Christian religion and evidence of some sophisticated evaluation responses.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1 (a)** All candidates attempted this question. The majority of responses referred to the resurrection of Jesus and placed it in the correct context; taking place after his death on the cross. Where candidates gave a response with a general reference to resurrection as a teaching of the Christian religion, credit was given. One candidate referred to the raising of Lazarus.
- (b)** Some very detailed responses were given to this question. Some of the most comprehensive answers included references about purgatory. Some of the generic answers discussed the idea of all people going to heaven if they had lived a good life. A number of responses included Christian beliefs about hell; this was not a requirement of the question. There were some outstanding and developed descriptions.
- (c)** 'Incarnation' as a term proved problematic for a number of candidates and a small number did not attempt the question. A number of candidates gave answers focused on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. One candidate wrote incorrectly about 'incantations'.
- (d)** The majority of candidate's responses were awarded marks in the middle band. There was a general lack of sophisticated evaluation responses, which is the reason for the bunching of marks awarded on this question. Answers were frequently generic, with limited evaluation.
- Q.2 (a)** More candidates failed to recognise this term than the key concept in question 1(a).

A number of candidates gave a full definition. Some candidates confused the term with 'omnipresent' and 'omnipotent' and so gave incorrect definitions.

- Q.2 (b)** Many candidates incorrectly described the fasting of Lent, pancakes on Shrove Tuesday and the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday as one aspect of the celebration of Easter. A number of candidates simply gave a description of the key Christian beliefs about Easter. The question required only a description of how Christians celebrate Easter. Many candidate's responses were in band 2 and failed to move to the highest band because of a lack in detail in many of the descriptions given. Overall a disappointing response, with few marks awarded in the top band.
- (c)** The most common response was the statement that prayer was a way for Christians to connect to God. There were some very good, detailed responses. Some candidates disadvantaged themselves with very brief responses or a simple description of prayer without unpacking the significance of prayer for Christians.
- (d)** Large numbers of candidates described what Baptism and Eucharist are, without any discussion. A number of candidates did not attempt the question. The inclusion of atheist and Muslim perspectives on this question were irrelevant, and not credit worthy.

### **Summary of key points**

- It is important for candidates to understand the different requirements of the rubric format in (b) and (c) questions and distinguish between what is required with 'describe' and 'explain' triggers.
- Candidates should focus on the demands of a question and not adopt the inappropriate approach of simply 'write everything I know' on a topic.
- Reference to diversity in Christian traditions should be included when appropriate, and this includes (c) as well as (d) responses.
- Bullet points should not be used in any answers.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### GCSE

November 2020

#### COMPONENT 3: OPTION 1 BUDDHISM

##### General Comments

A number of candidates lost marks due to confusion over Buddhist terms e.g. mixing up anatta with anicca, confusing buddha-nature with environmental issues. Some candidates struggled to write an accurate, detailed description of how Wesak is celebrated which indicated a lack of preparation as this should have been a straightforward question. A number of candidates still drift into explanation in the (b) questions rather than focusing on a description.

There were some good answers to the (c) questions, especially the explanation of the three poisons. Some candidates explained the teachings of each poison individually, while others took a more general view – either way was acceptable. However, a few candidates struggled to answer 2 (c) as they misunderstood 'bodhisattva'. In these answers there were glimmers of information, but they lacked the understanding to formulate good answers.

In the better (d) answers, candidates made effective use of sources of wisdom and authority to support their arguments and incorporated religious language and connectives which added maturity and depth. The higher scoring answers drew information from across the course and made links with philosophical and ethical issues. However, some answers included too much explanation at the expense of analysis or included statements without an evaluation of its importance. Some candidates showed a lack of understanding of the way the statement in a (d) question works e.g. if loving kindness is not the most important way to reach enlightenment, then what are the alternative ways? One candidate referred to Christian views in both (d) answers even though the statements included 'Buddhist' or 'Buddhists' and, therefore, should have focused on Buddhism. Credit cannot be given for irrelevant material.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

November 2020

### COMPONENT 3: OPTION 2 HINDUISM C120U40-1

#### General Comments

There were marks spread across the ability range, illustrating the paper's accessibility to all candidates. There were some examples of very good scripts showing thorough knowledge and understanding of religious belief and of students evaluating, in a mature and intelligent way, the influence of religious belief on practice. However, answers, especially in the extended writing, were lacking in detail. Within the c. explain question, many candidates described rather than explained. Alternatively, for question 2b, where candidates were asked to 'Describe how Hindus might celebrate Raksha Bandhan' the candidates explained why they celebrated this festival instead. Knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and concepts was generally superficial and this, in turn, had a detrimental effect on the standard of the evaluation answers. Furthermore, some candidates lost marks, not due to lack of knowledge, but by not answering the set question.

Within Question 1d, candidates struggled to provide developed views. They were good at describing the nature of Brahman, but not why Brahman is difficult to understand. This illustrates why it is important for candidates to read and understand the question requirements, so that they can evaluate effectively. Additionally, many candidates found it difficult to access the higher levels for question 2d, 'Havan is the best way to worship Brahman.' Due to the specificity of 'Havan', many candidates did not understand what this practice actually was, preventing them from analysing and evaluating fully. For both of the D questions many candidates did not use evaluative language, to illustrate their judgements within an argument.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

November 2020

### COMPONENT 3: OPTION 3: ISLAM

#### General Comments

The paper allowed for differentiation across all questions. There was some evidence of understanding and knowledge of the religion of Islam, and evidence of some understanding of diversity in belief.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1**
- (a)** A number of candidates did not recognise this term and a wide range of incorrect alternatives with incorrect meanings were given.
  - (b)** Some candidates appeared to be very well prepared for this question, with correct descriptions of Shi'a beliefs about the five roots in Usul ad-Din.
  - (c)** Very good range of responses, where candidates appeared to be particularly well prepared for this question and were able to explain a number of beliefs about Allah.
  - (d)** A small minority of candidates misread the question and responded by looking at how free Muslims were to live their life in modern society, discussing personal freedom rather than making any connection to the teachings on predestination. There were some excellent responses with appropriate references to diversity of beliefs within Islam.
- Q.2**
- (a)** The question was well answered and nearly all candidates recognised the term.
  - (b)** Weak range of answers with few candidates achieving the higher band marks. Few candidates were able to give a full account of the revelation of Qur'an and some candidates gave a full biography of the Prophet Muhammad, which was not required. The simple response given by a number of candidates simply stated the Qur'an was revealed by the angel Jibril.
  - (c)** A number of candidates gave a description of prayer practices and included no explanation. In order to access the higher band marks, candidates must comply with the demands of the question. There were some sophisticated responses, with evidence of knowledge and understanding of diversity in practice. Credit was given for the practices of prayer at home and at the mosque.

- Q.2 (d)** Some very interesting responses to this question. A number of candidates disadvantaged themselves by simply describing issues facing Muslims living in the UK and failed to evaluate the statement in the question. A number of candidates referred to different aspects of Islamophobia in the UK. Although some candidates wrote at length about Muslim lifestyle in other countries, the demand of the question was to focus on Islam in the UK.

### **Summary of key points**

- Responses to (b) do require some elaborated description to achieve the higher band marks.
- Brief and very short answers mean candidates disadvantage themselves.
- It is important for candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of diversity within the religion of Islam.
- Bullet points should not be used in any answers.



# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

November 2020

### COMPONENT 3: OPTION 4: JUDAISM

#### General Comments

The report should be read in conjunction with the mark scheme which contains the assessment criteria and indicative content for each question.

This paper was sat in unique circumstances as a November 'resit' paper. As such, the entry numbers were significantly lower than the usual numbers for a summer series.

There was a pleasing engagement with questions with no examples of 'spoilt' exam papers. Even where responses were not correct it was evident that candidates had tried to apply knowledge that might be relevant. Each question differentiated well. It was pleasing to see how many candidates engaged with the exam paper with few missed responses.

Although responses often showed a schema of understanding of Jewish beliefs and practices there was limited use of religious language in extended responses. This was particularly evident in the 'd' questions when general justifications were given without reference to specific religious language.

There were many examples of candidates responding to questions but with reference to Christianity. This was particularly prevalent in answers to 1d and 2a. Sometimes these responses gave a comparison between Christian and Jewish beliefs and sometimes answers were framed within a Christian context. So, for example, understanding of Christian beliefs were expressed with a caveat that this was the same (or not) of Jewish beliefs. This paper requires no references to, or comparison with, Christianity.

Some responses failed to meet the demands of the question and gave detailed explanations of beliefs and practices outside of the remit of the question. This was particularly evident in 3b where many responses referred to features outside of the actual ceremony. Similarly references to the Holocaust were not relevant to the demands of Question 1d. There appeared, generally, to be a lack of awareness of Judaism as a 'living' tradition in twenty-first century Britain.

Basic knowledge and understanding was often expressed in 'd' answers but there was generally limited analysis. In all 'd' questions it is important that responses contain analysis and evaluation, reinforced by relevant evidence and that responses do not descend into mere description or explanation.

**ROUTE B**  
**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**GCSE**

**November 2020**

**COMPONENT 1: FOUNDATIONAL CATHOLIC THEOLOGY**

**General Comments**

This was the third year of examination for this specification, as GCSE examinations were cancelled in the summer due to Covid 19, a very small cohort sat the exam in November. The majority of the candidates engaged with the exam paper with a few missed responses. The paper differentiated well with all questions accessible.

There were some examples of candidates highlighting relevant key words in questions to help them focus on the demands of the question, and some candidates had used planning tools, to support their response to 'd' questions. The use of appropriate religious/specialist language is a key criterion in this component and some candidates confidently used key religious terminology to express their understanding and arguments. Candidates are expected to refer to sources of authority where appropriate. What is important is that the source of wisdom and authority is contextualised to show clearly the rationale for its inclusion. There were instances where a candidate referred to, for example, 'Love thy neighbour' but failed to explore the meaning of the reference in connection with the question.

When responding to the 'a' questions, some generic responses outside the specification and the context of religion were seen, but many focused on the definitions given in the glossary published by Eduqas.

In the 'b' questions some candidates did not focus on the specificity of the question or were not familiar with the content from the specification, for example 1b, but some candidates demonstrated clear knowledge and understanding.

In the 'c' questions, candidates were asked for a comparison of religious tradition, but some could only explain belief from one. Some described rather than explaining. Generally, a comparison of Catholic Christianity and Christianity were presented, with fewer number and less depth in evidence when referring to Judaism. Humanism was referred to, which does not address the question and is not relevant to the c. questions.

For the 'd' questions, timing impacted on some candidates as they clearly were limited in their response on the last d question. Candidates do seem to be developing their responses to evaluation questions over the last three years, and the best responses have demonstrated their knowledge and understanding from across the specification and applied it to the arguments. However, some evaluative arguments lacked cohesion in that the judgements were not supported. Some candidates consistently used stems stating 'this a strong /weak argument' but their justification was underdeveloped or did not apply to the content cited. Most candidates were confident in the presentation of a non- religious argument, where relevant.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

November 2020

### COMPONENT 2: APPLIED CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

#### General Comments

The general comments on this component do not differ significantly from the comments on Component 1. For the important, generic comments on the different question types please see the Principal Examiner's report for Component 1: Foundational Catholic Theology. The generic comments on question types apply equally to both Components, except that the (c) questions of Component 2 do not require two religious perspectives and question 1(d) does not require non-religious perspectives.



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