

Religious Studies A

GCSE 1930

GCSE Short Course 1030

Report on the Units

June 2007

1930/1030/MS/R/07

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GCSE Short Course Religious Studies A (1030)

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2391

Paper 1 Christianity through a study of Luke or Mark (Short Course)

General Comments

The overall performance showed a continuing improvement in candidates' understanding of the requirements of the questions and there was a fairly high level of achievement in general. Candidates covered the whole ability range.

The entry for the paper was equally distributed between the Luke and Mark sections.

Generally candidates answered well on parts (a) and (c) of questions but the understanding and application skills needed for part (b) questions were less developed.

Some candidates struggled with knowledge of the texts in Luke and Mark and where this was a weakness candidates often knew a jumble of detail from different gospel accounts and the visual media.

Comments on individual questions

Section A: Luke

1(a) From Luke's gospel, describe the crucifixion and death of Jesus. [8]

Generally well answered with many candidates displaying an excellent and detailed knowledge of the crucifixion events.

Weaker responses tended to adopt a broader approach, not specific to Luke's account, utilising material, which was a mixture from a number of gospels. Some omitted many relevant details.

Others included too much material prior to the crucifixion and the descriptions petered out before reaching the relevant details.

1(b) Explain why belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus is important for Christians. [7]

This question produced many positive responses and was generally well answered. However, some candidates failed to discuss the resurrection and there was evidence of a lack of awareness of the implication of Jesus' death and resurrection for Christians.

1(c) 'The crucifixion is the most important event in Luke's gospel.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Many candidates focussed on the importance of the crucifixion but in counter arguments cited events of the birth, teachings or miracles in the gospel without giving good reasons for their importance.

The best responses argued that the crucifixion was the culmination of Jesus' ministry and predictions but was followed by the resurrection, making the notion of 'most important' irrelevant in the context of the gospel.

2(a) Describe the Feeding of the Five Thousand. [8]

Competently and well answered by the majority of candidates who attempted the question. Some responses included extraneous information, not in the gospel, such as the boy with the loaves and fishes and the 'sharing' of food'. The most common omission was the conversation between Jesus and the disciples.

2(b) Explain why the Feeding of the Five Thousand is an important story for Christians. [7]

This question provided some good responses with the better answers showing a spiritual as well as a physical aspect to the feeding. There was evidence that candidates were aware that this miracle is in the 'self-sacrifice and service' part of the specification. Many other answers were vague and lacked a grasp of the idea of physical/spiritual sustenance for all with many resorting to repetition to fulfil the question requirements.

2(c) 'Actions are more important than beliefs.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

Many found this question taxing and candidates appeared to struggle with the concept of the question. Many seemed unaware that actions are an important part of behaving. Standard answers dismissed belief in favour of 'action as expressing faith'. A number of candidates pointed out the error of some actions based on faith and in better responses went on to analyse causes and motives.

3 (a) Give an account of the Parable of the Sower and the explanation Jesus gave. [8]

Generally well answered. Candidates who knew the parable and its explanation found the question straightforward and achieved the highest levels.

In weaker answers, most were aware of the different types of soil but some mistakenly believed people to be the seed rather than the seed being the word of God. Most saw the parable as indicating ways in which the gospel was received however some of the best responses recognised the teaching as a method to encourage evangelism.

3(b) Explain how Jesus' teaching in the Parable of the Sower might influence the lives of Christians. [7]

For some candidates, who had made a good response to (a), the answer was straightforward but many did not answer well. Some found difficulty in understanding what the question meant and so the answers tended to be contrived. Many candidates seemed to focus on the message of the weeds and material gain rather than the application of Christian principles.

A significant number of answers were just reiterations of the explanation of the parable without any further development.

3(c) 'Jesus' teachings are too difficult for Christians to follow today.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

This produced some thoughtful answers with many candidates evaluating that modern life presents different problems to those in Jesus' time but that biblical teaching is still relevant to their solution.

Weaker responses tended to discuss 'relevance to today' rather than 'too difficult', often dismissing the teachings as a result. Many interpreted 'follow' as 'understand' rather than the intended 'practice'.

4(a) Describe what happened when Jesus met Zacchaeus. [8]

A popular question. The majority of answers were excellent or good. However, a significant number of candidates omitted the idea of repentance and the message of salvation from Jesus.

4(b) Explain how Jesus' actions towards outcasts and sinners might guide Christians today. [7]

Generally well answered with candidates applying practically the teachings of Jesus to outcasts of today though weaker answers failed to make specific references to Christians and their actions towards the disadvantaged and oppressed.

4(c) 'In Luke's gospel there is too much sympathy for people who do wrong.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

The better answers produced some excellent and thoughtful debates. Weaker responses tended to omit the idea of repentance and for some candidates the lack of knowledge of 'good people' being rewarded prevented a balanced view.

Section B: Mark

5(a) From Mark's gospel, describe the crucifixion and death of Jesus. [8]

Some good answers with candidates displaying sound knowledge of the crucifixion story.

However, as with 1(a) some answers were not specific to Mark's gospel and contained material from a variety of sources, cross-referencing different gospel accounts. Some candidates also displayed large discrepancies in detail.

5 (b) Explain why belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus is important for Christians. [7]

Generally a well-answered question. Good responses showed awareness of the implications of the death and resurrection of Jesus for Christians in the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life. Many of the best responses also linked the events with the importance of the Easter celebrations.

5 (c) 'The crucifixion is the most important event in Mark's gospel.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

It was noted that some candidates who made good responses to part (b) repeated some of the points previously made as their arguments for the importance of the crucifixion but most were able to develop them in a comparison with other events in Jesus' ministry or the resurrection which might have claim to equal importance.

6 (a) Describe the occasion when Jesus prayed with his disciples, before his arrest. [8]

This was not a popular question. Those candidates who recognised it as referring to the events in the Garden of Gethsemane also, for the most part, knew the details of the account in Mark 14:32-41 of Jesus praying and the failure of the disciples to keep awake. A few candidates attempted to answer using the Last Supper but their responses were mostly guesswork and inaccurate about the Last Supper

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6(b) Explain why this account of Jesus praying might encourage Christians to pray. [7]

This was less well done than (a). Mostly answers were brief and generally about why Christians should pray rather than showing an understanding of the nature of Jesus' pleas in the Garden of Gethsemane and his acceptance of his fate, which might be seen as an example for Christians today.

6(c) 'Jesus' disciples should have had more faith in him.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Some of these evaluations were based upon the disciples falling asleep in the Garden and involved fairly simplistic alternative arguments about their behaviour.

However, there were some well-developed responses, which showed excellent awareness of the roles and actions of individual disciples and presented convincing, opposing arguments supported by evidence from the gospel.

7(a) Give an account of the Parable of the Sower and the explanation Jesus gave. [8]

The majority of candidates found this a straightforward question and there were a significant number of accurate answers. Weaker responses were therefore those that failed to demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the details and the order of events in the parable.

7(b) Explain how Jesus' teachings in the Parable of the Sower might influence the lives of Christians. [7]

Candidates who answered well on (a) found this a straightforward question. One of the main weaknesses in many answers was reiteration of the explanation of the parable, without development. Another was repetitious and contrived responses which showed a lack of understanding.

7(c) 'Jesus' teachings are too difficult for Christians to follow today.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

As with 2(c), this question was not generally well answered.

8(a) Describe what happened when Jesus met the Rich Young Man. [8]

Not a popular question but generally well answered by those who attempted it.

8(b) Explain how Jesus' teaching on the cost of being a disciple might influence Christians today. [7]

Some good answers despite the limited number of candidates who answered. Many chose to write effectively describing how some Christians, Priests, Nuns etc. had given up everything to follow Jesus. Some weaker responses were only about the 'cost' being to give up wealth, as the rich man had been asked to do.

8(c) 'Mark's gospel teaches that it is wrong to be rich'.
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Again, well answered. Many responses dealt in detail with the concept of wealth and the view that wealth is not intrinsically wrong but then explored the way it could be put to good use to benefit the less fortunate.

2392/01

Paper 2A Christian Perspectives (Short Course)

General Comments

The paper proved accessible to the candidature and provided appropriate challenge at all levels, achieving the required discrimination between the candidates. The vast majority of candidates were able to attempt all parts of two questions and only a handful of candidates failed to observe the requirement to answer Question 1. Time management appeared to be a problem for some candidates who failed to complete their final question. This often appeared to be the result of poor planning before responding to the section c) parts of the questions. The tendency of some candidates to offer what almost seemed like a prepared response which they were familiar with, rather than attempt to answer the question as stated was evident in the work of some centres. Candidates who did what the questions asked tended to offer fresh and occasionally outstanding responses, which could be credited much more highly than 'learned' responses. This problem was especially evident in the b) (AO2) sections of the paper where the candidate's ability to demonstrate their understanding of Christian Perspective relating to the topic is being measured. Overall, achievement tended to be higher in the a) (AO1) and c) (AO3) parts of the questions. Good responses in the a) sections offered detailed, specifically Christian teaching appropriate to the topic of the question, drawn from the specification for this paper or from other appropriate sources. Candidates who referred to the same general principle such as 'Christians believe all people are equal', or repeated the same Biblical teaching in response to all the questions limited their chances of achieving much beyond Level 1 or 2. In line with previous years, some of the responses to the c) parts of the questions were outstandingly mature with points of view being carefully and cogently debated. However some responses ran to over one and a half pages leading to the time management problems mentioned above. A substantial number of candidates, sometimes whole centres, failed to take note of the guidance offered by the wording of these questions and just repeated what had been offered already in sections a) or b) as their response to the stimulus, without any attempt to evaluate the material at all. Others failed to give supporting reasons for their view or the views of others and thus limited their level of achievement.

Comments on individual questions

1(a) Describe Christian teaching about the value of human life. [8]

Although the headlines in the stimulus for this question led some candidates to concentrate more on the specific issues of abortion and euthanasia rather than the general issue in the question, the vast majority of candidates were able to respond well to this question. Reference was commonly made to the idea of life as 'God given' and therefore sacred. Some of the best responses described the basic principles and then illustrated them within reference to the topics in the stimulus.

1(b) Explain how Christians might put their beliefs about euthanasia into practice. [7]

The very best responses to this question described several possible examples of Christian action and explained the driving forces behind the actions, in terms of the motivational and inspirational aspects of Christian faith. These responses showed insight into the relationship between Christian beliefs and values in matters of life, death, human suffering, and teachings about compassion and individual responsibility to others. Weaker responses offered examples of likely actions by Christians, such as helping to relieve suffering by working in a hospice, without reference to the motivation for such actions. A considerable number of candidates believed, wrongly, that euthanasia was legal, commonly practised and acceptable to Christians and as an act of agape love.

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1(c) 'Only God has the right to end a life.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

The tendency to repeat factual material from the other parts of the question without any sort of evaluation or comment was evident here. This fixed many responses at Levels 1 or 2. Better responses broadened the issues beyond euthanasia, for example by considering the apparent contradiction between the view that life should be sustained as it is sacred, but that it can also legitimately be extinguished, for example in a time of war.

2(a) Describe Christian teaching about favouritism. [8]

Candidates who understood the concept of favouritism responded well by stressing Christian teaching about the worth of all people and that God has no favourites. The teaching from James 2, referred to in the specification was known by many of these candidates and they used it to demonstrate how Christian teaching supported the ideas of human rights and equality.

2(b) Explain how children should be treated in a Christian family. [7]

This question proved problematic to some candidates who could only refer to the idea that children should be respected by their parents. However there was a substantial number of candidates who were familiar with the Biblical teaching. Many of these candidates justifiably interpreted 'treatment' as mean 'upbringing' and referred to the religious side of treatment in a Christian family, starting with Infant Baptism or Dedication and support in the faith until Confirmation or Adult Baptism and beyond.

2(c) 'Christian parents should encourage their children follow Christian teachings.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

As always with the topic of this question, some candidates took the view that children should make up their own minds and not be forced or encouraged into any faith. These responses failed to suggest at what stage in a child's development such decision making should take place. By contrast there were many other pleasingly mature reflections on why religious belief should be fostered in the upbringing of children. Many of these responses showed an awareness of the rights of parents to bring up their children in their own faith and an understanding that this was essential if the child was to be a full member of the family.

3(a) Describe Christian teaching which might be used in a discussion about gender. [8]

This question dismayed candidates who were expecting to respond to a similar question about race. It was possible to award some credit for the general principles to which these responses alluded, but few achieved beyond 3 or 4 marks. Other candidates took the question to be about the role of women in the Church and were diverted to a full discussion of the issue of women priests. More appropriate responses drew on Biblical teaching; often referring to how Jesus' positive attitude towards women and the emphasis on role of women in the gospel of Luke in particular, coincided with changes in societal attitudes towards gender equality. The idea of everyone equal before God was taken by most candidates to override the apparently sexist views present in scripture or past and current church teaching. A handful of candidates referred to the idea that equal does not mean identical and for example, that in the Roman Catholic Church, women are valued equally with men but for different reasons as they have different roles.

3(b) Explain how and why a well known Christian has dealt with prejudice and discrimination. [7]

The Christian chosen by the vast majority of candidates was Martin Luther King and for many of them, this question was an opportunity to write a lengthy biography without selecting or deploying their knowledge effectively. Candidates who focused on crucial incidents in his life and drew out the Christian rationale of his mission and of his (non violent) methods showing their understanding, were able to access the higher mark levels with ease. Pleasingly, this year only a handful of candidates failed to choose a person who is well known for being a Christian.

3(c) 'It is impossible to treat all people equally.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

Candidates, who took the time to see what the question was getting at and to plan their response, offered a sound appreciation of the difference between the ideal of equality and the harsh reality of an imperfect world. These candidates realised that despite the difficulties, this was an ideal to be worked towards and that the current impossibility of treating all people equally should not be accepted as an excuse for accepting inequality. Other candidates took to view that human nature and the desire for self preservation were bound to lead to inequalities. As sometimes happens with the c) parts of the question, some candidates reacted so strongly to the stimulus with indignation that their responses lack any balance and failed to address more than one point of view, leading to limited achievement.

4(a) Describe the teachings which Christians might use in a discussion about divorce. [8]

This question proved very accessible, elicited a wide range of responses enabling candidates to score well. Candidates had a good knowledge of the Biblical teaching and of the Roman Catholic position, although annulment was commonly misunderstood as a kind of divorce. Many candidates exhibited a detailed knowledge of denominational differences but did not always apply them to the correct denomination.

4(b) Explain how Christians should treat elderly relatives. [7]

Many candidates could only refer to the idea that the elderly should be respected by the other family members. There seemed to be an assumption amongst some candidates that elderly meant an infirm person who was potentially a candidate for euthanasia. However there were a substantial number of candidates who were familiar with the Biblical teaching about respecting elders. The ideas of agape love and of the need for Christians to set an example in their treatment of the elderly figured prominently in many of these responses.

4(c) 'Christian couples should never divorce'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

For some candidates, this was an opportunity to rehearse the information they had presented in part of their answer to a). This limited their level of achievement significantly. Those candidates, who examined more than one Christian attitude and weighed them against each other making useful observations and in some cases coming to balanced conclusions, fared much better.

2392/02

Paper 2B Christian Perspectives (Roman Catholic) (Short Course)

General Comments

The standard of this short course is no less rigorous than the full course GCSE and some candidates' answers were too short and undeveloped to gain marks at the higher levels. However, candidates appeared to be well prepared for the paper in general. Basic Catholic teaching was known, technical vocabulary was largely understood and some relevant biblical passages were applied. Most candidates were able to offer relevant responses on the range of issues set. Some candidates did not offer a specific Christian response in the (b) and (c) sections, which means they could not gain full marks on these parts of questions.

Comments on individual questions

1(a) Describe Roman Catholic teaching which might be used in a discussion about race and gender. [8]

Most candidates began with the teaching that we are made in the image of God and are equal in His eyes. Many then used 'Love your neighbour' and/or 'Treat others as you would like to be treated'. Better answers then explained the relevance of the passage to the issues of race and gender. Some were able to quote St Paul's letter to the Galatians to good effect. Surprisingly few referred to Jesus' own example, his attitude to women, outsiders and outcasts. Candidates did need to take note that the question asked about both race and gender. There was rarely more than a brief comment on gender. Some candidates pointed to lack of women priests in the Catholic Church as a failure to practice what it preached in this answer or in (b).

1(b) Explain how Roman Catholics might put teaching about equality into practice. [7]

Many ways to treat others equally were mentioned e.g. not stereotyping, not judging, non violent protest, lobbying MPs, but there was a danger here for weaker responses to ignore religious practice. Candidates should be prepared to comment on the religious motivation behind acts performed by Christians that people of other faith and none, may also do. They should also be ready to provide uniquely Christian or Catholic examples, either Catholic people or organisations or encyclicals that have made contributions in these areas or mention prayer, offering Mass or other religious practice. The Parable of the Good Samaritan was used to good effect in response to this question or in (a). Better answers did more than recount the story, showing how it inspired Catholics to ignore differences.

1(c) 'It is impossible to treat everyone equally'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

Candidates did not limit answers to issues of race and gender and many explained the injustice of division of resources or how prisoners forfeited their rights to be treated equally. All were relevant responses. As always, there had to be at least one Christian point of view to gain full marks

2(a) Describe Roman Catholic teaching about family life. [8]

Most students choosing this question knew little of the teaching on family life. The CCC view of the family as 'the original cell of social life' and the importance of fidelity, commitment and openness to children was largely ignored. Many thought a model of husband as head of the household and subservient wife was Catholic teaching. 'Honour your father and your mother' was used well to discuss children's role in the family

2(b) Explain why the Roman Catholic Church teaches that marriage should be for life. [7]

Many candidates did not understand why marriage should be for life and instead described adherence to vows and the effect on children of family break up. Many included a discussion of teaching on divorce and annulment in their answer which was credited.

2(c) 'It is important for family life that women stay at home.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

A significant number of candidates responded to this question without any reference to Christianity, which meant they could not be given full marks. They mainly offered examples of the inequality of expecting women to stay at home while men could have a career. Some commented on the importance of a mother at home to raise a young family

3(a) Describe Roman Catholic teachings that could be used in discussion about the sanctity of life. [8]

When the definition of sanctity of life was known, many candidates confidently offered summaries of some aspect of Catholic teaching, its sacred nature, given at Creation when humans were 'made in the image of God' life beginning at conception, and a gift which only God can end. Many offered relevant issues influenced by the concept of sanctity of life. Others then wandered slightly off the point with general discussions of abortion, euthanasia and contraception.

3(b) Explain Roman Catholic attitudes towards euthanasia. [7]

This question was answered well. Many candidates were able to explain some Catholic teaching on euthanasia clearly and knew that the Church regards active euthanasia as wrong, while allowing for passive euthanasia with a good use of example situations. Many used the 5th commandment, though the commandment actually forbids murder; or the sanctity of life argument. Candidates made good use of their knowledge of 'double effect' and hospice care.

3(c) 'Euthanasia is not wrong if a person asks to die.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

Not all candidates picked up on the issue of voluntary euthanasia in their answers and referred to euthanasia generally. Very few used any well-known examples such as Diane Pretty to illustrate their points. Most candidates offered little more than one opinion.

4(a) Describe Roman Catholic teaching which might be used in a discussion about divorce. [8]

Candidates knew the teaching on divorce and were quick to note that it was never allowed. There was comment on making the divorcee's spouse an adulterer if remarrying and some connections were made with Christ and the Church, which underlined the importance of not divorcing. Others knew it to be wrong but could not develop their point beyond this.

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4(b) Explain how people in a Roman Catholic parish might help a couple having problems with their marriage. [7]

Candidates were creative in their selection of ways a parish might help a couple experiencing problems in their marriage from priests explaining teaching on divorce to offering annulment; from giving them bible passages to read to renewing wedding vows; from Marriage Care counselling to advising breaks. Some candidates had exhortation to forgiveness (70x7). A few could not think of any ways that a parish could help and gave no response.

4(c) 'Divorce should never be allowed'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

Candidates had reasons for and against divorce. Weaker responses did not offer religious reasons discussing loveless or abusive marriages and thus the need for divorce.

2393

Paper 3 Buddhism (Short Course)

General Comments

This paper once again achieved a good level of differentiation among candidates with some performing extremely well. The answers given by some candidates at some centres to a number of the questions raised some concerns, as they did not appear to have been made fully aware of the differences between Buddhist and Hindu philosophy, giving answers that were accurate for Hinduism but not Buddhism. This was particularly noticeable in question 1 and was reflected in the marks awarded.

Section (a) questions were generally well answered this year with most candidates giving an appropriate amount of detail.

Section (b) questions continue to cause the most difficulty for candidates with many candidates merely repeating knowledge creditable in part (a) but failing to explain the application of this to the lives of believers socially, morally, spiritually or personally.

Section (c) questions seemed to provide more of a challenge to candidates than they did last year, with comparatively few achieving full marks. Many gave a one sided opinion or a statement of their own opinion with no supporting arguments. Far too many seemed to think that "everyone is entitled to their own opinion" was an argument that could be offered in support of the statement. As last year, many attempted to provide a viewpoint from a number of different religions which failed to provide a reasoned argument and became instead a statement (with varying accuracy) of the beliefs of a number of religions with regard to the question. Section (c) questions require opinions which are supported by reasoned argument and which make accurate reference to Buddhist beliefs. Many candidates are still choosing to spend too much time on the part (c) questions relative to the number of marks available for them. Having said this there were some excellent answers on part (c) questions which showed a thorough understanding of the material and an ability to manipulate it skilfully.

Many candidates continue to use the word "Buddha" instead of "Buddhist".

Almost all candidates had enough time to finish the paper and there were few rubric errors.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe Buddhist beliefs about life after death. [8]

The response to this question was, on the whole, disappointing. Many candidates, even at the more able end of the spectrum, were unaware of the differences between the Hindu concept of reincarnation and of the Buddhist concept of rebirth and answered on the former. Many got no further than a statement that you would be reborn as something else depending on how you had lived your life. Some mentioned enlightenment as an ultimate goal but seemed ignorant of the meaning of the term, many describing nibbana as the "Buddhist version of heaven". Some gave an excellent description of the Tibetan ideas regarding the bardo state and the Six Realms, clearly picking up on part (c). Only a few candidates were aware of the concept of anatta and attempted to relate it to the question, a few even discussing the skandas. Some seemed aware that Buddhists do not believe in a soul but clearly did not know what to make of this information and so went on to explain that the person was reborn, unaware of the contradiction this involved. Comparatively few candidates achieved the top marks available for this question; with many achieving only at level one or two.

1(b) Explain how believing in kamma might affect the life of a Buddhist. [7]

Candidates did not appear well prepared for this question with many of even the more able responses limited to a simplistic answer about “what goes around comes around” and many seeming to believe that kamma is the result of judgement from the Buddha. Simple answers talked about doing good things so that good things will happen to you and so as to get a good birth. A few seemed to think that reaching nibbana is a reward for having a lot of kamma rather than the result of an escape from it. Very few indeed were aware of ideas such as the transfer of merit or kamma to others or the gaining of kamma through ritual action. The best answers talked about the way in which Buddhists might attempt to put the teachings of the Dhamma into practice in their lives or be motivated to try to break free of samsara. A worrying number of candidates wanted to use examples from “My Name is Earl” which, it should be noted, does not give an accurate representation of Buddhist beliefs about kamma.

1(c) ‘The Six Realms are not real.’ Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Buddhism in your answer. [5]

Many candidates clearly had no idea what the Six Realms were; some assuming that they were rules Buddhists were expected to follow while others made a vague guess that they were connected to life after death given part (a) and gave general answers about this. Answers that received marks in the lower levels of response tended to contain arguments that were limited to the fact that there is no scientific evidence of the six realms, that the Christian belief in heaven and hell is self-evidently to be preferred or that people are entitled to their own opinions. Those who said that they agreed with the statement because they respected the right of Buddhists to believe what they liked could not achieve beyond level 1 as they had not offered any arguments in support of their statement.

At the other end of the scale there were some outstanding evaluations about the metaphorical as opposed to the literal existence of the Realms, which was very encouraging. A few candidates wasted a great deal of time producing a very detailed description of the Six Realms which could not be credited in this question but did not offer any arguments as to their reality or otherwise.

2(a) Describe the Five Precepts. [8]

Those who knew what the Five Precepts were (a few clearly guessed, making liberal use of the 10 Commandments in the process) generally answered this well, although many just gave a list which was not sufficient to achieve at the higher levels. Many explained in some detail how the Precepts could be put into practice and most were aware that they were guidelines designed to help one towards enlightenment rather than rules to be followed to avoid punishment. Surprisingly few mentioned that the Precepts could be interpreted both positively and negatively. The full range of marks was achieved by candidates on this question.

2(b) Explain why a Buddhist might find it difficult to follow the First Precept. [7]

Despite some excellent answers, this question was, on the whole, poorly answered. Some did not know which the First Precept was and either picked one at random or described them all. Those who did know tended to give general answers about vegetarianism and sweeping the path to avoid walking on insects (a custom practised by Jain, not Buddhist monks).

A few of the more able entered into a general discussion about conscription, fair trade and related issues and what could be considered “harmful”. Few considered the positive side of the Precept and went on to talk about compassion.

2(c) 'Buddhists only want to reach nibbana so they do not care about making the world a better place.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Less able responses again resorted to moral outrage as Buddhists are "gentle and unselfish" people who could not possibly think this. At the top end of the ability range, however, there were some excellent answers exploring the idea that following the Dhamma automatically makes the world a better place. Many discussed compassion here and some pointed out that actions must be without hope of reward to be truly Dhammic. Surprisingly, however, very few indeed made any mention of ethically engaged Buddhism or the Dalai Lama.

3(a) Describe what Buddhists mean by the term dukkha. [8]

This question was generally answered well. There were surprisingly few references to anicca or "unsatisfactoriness" / "dis-ease" however. Most responses linked the idea with craving and tanha. A general problem with responses to this question was that candidates seemed uncertain which pieces of information to put into part (a) and which to put into part (b). However, candidates were, in general, well prepared for this question and achieved the full range of available marks.

3(b) Explain how the Dhamma can help a Buddhist to overcome dukkha. [7]

Most seemed well prepared for this question and were able to give a good account of themselves. Where candidates failed to achieve well it was often because they described the Dhamma (Eightfold Path, Five Precepts etc) rather than explaining how it might help to overcome dukkha. There were some very general answers to do with encouragement and help, and these could not be awarded marks in the higher levels.

3(c) 'Religion should make people happy.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Buddhism in your answer. [5]

Most managed to achieve at least at level 2 or 3. Many arguments were offered against the statement. Many pointed out that people are often forced into religion or that religion is responsible for wars (a fact that was assumed, rather than justified or challenged.) Candidates found it less easy to argue in favour of the statement and many fell back on to simplistic arguments such as people being entitled to their own opinions or people would not follow a religion that did not make them happy. A disappointing number of candidates failed to achieve full marks because they did not refer to Buddhism in their answer.

4(a) Describe Mahayanan Buddhist beliefs about Bodhisattvas. [8]

Not many candidates attempted this question and those who did were generally well prepared for it and achieved well. Some candidates gave outstanding answers on this question in particular, mentioning "real" bodhisattvas such as the Dalai Lama and "metaphorical"/ "mythological" ones. A few candidates attempted this question without having any real idea what a bodhisattva was, possibly because they hoped to pick up some marks on part (c). These candidates struggled, often hazarding a guess that Buddhists believe bodhisattvas are "wrong".

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4(b) Explain How a Buddhist might try to develop the Six Perfections.

Again this gave rise to some outstanding answers and nearly all those who knew what the Six Perfections are achieved well in this question. Some confused the Six Perfections with the Five Precepts or, on a few occasions, with the Ten Commandments. Vague answers about meditating and doing good were credited at level 1.

4(c) 'Anyone can achieve enlightenment.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Buddhism in your answer. [5]

Answers here tended to be surprisingly simplistic with very few making mention of the distinction between lay Buddhists and the monastic Sangha; or between Mahayana and Theravada beliefs in respect to this. Some argued convincingly that non-Buddhists could achieve enlightenment. Less able responses tended to be outraged by the statement as "everyone has the right to be enlightened if they want to" or "you can achieve anything if you really want to". Although most achieved level 1 or 2, the number of candidates achieving level 4 on this question was disappointing.

2394

Paper 4A Christianity (Short Course)

General Comments

This paper was accessible to all candidates. While the full range of ability was represented, there was a feeling that the overall performance by candidates this year was somewhat disappointing. However, this should not detract from the fact that there were some excellent scripts.

A minority of candidates attempted questions 2 and 3 and, for those who did, many of the answers were lacking in relevant detail and/or understanding of the topic. The standard of the answers to question 2 once again raises the issue as to whether or not, in some Centres, the biblical sections of the syllabus are taught fully and in as much depth as other sections.

Question 4 was undoubtedly the most popular question of the three optional questions though, once again, many of the answers lacked depth and breadth.

Some candidates seemed to lack a basic knowledge and understanding of Christianity with many confusing or misunderstanding important events in Jesus life and/or applying beliefs and teachings from other religions (for example Judaism or Islam) to Christianity.

There were quite a number of rubric errors with a worrying number of candidates attempting all four questions. This inevitably led to low marks as they did not have time to do justice to each of the individual questions.

Additionally, a number of the scripts were virtually illegible and grammatically unsound resulting in candidates receiving low written communication marks; however, other scripts were beautifully written and were a pleasure to mark.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe how some Christians keep Lent including Ash Wednesday. [8]

A number of candidates were not able to answer this question fully as, other than Christians giving up something for Lent, they were not able to describe anything else Christians do. Very few attempted to describe what Christians do during Holy Week. A number did not know when Ash Wednesday is or what Christians do on that day. Too many candidates spent too much time writing about Shrove Tuesday and, therefore, did not address the question fully. Conversely, some candidates gave very detailed and thorough answers.

1(b) Explain why Christians keep Lent. [7]

Many candidates' answers were valid or competent but few were good. Some could relate Lent to Jesus' temptations in the wilderness and how it is a test of faith and self-control. Some were also able to describe how it made Christians grateful for what they had and how it created empathy with those who have little in life. However, there were some candidates who could not understand the theology of Lent and simply thought it was a good way to diet or give up smoking.

1(c) Fasts are more important than festivals.

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer.

In a number of responses, it was not clear whether Christian festivals were being addressed or general secular celebrations. Most candidates could consider more than one point of view but

many answers were not well-developed. Some candidates confused fasting with starvation, which then led to inappropriate health-related discussions.

2(a) What does Jesus teach in the Sermon on the Mount about the laws against murder and adultery? [8]

There was a lot of confusion with the Ten Commandments in the answers to this question. Most knew that adultery and murder were wrong but few were able to give Jesus' specific teachings about them from the Sermon on the Mount. A number of more able candidates used teachings of Jesus from outside the Sermon on the Mount or later Christian teachings but, in doing so, did not fully address the question. Overall, the question was not well answered and this once again, raised concern that the Sermon on the Mount is virtually ignored by some Centres.

2(b) Explain how the teaching about divorce in the Sermon on the Mount might affect the lives of Christians. [7]

Disappointing answers were the norm for this question. Whilst a number could say what Jesus taught about divorce, they could not explain how it might affect the lives of Christians. There was a lot of muddled theology and some answers simply ended up as the candidate's list of reasons why a person should be allowed a divorce irrespective of what Jesus taught. However there were some good answers, clearly showing the dilemma faced by practising Christians who find themselves in an unhappy marriage.

2(c) 'The teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is not helpful to people today. Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Although many candidates seemed to equate the Sermon on the Mount with the Bible in this question, on the whole, was answered well. Many candidates concentrated on the fact that the Sermon was written at a different time for a different audience and that many of the teachings are out-dated now and not relevant to our society. However, a number did say the teachings were timeless and a surprising number expressed dismay and sadness that society had rejected Jesus' teachings.

3(a) Describe the work of bishops and priests. [8]

This was a popular question. While some candidates failed to differentiate between priests and bishops, they were still able to give quite detailed accounts of what priests did. Those who did describe the work of bishops, separately, did so competently or well and were clear about his pastoral role. Some candidates became unnecessarily bogged down in trying to differentiate between a priest and a vicar and a minister and other denominational clergy but, nevertheless, could see the important role a priest plays in the church and in the community.

3(b) Explain the importance of confirmation for some Christians. [7]

A number of candidates used this question as an opportunity to write everything they knew about confirmation and they obviously knew a lot about the preparation and the service itself. However, many responses did not include the importance of confirmation therefore they failed to answer the question. Even when the question was answered well, few mentioned the Holy Spirit at all or the fact that confirmation was a public acknowledgement of the individual's Christian faith. Sadly, some candidates confused Confirmation with confession or communion or adult baptism.

3(c) 'In today's church, ordinary people are as important as ministers.' Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

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Whilst some candidates relied heavily on the philosophy that all men are equal and some got a little confused by the term “ministers” and “ordinary people”, this was generally a well answered question and most candidates could give a number of different points of view.

4(a) Describe how Christians might use the Bible in worship. [8]

This was a popular question and one that was sometimes answered well. However, a number of candidates who answered this tried to explain why the Bible was important in a) rather than how it is used for worship. Many could explain how it was used for Bible readings in church but could not give further examples of use.

4(b) Explain why the Bible is important for Christians. [7]

Few candidates produced a good answer for this question. Many repeated their answer to a), failing to distinguish between use and importance.

4(c) ‘Christianity could not exist without the Bible.’
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Generally well answered with most candidates able to offer different points of view although there were sadly, some candidates who failed to develop these effectively. Some candidates referred to the oral tradition and said that this would have been the means whereby Christianity would have flourished in the absence of a written testament.

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Paper 4B Christianity (Roman Catholic) (Short Course)

General Comments

It was evident that many candidates had put considerable thought and effort into their answers, on the whole however, answers were very short. Candidates could be helped to do better on this paper by looking at the 'driver words' for examination questions. In particular 'how' and 'why' were interchanged freely, requiring cross crediting to give candidates any marks. The generally poor knowledge of religious vocabulary and terms for this paper made it difficult for some candidates to answer all parts of questions and candidates should be made more familiar with all terms and vocabulary used in the syllabus.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe how Roman Catholics keep Lent including Ash Wednesday. [8]

Ways of keeping Lent rarely went beyond giving up chocolate, alcohol and cigarettes. Very few candidates wrote about giving to charity and prayer as well as fasting. Ash Wednesday had to be mentioned for full marks and most candidates knew that there was an ashing service. Descriptions rarely went beyond receiving a cross of ash on the forehead – only the best candidates included development by mentioning fasting and abstinence, the form of words, where ash came from or the symbolism of ash. Few thought to include other days of Lent.

1(b) Explain why Roman Catholics keep Lent. [7]

Most candidates rightly knew that Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights and that this inspired Catholics to fast for forty days and forty nights themselves. Better answers explained this in depth and described Jesus' temptation by the devil. Some commented on Lent as a preparation for Easter and a way of acknowledging Jesus' sacrifice for us by making sacrifices. Very few thought to analyse the reasons that Catholics might keep Lent, such as self control or for looking at their lives and their relationship with God.

1(c) 'Fasts are more important than Festivals.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

This appeared from the answers, to be difficult to think through for many candidates. Most focused on the food eaten at festivals, versus fasting. Better candidates commented on the commitment to religion that fasting showed or that fasting was more important if it benefited the poor. Some candidates made the good point that festivals formed and tightened communities. Very few considered that fasts often precede festivals.

2(a) Describe what is said and done at a Roman Catholic funeral. [8]

Many responses focused mainly on how the coffin arrived at church and left and said very little about the service itself. Weaker responses mentioned priests and family 'saying a few words'. Very few had any religious terms, using 'songs' rather than 'hymns', 'saying something about the dead person' rather than 'eulogy', Mass rather than Requiem Mass. Most candidates understood the funeral as a way of saying goodbye. The best responses referred to prayers being said, the body being blessed and readings about life after death.

2(b) Explain how belief in the afterlife might affect the daily life of Roman Catholics. [7]

To answer this question fully, there had to be some comment on the effect of belief in life after death on daily life. Many wrote about being good without giving examples. Better answers were about helping others, praying and candidates referred to going to reconciliation.

2(c) 'When people worry about going to heaven it stops them enjoying life.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

There was not much argument beyond 'do not worry'. Most thought that a good life meant people had missed out on fun. Hardly anyone considered that being good could be enjoyable.

3(a) Describe Jesus' teaching about prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. [8]

Very few candidates chose this question. Very few of those who did choose it knew Jesus' teaching on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. There was very occasional reference to the Lord's prayer or the need to pray in secret. The different parts of Sermon on the Mount need to be known thoroughly for this examination.

3(b) Explain how praying daily might affect the life of a Roman Catholic. [7]

There was very general comment on this question. In better answers daily prayer was seen to be helping Catholics to feel better, be closer to God or think that they were being helped through difficult and trying times.

3(c) 'The two great commandments are too difficult to follow'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

Again very few candidates knew the Two Great Commandments which led to general comment at best. When known, candidates were able to consider the difficulty of following them.

4(a) Describe the work of Bishops and Priests in the Roman Catholic Church. [8]

The work of Bishops and priests was quite well known and candidates could write about administering sacraments, celebrating Mass and spreading God's word. For top marks candidates needed to separate out the role of Bishop and priest and this was rarely done.

4(b) Explain how Religious Orders might help with the work of the Roman Catholic Church. [7]

The term religious orders was largely misunderstood and taken to mean instructions or rules rather than monks and nuns which meant that very few candidates offered valid attempts to answer the question.

4(c) 'In today's Church lay ministers are as important as priests'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

In contrast the term 'lay ministers' was understood and after discussion of both sides of the argument most candidates came to the conclusion that priests and lay ministers had equal importance for various reasons.

2395

Paper 5 Hinduism (Short Course)

General Comments

Whilst this paper produced a full range of responses, there was more evidence of candidates struggling with the questions than in previous years. There was a tendency among some candidates to provide a great deal of detail when describing a ceremony or belief, but far less when asked to explain the reasons for it or relate it to daily life.

Section (a) questions were generally well answered this year with most candidates giving an appropriate amount of detail.

Section (b) questions continue to cause the most difficulty for candidates with many merely repeating knowledge creditable in part (a) but failing to explain the application of this to the lives of believers socially, morally, spiritually or personally.

Section (c) questions seemed to provide more of a challenge to candidates than they did last year, with comparatively few achieving full marks. Many gave a one-sided opinion or a statement of their own opinion with no supporting arguments. Far too many seemed to think that “everyone is entitled to their own opinion” was an argument that could be offered in support of the statement. As last year, many attempted to provide a viewpoint from a number of different religions which failed to provide a reasoned argument and became instead a statement (with varying accuracy) of the beliefs of a number of religions with regard to the question. Section (c) questions require opinions which are supported by reasoned argument and which make accurate reference to Hindu beliefs. Many candidates are still choosing to spend too much time on the part (c) questions relative to the number of marks available for them. Having said this there were some excellent answers on part (c) questions which showed a thorough understanding of the material and an ability to manipulate it skilfully from the most able candidates.

Almost all candidates had enough time to finish the paper and there were few rubric errors.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe the Sacred Thread Ceremony. [8]

Some candidates answered this question extremely well and were able to give an exhaustive account. On the whole, however, this question was not well answered. Many appeared confused. Some gave very general answers relating to ceremonies in general and picked up marks at level 1 where appropriate. Quite a few confused the ceremony with the rakshabandan ceremony which is not specifically covered by the specification, and presumably because of this confusion quite a few, from one centre in particular, believed that the thread was given by the boy's sister or a female member of his family. Many knew that the ceremony marked the beginning of an ashrama but mistakenly associated it with the beginning of the householder or grhastha stage of life.

1(b) Explain why the Sacred Thread Ceremony is important to some Hindus. [7]

Where candidates had struggled with part (a) they tended to give very general answers about celebrating with friends and family and feeling part of the religion; usually picking up marks at level 1 or 2. Where candidates had answered well on part (a) they usually answered well here also. Some answers were very good, considering a wide variety of possibilities to do with karma, varnashramadharma, family life, duty and so on. Many compared the importance of the ceremony to that of the Jewish Bar Mitzphar, some more convincingly than others.

1(c) "Family is more important than anything else." Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Hinduism in your answer. [5]

This question tended to be well answered even where candidates had struggled with parts (a) and (b). The more simplistic answers tended to talk about personal experience of the importance of family support and blood being thicker than water. Some talked about difficulties within family life such as conflict surrounding arranged marriages. More complex answers dealt with the tension that sometimes exists within Hinduism between varnashramadharma, including family life. A significant number wrote of the sadhus and holy men who had abandoned family ties on the quest for moksha and who would therefore disagree with the statement. Few candidates failed to achieve and many scored at the highest level.

2(a) Describe the role of a priest in a Hindu community. [8]

This question achieved the full range of available marks. Many described the role in very general terms and often indistinguishably from the role of a Christian priest. Others confused the idea of a priest with that of a guru or sadhu. Conversely there were many accurate and detailed answers which achieved full marks. Some candidates successfully described the differences in the role that have developed between those practising in India and those in the Hindu diaspora.

2(b) Explain how visiting a mandir might help a Hindu. [7]

Many of these answers tended to be quite "waffley" with vague descriptions of nice places to meet up with your friends. The answers which achieved the higher levels took account of the religious and cultural value of a mandir with many, again, providing a contrast between the situation in India and Britain. Many talked of communal worship at festivals and eating together. A few talked about pilgrimage and one mentioned the Neasden Temple as a symbol of cultural identity. Few candidates failed to achieve level 2 on this question, but comparatively few achieved at the higher level.

2(c) 'Every Hindu community should have a mandir.'
Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Hinduism in your answer. [5]

Again, most candidates achieved at least at level 2 as they could give reasons why a mandir would be helpful to the community. A much higher proportion than on part (b) achieved the top level, pointing out that a mandir might be a waste of money where worship in the home is perfectly acceptable. Again some discussed the different answers that might be given to the question in India and Britain.

3(a) Describe Hindu beliefs about Brahman (God). [8]

There was a wide range in the quality of answers to this question. Some gave a basically Judeo-Christian description of the concept of God and seemed unaware of any variation in Hinduism. Most gave a description of the Trimurti; sometimes, but not always explaining the idea of a single reality underlying it. Some gave a description of the god Brahma. There were, conversely, a few outstanding answers which considered various interpretations of Brahman as saguna and nirguna (with and without attributes) and as manifested in the sound "Om". The best answers were truly outstanding however given the centrality of the concept the proportion of candidates achieving the top level was slightly disappointing.

3(b) Explain why some Hindus use pictures or statues of the gods and goddesses in their worship. [7]

Most managed to acquit themselves well in this question with only a few merely describing how murtis are used in worship. Some gave detailed explanations of why murtis should not be used which did not answer the question and was not, in itself, sufficient to achieve the highest levels. Many discussed the usefulness of having something visual on which to focus devotion. Perhaps responding to the statement in part (c) many suggested that images are useful to help focus attention on to a particular deity. Many of the highest achieving answers discussed the concept of god being omnipresent and therefore present in the image as well as the idea of installing the murti to make the presence of God particularly strong in it. Candidates achieved across the full range of marks.

3(c) 'It does not matter which god you worship.'

Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Hinduism in your answer. [5]

Some candidates contrasted the Hindu idea of many gods with the exclusive monotheism of the Western religions, concluding that it did matter which god you worshipped if you were a Christian but not if you were a Hindu. This was an appropriate response which was fully credited as long as full account was taken of the Hindu standpoint. Others suggested that different deities were worshipped for different reasons but that in actuality it did not matter as all gods are, ultimately, One. Few failed to achieve at least level 3 and a high proportion achieved level 4 compared to most other questions.

4(a) Describe how Hindus celebrate Durgapuja (Navaratri). [8]

There were a number of very vague answers describing festivals in general with little or no information specific to Navaratri. Conversely many answers were detailed and exhaustive, sometimes giving information on regional differences in celebrating the festival in India. Some also discussed differences in the way the festival is kept in India and Britain. Candidates achieved across the full range with a good proportion doing well. Some candidates failed to achieve as well as they might as they spent the time describing in detail the stories associated with one or more of the goddesses which they did not then relate to the question asked.

4(b) Explain how stories about the gods might affect the way Hindus live their lives. [7]

Some followed on from the previous question by considering the stories associated with the goddesses. Some discussed the Ramayana or the example set by Krishna and the Bhagavad Gita. Discussions on the example set by gods and the consequent working out of dharma were frequent, as were considerations of the gods as encouragement.

4(c) 'Festivals are the most important part of Hinduism.'

Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Most candidates were able to offer at least one valid argument in support of each side of the discussion. Many talked about festivals as encouragement and time for families, referring back to question one. Others contrasted the importance of time alone for contemplation leading to moksha, or personal worship and devotion to a god.

2396

Paper 6 Islam (Short Course)

General Comments

As in previous years there were some excellent responses but also this year a greater number of weaker responses which tended to lack an understanding of the religious and spiritual aspects of Islam. This was particularly noticeable in AO2 responses. Many candidates were able to give appropriate or good answers to AO1 questions where factual information was required. However, many AO2 responses also focused on factual information showing limited engagement with how beliefs or practices might affect Muslims. Good responses showed candidates able to discuss the importance of Islam for the Muslim community and an individual Muslim's spiritual development. AO3 responses are now becoming the longest answers for some pupils and must have taken a disproportionate amount of time for some of them. Many Centres are still advising pupils to adopt a formula when responding to these questions which for many is helpful but the better responses included a discussion of, or comments about, the different points of view not just a statement of them.

There were very few rubric infringements this year, all coming from a very small number of Centres. Examiners were pleased to find most candidates filling in the front of the answer booklet with the numbers of the questions answered. Written Communication was generally good but candidates still need to be reminded that legibility is included in this assessment.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe the role of an Imam. [8]

There was the full range of responses to this compulsory question. Most candidates had a valid or competent knowledge of the Imam's role at the mosque and within the community. A few candidates did not know what an Imam is but some were able to talk about him leading prayer from the stimulus. There were a number of candidates who equated the Imam to a Christian Priest thereby displaying a lack of sound understanding. Good responses included reference to his religious duties in the mosque, his involvement in rites of passage ceremonies, his teaching of young Muslims and his pastoral role within the Muslim community.

1(b) Explain the importance of the mosque for a Muslim community. [7]

Many answers offered little more than a description of the mosque without explaining how these features helped the Muslim community in its worship or daily life. Some candidates focused solely on the mosque being a place for the individual to go and pray without reference to communal prayer and how this can strengthen the Ummah. Good answers saw candidates engaging with the question in a broader sense and explaining how the mosque is the centre of the community, especially in non-Muslim countries. Not only did they give examples of when the mosque was used for communal prayer but also discussed its significance for social events, festivals, learning and rites of passage.

1(c) 'You must attend the mosque regularly to be a true Muslim.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

This was answered well by the large majority of candidates who had definite views on regular attendance at a place of worship. Good responses discussed what was meant by "regularly" and some even explored what was meant by "true". Arguments used to defend the quote included that to do so is an act of submission to Allah and that prayer (a pillar of Islam) is looked upon more favourably when done as a community. In opposition candidates reasoned that not every Muslim is able or required to attend the mosque, any clean place is indeed a mosque and being a true Muslim is not just about prayer. The best answers saw candidates commenting on the strength or weakness of different views.

2(a) Describe how Muslims keep Ramadan. [8]

This proved to be the most popular choice of question by far and was answered competently by a large number of candidates. A very small minority did not know what Ramadan was and described Hajj instead. Weak responses referred only to going without food and drink for the month while good answers described; how the fast was begun and broken each day, how Muslims abstain from evil actions and thoughts, who is exempt from fasting and how they read the Qur'an and go to the Mosque more at this time. The best answers portrayed a clear knowledge of Ramadan being a spiritual time for Muslims.

2(b) Explain how keeping Ramadan might affect the life of a Muslim. [7]

The responses to this question ranged from excellent to poor. Some candidates focused purely on the dangers of fasting, which they felt could lead to starvation, eating disorders and bad tempers. These negative answers were very secular and lacked the religious understanding required in AO2 responses. Good answers referred to the effects of Ramadan on a Muslim's spiritual development. These responses included reference to strengthening of the Ummah through this shared experience, Muslims feeling grateful for Allah's gifts and their identifying with the poor and disadvantaged, the development of self discipline, mercy and an attitude of forgiveness and the fact that Saum is an act of 'Ibadah which stands Muslims in good stead on the Day of Judgement.

2(c) 'Fasting is the least important of the Five Pillars.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

There was a tendency with some candidates to describe all five pillars rather than address the question. Good answers once again discussed the views offered and debated why one pillar might be considered less important than another or why all pillars should be viewed as equally important. Reasons offered included; some pillars were practised daily while others were annual, some pillars were easier to perform than others, some seemed to be more altruistic than others and the fact that all were decreed by Allah so carried equal significance.

3(a) Describe the use of calligraphy in Islam. [8]

This was the least popular question but answered well by many who tackled it. It was possibly part (a) that stopped many candidates from attempting it. Most candidates knew what calligraphy is and how and where it is used. Weaker answers tended to describe calligraphy as geometric patterns whilst good answers referred to it as 'beautiful writing' used to decorate the mosque, the Qur'an, the Kiswah, other buildings and used in place of statues and drawings to avoid shirk. The best answers also made reference to it as being taught to children and when copied it was seen as an act of worship.

3(b) Explain why Muslims practise both Salah and du'a. [7]

There were some very pleasing responses to this question. Most candidates knew the difference between the two and could offer suggestions as to why both were important. The best answers showed an understanding of how formal, regular prayer strengthens the ummah, is an act of submission and being fard is a duty to Allah, while du'ah allows Muslims to come close to Allah and enables them to ask Him for help at a personal level.

2(c) "Islam is all about prayer."

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Once again some weaker attempts focused on descriptions of the Five Pillars without tackling the specific question. However, there were some very good responses to this question where candidates debated what is at the heart of Islam and whether five prayer times each day suggests that prayer is meant to be an underpinning aspect of the religion. Some candidates showed an excellent understanding of how prayer is an act of submission to Allah and as Islam means submission the quote is a valid one.

4(a) Describe a Muslim marriage ceremony. [8]

Good answers referred to what actually takes place during the wedding ceremony and noted that customs can vary and be culturally linked but are likely to include some common factors such as: readings from the Qur'an, consent from both parties, at least two witnesses, prayers, the marriage contract being spoken and written, the mahr and the walimah. Weaker answers tended to focus entirely on marriages being arranged and the bride and groom not seeing each other before the wedding. Some included a variety of things that might occur before a wedding rather than describing the ceremony itself.

4(b) Explain why family life is important for Muslims. [7]

Once again, weaker answers focused on parents arranging marriages for their children or commented generally on why family life is important. Good answers came from candidates who had taken on board the part of the question that said "for Muslims". Here, they gave examples of how Muslims benefit specifically such as the family promotes the rules of Islam, educates children in the customs and rituals of the religion, follows the sunnah of Muhammad, teaches respect for the elderly and forms the basis of Muslim society.

4(c) 'Parents should not decide whom their children marry.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Many candidates appeared to be very negative in their understanding of arranged marriage and therefore fell into the trap of only presenting one side of the argument which rested mainly on how unfair this process is. This was unfortunate as it prevented them from reaching levels 3 and 4. Those candidates who had a deeper understanding of what is meant by arranged marriage were able to put forward arguments to support both sides. The best responses debated whether love should be the deciding factor in choosing a spouse, whether it is a person's right to choose their own marriage partner, or whether parents' experience and guidance are vital when making the important decision to bring two families together.

2397

Paper 7 Judaism (Short Course)

General Comments

As has been the case in previous years, most candidates demonstrated an impressive knowledge and understanding of Judaism. Very few candidates made rubric errors. With a few exceptions, candidates were able to make effective use of the time allowed. Time did become an issue, however, for those candidates who chose to set out intricate plans prior to each answer. Experience would suggest that this is not a beneficial strategy. Whilst those questions on Kashrut and Shabbat were all relatively popular, the question on beliefs about Messianic hope and G-d was certainly less so. As has been previously noted, candidates are making effective use of formulaic approaches to certain questions, especially in explaining and evaluating.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe what happens at a Brit Milah. [8]

In previous years the paper included a picture stimulus for the first question. For this year's exam it was felt more appropriate and helpful to insert the quotation from the Torah. The vast majority of candidates made good use of it, although a small number still confused Brit Milah with Bar Mitzvah, and even Bat Mitzvah. This would suggest that the passage had not been read. Brit Milah was often well described, with reference being made to the key participants and events. The weakest responses only referred to a generic family celebration, whilst others sometimes confused the roles of mohel and sandek.

1(b) Explain the importance of the family in Judaism. [7]

Nearly all candidates were able to make a valid attempt at this question. The main distinction was between the more detailed response and those that highlighted qualities that might apply to families from any religion or culture. The former made reference to other rites of passage, family orientated festivals, the importance of education and even the notion of the Jewish people as an extended family reaching back to Abraham. The connection between Jewish identity and the family was made by some.

1(c) 'Children should follow their parents' religion.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Judaism in your answer. [5]

As already mentioned, candidates are adept at structuring the evaluation questions. A small number omitted any reference to Judaism. Candidates tended to represent the strong family tradition within Judaism as one side of the debate, whilst contrasting it with a more autonomous approach. Arguments tended to be well balanced, often referring back to Brit Milah. This worked well but sometimes candidates did get sidetracked by the issue of circumcision.

2(a) Describe Kashrut (dietary laws). [8]

This question was a popular and frequently well answered option. More able candidates were able to describe the food laws with regard to meat, fish, poultry and so on. Reference was often made to the separation of meat and milk, as well as the implications for the Orthodox Jewish kitchen. Credit was also given to those who gave an account of the method of slaughter and removal of blood. A good knowledge of the terminology prevailed in many responses. Some

candidates went on to refer to specific food laws for certain festivals. The weaker responses often confused the different criteria, sometimes stating the opposite to the reality.

2(b) Explain how Kashrut (dietary laws) affects the life of a Jew. [7]

In general, candidates were able to explain some of the restrictions that the food laws might impose upon the Jewish community. This revolved around the complexity of the Orthodox kitchen, the need for the hechsher, the implications for the social life of the Jew and the limited number of eating establishments that might be available. The more able were also inclined to focus on the positive aspects of Kashrut. They made reference to the covenantal relationship with G-d and how this might be strengthened. They also explained that the food laws might help to bind the community together and enhance their sense of their own holiness.

2(c) 'What people eat shows what they believe.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Judaism in your answer. [5]

Most candidates were able to construct a well balanced response to this question. One side of the debate tended to be that many religions - including Judaism - have food laws that demonstrate the follower's devotion to their faith. Some candidates were still inclined, however, to omit explicit reference to Judaism. This tendency always prevents candidates from reaching the highest marks. Secular examples like vegetarianism and organic foods were also referred to and credited. It was also often argued that diet might simply be the result of taste or economic necessity.

3(a) Describe how Shabbat is celebrated in the Jewish home. [8]

This question, based around the celebration of Shabbat, was also very popular with candidates. Not all recognised that the first part was specifically about the Jewish home in relation to Shabbat and included information about the synagogue. Other candidates focussed more on the restrictions than on what actually does happen. Knowledge about the content of the Shabbat meal was not always developed. This was also sometimes the case with descriptions of havdalah. The most able distinguished between Orthodox and Progressive worship. Candidates were given some credit for describing the preparation for Shabbat.

3(b) Explain why the synagogue is important during Shabbat. [7]

Most candidates were able to recognise the importance of communal worship for Jews during Shabbat. They explained the significance of prayer and the role of the rabbi. A significant number overlooked the importance of hearing the Torah read. Good use was sometimes made of the different features of the synagogue and how these might be an aid to worship. Once again, differences between the Orthodox and Progressive traditions were both welcome and credited.

3(c) 'Shabbat is just a day off work.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Judaism in your answer. [5]

Answers to this question were generally well structured. Candidates frequently argued that there is a sense that Shabbat is a day off, but that it is also far more than that. Frequent reference was made to the demands of the Torah and to the precedent set out by G-d during the Creation. At times reference to the different denominations was somewhat unhelpful. Some candidates gave the impression that Progressive Judaism is a watered down version of Orthodoxy in which Shabbat has little, or no, religious significance.

4(a) Describe what Jews believe about the Messianic hope. [8]

Traditionally the questions examining Jewish beliefs have been less popular options and this year was no exception. Of those candidates who selected it many were able to describe the salient Jewish beliefs about the Messiah. Having set out some of the better known expectations of the Messianic Age - about the Temple, a time of peace and so on - some candidates made a distinction between the Orthodox and Progressive beliefs. Such depth of knowledge was impressive. Examiners credited those candidates who described the different attitudes to be found in Judaism and Christianity. The weaker responses often confused the Messiah with other areas of Judaism, most frequently beliefs about G-d.

4(b) Explain why believing in G-d is important for a Jew. [7]

This question gave great scope to candidates for explaining how beliefs about G-d impact upon the lives of the Jewish community. A handful of candidates saw the question as an opportunity to discuss proofs for the existence of G-d, which limited the level they could attain. Reference was often made to the covenant and then the implications of the mitzvot. Other candidates approached the topic by discussing the structure that might be provided by adherence to either festivals or rites of passage.

4(c) 'Believing in G-d is the most important part of Jewish life.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Candidates generally performed well on this question. They were able to structure their answers relatively easily, articulating arguments both for and against the proposition. Any reference to G-d was taken as a reference to Judaism, although the best responses made their understanding more explicit. The majority of candidates felt that belief in G-d was vital to Judaism, although the more able pointed to the absence of a universally accepted creed. It was sometimes recognised that Judaism is often perceived as a religion based more on practice than belief.

2398

Paper 8 Sikhism (Short Course)

General Comments

The overall performance of students on this paper demonstrated that the majority had a sound knowledge of the topics selected and were able to demonstrate the skills that enabled them to access Level 3 and 4.

Knowledge was often deployed very effectively and many candidates used specialist language with confidence.

Most candidates were able to plan and use time effectively. There were very few examples of rubric error.

Some candidates offered material appropriate for responses to section b) in their responses to section a). Whilst the information was often appropriate for section b), it could not necessarily be give credit in the a) section. Candidates need to be encouraged to direct their responses more effectively to the appropriate parts of the question.

Many candidates showed extremely well considered arguments in their responses to the section c) parts of the question, clearly demonstrating the ability to consider a number of views and to evaluate them effectively.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe how the Guru Granth Sahib Ji is shown respect by Sikhs. [8]

This proved to be accessible to the majority of candidates, although some were unable to describe without considerable explanation. The main ways in which respect is shown to the Guru Granth Sahib Ji were covered in breadth and depth –many candidates demonstrating a wide knowledge of physical and personal examples of respect. Use of specialist language was evident.

1(b) Explain the importance of the langar in the life of a Sikh community. [7]

Candidates were able to explain the importance of service (sewa) within the context of the langar and many used their knowledge effectively to explain the concept of equality within the community. The majority of candidates clearly knew about the langar and its function.

1(c) 'Religious people need a sacred book.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Sikhism in your answer.

Many candidates presented arguments for and against the statement sometimes showing that they could present two viewpoints that agreed with each other for different reasons. A few failed to include reference to Sikhism which meant that they were unable to access the highest level.

2(a) Describe how the birth of a baby is celebrated by the Sikh community. [8]

Full and accurate answers were offered by most candidates who attempted this question. It is clear that they had been thoroughly prepared for the section on Rites of Passage and were able to include the main points. A very few candidates did not progress beyond the choosing of the name.

2(b) Explain how being brought up in a Sikh family might strengthen the faith of a child. [7]

Candidates produced interesting and full answers in many cases. They were able to establish links between structure and behaviour and the demonstration of belief by family members that might lead to a strengthening of the faith.

2(c) 'Children should be free to choose their own religion.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Sikhism in your answer.

The balance of argument between the need for religion to continue through the family if it is to be relevant in future generations, and the rights of children to make up their own mind was clearly an issue in this question. Many failed to come to an outright conclusion –which was entirely acceptable in the context of the question. This question did result in some long, repetitive answers.

3(a) Describe Sikh beliefs in one God. [8]

Despite the fact that this is a central belief for the faith, some candidates who chose this question struggled to write a full answer. Many did understand the immanence (sargun) and transcendence (nirgun) of God, also that he is Creator and without beginning or end. Some made links to the beliefs stated in the Mool Mantra, including quotations.

3(b) Explain how samsara might affect the life of a Sikh. [7]

Not all candidates could explain both what samsara is, and how it might affect a Sikh. Answers included the benefits of sewa in all forms as a way of working towards a release from samsara.

3(c) 'Reincarnation means that Sikhs should not worry about life after death.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

A wide range of answers indicated some serious thought from many candidates. Some suggested that the opposite was the case, and that reincarnation meant that Sikhs should worry, whilst others felt that a 'second chance' meant that there was nothing to be concerned about. Many considered both options had some merit.

4(a) Describe the work of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. [8]

This was a popular question, giving candidates the opportunity to describe the khalsa and Vaisakhi as well as the biography of a well known leader. Most could describe the formation of the khalsa in great detail, although this was not required. A few candidates confused Guru Gobind Singh Ji with others of the ten gurus.

4(b) Explain how the initiation ceremony (khalsa) is important to Sikhs. [7]

Many candidates found this straightforward and could explain the importance of each part of the khalsa as well as its overall importance. Some suggested that it might not be important to some members of the faith and that the added responsibility was not for all believers.

A number of candidates tried to explain this but found that they could not follow their points through to any conclusion and this limited access to higher levels.

4(c) 'Initiation ceremonies are not important for a believer'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Sikhism in your answer.

Some candidates suggested that they are an outward sign of inner faith and demonstrate belonging, whilst others suggested that they were unnecessary and meaningless without belief. Candidates demonstrated a wide variety of opinions often backed up with clear reasoning.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

2399

Jewish Studies (Short Course)

There were insufficient candidates to produce a subject report for this component.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

2400

Jewish Texts (Short Course)

There were insufficient candidates to produce a subject report for this component.

2301

Paper 1 Christianity through a study of Luke or Mark (Full Course)

General Comments

The majority of candidates performed well with detailed and thoughtful responses producing a good range of approaches. There were some excellent performances from candidates who had a thorough knowledge of the texts from the gospel they had studied and were able to write about application of beliefs. Evaluative skills also continue to improve and a significant number of candidates achieved full marks for their answers in part (c) of questions.

The entry for the paper was equally distributed between the Luke and Mark sections.

Some candidates were let down by their lack of biblical knowledge of the texts and resorted to using irrelevant material or simply became repetitive in their style and analysis.

Most candidates used the time well and adhered to the rubric.

Comments on individual questions

Section A: Luke

1(a) From Luke's gospel, describe the crucifixion and death of Jesus. [8]

Generally well answered with many candidates displaying an excellent and detailed knowledge of the crucifixion events.

Weaker responses tended to adopt a broader approach, not specific to Luke's account, utilising material, which was a mixture from a number of gospels. Some omitted many relevant details.

Others included too much material prior to the crucifixion and the descriptions petered out before reaching the relevant details.

1(b) Explain why belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus is important for Christians. [7]

This question produced many positive responses and was generally well answered. However, some candidates failed to discuss the resurrection and there was evidence of a lack of awareness of the implication of Jesus' death and resurrection for Christians.

1(c) 'The crucifixion is the most important event in Luke's gospel.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Many candidates focussed on the importance of the crucifixion but in counter arguments cited events of the birth, teachings or miracles in the gospel without giving good reasons for their importance.

The best responses argued that the crucifixion was the culmination of Jesus' ministry and predictions but was followed by the resurrection, making the notion of 'most important' irrelevant in the context of the gospel.

2(a) Describe the Feeding of the Five Thousand. [8]

Competently and well answered by the majority of candidates who attempted the question. Some responses included extraneous information, not in the gospel, such as the boy with the loaves and fishes and the 'sharing' of food'. The most common omission was the conversation between Jesus and the disciples.

2(b) Explain why the Feeding of the Five Thousand is an important story for Christians. [7]

This question provided some good responses with the better answers showing a spiritual as well as a physical aspect to the feeding. There was evidence that candidates were aware that this miracle is in the 'self-sacrifice and service' part of the specification. Many other answers were vague and lacked a grasp of the idea of physical/spiritual sustenance for all with many resorting to repetition in an attempt to fulfil the question requirements.

2(c) 'Actions are more important than beliefs.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

Many found this question taxing and candidates appeared to struggle with the concept of the question. Many seemed unaware that actions are an important part of behaving. Standard answers dismissed belief in favour of 'action as expressing faith'. A number of candidates pointed out the error of some actions based on faith and in better responses went on to analyse causes and motives.

3(a) Give an account of the Parable of the Sower and the explanation Jesus gave. [8]

Generally well answered. Candidates who knew the parable and its explanation found the question straightforward and achieved the highest levels.

In weaker answers, most were aware of the different types of soil but some mistakenly believed people to be the seed rather than the seed being the word of God. Most saw the parable as indicating ways in which the gospel was received however some of the best responses recognised the teaching as a method to encourage evangelism.

3(b) Explain how Jesus' teaching in the Parable of the Sower might influence the lives of Christians. [7]

For some candidates, who had made a good response to (a), the answer was straightforward but many did not answer well. Some found difficulty in understanding what the question meant and so the answers tended to be contrived. Many candidates seemed to focus on the message of the weeds and material gain rather than the application of Christian principles.

A significant number of answers were just reiterations of the explanation of the parable without any further development.

3(c) 'Jesus' teachings are too difficult for Christians to follow today.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

This produced some thoughtful answers with many candidates evaluating that modern life presents different problems to those in Jesus' time but that biblical teaching is still relevant to their solution.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

Weaker responses tended to discuss 'relevance to today' rather than 'too difficult', often dismissing the teachings as a result. Many interpreted 'follow' as 'understand' rather than the intended 'practice'.

4(a) Describe what happened when Jesus met Zacchaeus. [8]

A popular question. The majority of answers were excellent or good. However, a significant number of candidates omitted the idea of repentance and the message of salvation from Jesus.

4(b) Explain how Jesus' actions towards outcasts and sinners might guide Christians today. [7]

Generally well answered with candidates applying practically the teachings of Jesus to outcasts of today though weaker answers failed to make specific references to Christians and their actions towards the disadvantaged and oppressed.

4(c) 'In Luke's gospel there is too much sympathy for people who do wrong.' Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

The better answers produced some excellent and thoughtful debates. Weaker responses tended to omit the idea of repentance and for some candidates the lack of knowledge of 'good people' being rewarded prevented a balanced view.

5(a) Describe what happened when Jesus healed a Paralytic (paralysed man). [8]

This was the most popular and well-answered question. Many candidates knew the miracle in detail and the majority of the answers were excellent or very good attempts.

Weaker responses tended to omit the reference to the forgiveness of sins and the Son of Man passage. Some very weak responses did not seem to know the story to which the question referred and so consisted of an amalgamation of several healing stories.

5(b) Explain what this miracle might teach Christians about faith. [7]

Answers tended to be rather vague with many candidates failing to explore the different instances of faith within the story. Many understood the idea of the faith of the man and his friends as encouraging Christians to have faith in Jesus/God to heal the sick. However, answers showed little further development and most failed to see the significance of faith in releasing sin and evil, as in the forgiveness of the paralysed man's sins.

5(c) 'Sick people should have faith in doctors, not religion.' Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

Well answered by the majority of candidates with many producing intelligent responses and gaining the higher marks. These answers were well balanced and competent providing compassionate responses, which combined common sense and empathy.

Section B: Mark

6(a) From Mark's gospel, describe the crucifixion and death of Jesus. [8]

Some good answers with candidates displaying sound knowledge of the crucifixion story.

However, as with 1(a) some answers were not specific to Mark's gospel and contained material from a variety of sources, cross-referencing different gospel accounts. Some candidates also displayed large discrepancies in detail.

6(b) Explain why belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus is important for Christians. [7]

Generally a well-answered question. Good responses showed awareness of the implications of the death and resurrection of Jesus for Christians in the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life. Many of the best responses also linked the events with the importance of the Easter celebrations.

6(c) 'The crucifixion is the most important event in Mark's gospel.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

It was noted that some candidates who made good responses to part (b) repeated some of the points previously made as their arguments for the importance of the crucifixion but most were able to develop them in a comparison with other events in Jesus ministry or the resurrection which might have claim to equal importance.

7(a) Describe the Feeding of the Five thousand. [8]

A wide range of responses. Many were accurate to Mark's account and had good detail. In some responses the blessing or breaking of the loaves was omitted and often there was some confusion over the numbers of bread and fish. The boy inevitably appeared, wrongly, in a significant number of answers.

7(b) Explain why the Feeding of the Five Thousand is an important story for Christians. [7]

There were some very good responses to this question with the better answers showing a spiritual as well as a physical aspect to the feeding. In some excellent answers reference was made to the Lord's Supper and the idea of eternal sustenance. Some candidates explained the miracle as symbolising the inclusiveness of God's Kingdom.

Weaker answers were vague and usually showed only a simplistic understanding of Jesus feeding hungry people.

7(c) 'Actions are more important than beliefs.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

As with 2(c), this question was not generally well answered.

8(a) Give an account of the Parable of the Sower and the explanation Jesus gave. [8]

The majority of candidates found this a straightforward question and there were a significant number of accurate answers. As with 3(a) candidates who did less well did not know the details of the parable.

8(b) Explain how Jesus' teaching in the Parable of the Sower might influence the lives of Christians. [7]

Candidates who answered well on (a) found this a straightforward question. One of the main weaknesses in many answers was reiteration of the explanation of the parable, without development. Another was repetitious and contrived responses which showed a lack of understanding.

8(c) 'Jesus' teachings are too difficult for Christians to follow today.' Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Generally a good performance, although many interpreted 'follow' as 'understand' rather than the intended 'practice'.

9(a) Describe what happened when Jesus met the Rich Young Man. [8]

Not a popular question but generally well answered by those who attempted it.

9(b) Explain how Jesus' teaching on the cost of being a disciple might influence Christians today. [7]

Some good answers despite the limited number of candidates who answered. Many chose to write effectively describing how some Christians, Priests, Nuns etc. had given up everything to follow Jesus. Some weaker responses were only about the 'cost' being to give up wealth, as the rich man had been asked to do.

9(c) 'Mark's gospel teaches that it is wrong to be rich'. Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Again, well answered by those who attempted the question. Many dealt in detail with the concept of wealth and the concept of wealth not being intrinsically wrong but explored the issues of wealth and the way it could be put to good use to benefit the less fortunate.

10(a) From Mark's gospel, describe what happened at the Last Supper. [8]

This question produced a mixed response with some centres showing in-depth, accurate detail of the whole text whilst others were vague and woolly and seemed unclear on the finer details of the Supper. Some wrote only about the bread and wine.

10(b) Explain why the Eucharist is an important part of Christian worship. [7]

This question posed a difficult concept which candidates handled well and produced some pleasing responses on the centrality of the Eucharist to Christian worship. The answers were particularly good from Centres whose candidates could discuss Transubstantiation and Consubstantiation in depth.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

10(c) 'Christians should expect God to answer all their prayers.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

This allowed candidates to provide open responses. The majority were mature and thoughtful. Many saw prayer as a conversation rather than a petition with many arguing the benefits of praying in a non-altruistic manner.

Weaker answers tended to ignore Christian teachings on prayer and were general and superficial.

2302/01

Paper 2A Christian Perspectives (Full Course)

General Comments

The paper proved accessible to the candidature and provided appropriate challenge at all levels, achieving the required discrimination between the candidates. The vast majority of candidates were able to attempt all parts of three questions and only a handful of candidates failed to observe the requirement to answer Question 1. Time management appeared to be a problem for some candidates who failed to complete their final question. This often appeared to be the result of poor planning before responding to the section c) parts of the questions. The tendency of some candidates to offer what almost seemed like a prepared response which they were familiar with, rather than attempt to answer the question as stated was evident in the work of some centres. Candidates who did what the questions asked, tended to offer fresh and occasionally outstanding responses, which could be credited much more highly than 'learned' responses. This problem was especially evident in the b) (AO2) sections of the paper where the candidate's ability to demonstrate their understanding of Christian Perspective relating to the topic is being measured. Overall, achievement tended to be higher in the a) (AO1) and c) (AO3) parts of the questions. Good responses in the a) sections offered detailed, specifically Christian teaching appropriate to the topic of the question, drawn from the specification for this paper or from other appropriate sources. Candidates who referred to the same general principle such as 'Christians believe all people are equal', or repeated the same Biblical teaching in response to all the questions limited their chances of achieving much beyond Level 1 or 2. In line with previous years, some of the responses to the c) parts of the questions were outstandingly mature with points of view being carefully and cogently debated. However some responses ran to over one and a half pages leading to the time management problems mentioned above. A substantial number of candidates, sometimes whole centres, failed to take note of the guidance offered by the wording of these questions and just repeated what had been offered already in sections a) or b) as their response to the stimulus, without any attempt to evaluate the material at all. Others failed to give supporting reasons for their view or the views of others and thus limited their level of achievement.

Comments on individual questions

1(a) Describe Christian teaching which could be used in a discussion about caring for the environment.

[8]

When the topic of the environment is one of the optional questions, it tends to be one of the least popular questions. It was clear that for some candidates Question 1 was one they would rather not have had to tackle, with some candidates responding to the other questions before attempting this one. However centres should be aware that all parts of the specification have to be examined over time and any topic can appear as part of the compulsory question. Some candidates appeared distracted by the headlines in the stimulus and focused more on them in their response rather than the actual question. The application of the levels of response and the principle of positive awarding enabled examiners to credit these responses appropriately. The best responses referred to: stewardship; dominion; to God as creator; the earth as a gift from God held in trust, with appropriate support from Biblical or recent Church teaching.

1(b) Explain how and why many Christians work to get rid of poverty. [7]

Many examiners were surprised that candidates seemed to have only a sketchy knowledge and understanding how Christians are engaged attempts to relieve poverty. Many candidates offered very general ideas about giving to charities that work in the less economically developed countries. This seemed odd, considering the considerable amount of information available from the relief organisations given as examples in the specification. Many candidates did better when explaining why Christians would want to get rid of poverty. The tendency mentioned above, of some candidates to use the same general idea – all people are equal and therefore should be helped - limited the amount of credit that could be awarded to some. By contrast those candidates who supported their responses with, for example, the teaching in Parable of the Sheep and the Goats or Dives and Lazarus offered more powerful and focused responses and hence achieved much higher marks.

1(c) 'Helping the poor is the most important thing Christians can do.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

The tendency of some candidates to repeat material offered in parts a) or b) as response to the c) section was evident here. Other candidates just reiterated the view that helping the poor was what Christians ought to do, without considering whether this was the most important thing. Other Candidates seemed at a loss to suggest what else might be important for Christians. Those who offered alternative views suggested prayer, worship and looking after friends and family.

2(a) Describe Christian teaching which might be used in a discussion about euthanasia. [8]

The majority of candidates offered a full and well considered account of Christian views. The idea of the sanctity of life and the view that only God has the right to end a life were well expressed and supported. Some candidates believed, wrongly, that euthanasia was approved of by the Protestant churches or by many Christians because of the idea of agape love, which would lead to them assisting a suffering person to die. Better responses differentiated between euthanasia and the acceptance of many Christians that the use of pain killers (a loving act) may hasten an inevitable death.

2(b) Explain how Christian teaching might affect a Christian's attitude to fertility treatment. [7]

This question caused significant problems for candidates who did not know anything about fertility treatment or confused it with contraception and / or abortion. Despite positive awarding little credit could be given for such responses. Good responses referred to the views that the use of donor sperm is technically adultery or that infertility could be an appropriate part of God's plan for some people. Other responses developed the view that fertility treatment enabled couples to fulfil the requirement to 'go forth and multiply' as well as to fulfil their desire to be good parents and enjoy what should be a natural outcome of the marital relationship.

2(c) 'Only God has the right to end a life.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

The tendency to repeat factual material from the other parts of the question without any sort of evaluation or comment was evident here. This fixed many responses at Levels 1 or 2. Better responses broadened the issues beyond euthanasia, for example by considering the apparent contradiction between the view that life should be sustained as it is sacred, but that it can also legitimately be extinguished, for example in a time of war.

3(a) Describe Christian teaching which might be used in a discussion about marriage and divorce. [8]

This question proved accessible, elicited a wide range of responses and with the exception of those who concentrated on either marriage or divorce, candidates tended to score well. Many candidates exhibited knowledge of denominational differences but did not always apply them to the correct denomination. Annulment was commonly misunderstood as a kind of divorce.

3(b) Explain how children should be treated in a Christian family. [7]

By contrast, this question proved problematic for some candidates who could only refer to the idea that children should be respected by their parents. However there was a substantial number of candidates who were familiar with the Biblical teaching. Many of these candidates justifiably interpreted 'treatment' as mean 'upbringing' and referred to the religious side of treatment in a Christian family, starting with Infant Baptism or Dedication and support in the faith until Confirmation or Adult Baptism and beyond.

3(c) 'Christian couples should never divorce'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

For some candidates, this was an opportunity to rehearse the information they had presented in part of their answer to a). This limited their level of achievement significantly. Those candidates, who examined more than one Christian attitude and weighed them against each other making useful observations and in some cases coming to balanced conclusions, fared much better.

4(a) Describe Christian teaching which might be used to support pacifism. [8]

Candidates referred to the example of Jesus at his arrest and his words in the beatitudes as evidence in support of pacifism. There was an assumption amongst some candidates that all Christians are pacifists. Examiners reported that some candidates, having exhausted their knowledge of pacifism, instead offered a description of when, despite being pacifists, Christians could go to war. Often elaborate and detailed accounts of the conditions for a just war were offered. Examiners salvaged what they could from these responses but the candidates clearly penalised themselves considerably as they had not really addressed the question

4(b) Explain how and why Christians might try to help people who have been imprisoned for their beliefs. [7]

Although questions of this type have been asked regularly, candidates appear to find this topic particularly difficult. Only a few drew on the words of Jesus in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats about visiting the prisoners. Those who had a sound knowledge and understanding of Amnesty international tended to offer good responses. Whilst this organisation is not specifically Christian, its aims and attitudes accord with the Christian ideal in many respects and candidates who drew the parallels between Christian attitudes and the philosophy of Amnesty did well. Other candidates referred to specific examples of people who have been imprisoned for their faith and showed how by peaceful actions in many cases, good had eventually overcome evil.

4(c) 'It is sometimes right for Christians to fight for their country.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Some candidates took this to be an AO1 question about why some Christians might be prepared to fight in a war. Hence knowledge of the Just War theory and its conditions overwhelmed any attempts at evaluation for these candidates. Better responses stood back from detailed knowledge to assess what sort of issues might cause a Christian to go against the non violent attitudes expressed in section a). Many good responses showed the realisation that fighting for one's country might not be a sufficient reason for a Christian, if the war was not just or acceptable according Christian principles.

5(a) Describe Christian teaching which might be used in a discussion about gender. [8]

This question dismayed candidates who were expecting to respond to a similar question about race. It was possible to award some credit for the general principles which these responses alluded to, but few achieved beyond 3 or 4 marks. Other candidates took the question to be about the role of women in the Church and were diverted to a full discussion of the issue of women priests. More appropriate responses drew on Biblical teaching; often referring to how Jesus' positive attitude towards women and the emphasis on role of women in the gospel of Luke in particular, coincided with changes in societal attitudes towards gender equality. The idea of everyone equal before God was taken by most candidates to override the apparently sexist views present in scripture or past and current church teaching. A handful of candidates referred to the idea that equal does not mean identical and for example, that in the Roman Catholic Church, women are valued equally with men but for different reasons as they have different roles.

5(b) Explain how and why a well known Christian has dealt with prejudice and discrimination. [7]

The Christian chosen by the vast majority of candidates was Martin Luther King and for many of them, this question was an opportunity to write a lengthy biography without selecting or deploying their knowledge effectively. Candidates who focused on crucial incidents in his life and drew out the Christian rationale of his mission and of his (non violent) methods showing their understanding, were able to access the higher mark levels with ease. Pleasingly, this year only a handful of candidates failed to choose a person who is well known for being a Christian.

5(c) 'It is impossible to treat all people equally.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Candidates, who took the time to see what the question was getting at and to plan their response, offered a sound appreciation of the difference between the ideal of equality and the harsh reality of an imperfect world. These candidates realised that despite the difficulties, this was an ideal to be worked towards and that the current impossibility of treating all people equally should not be accepted as an excuse for accepting inequality. Other candidates took to view that human nature and the desire for self preservation were bound to lead to inequalities. As sometimes happens with the c) parts of the question, some candidates reacted so strongly to the stimulus with indignation that their responses lack any balance and failed to address more than one point of view, leading to limited achievement.

2302/02

Paper 2B Christian Perspectives (Roman Catholic) (Full Course)

General Comments

Candidates appeared to be well prepared for the paper in general. Basic Catholic teaching was known, technical vocabulary was largely understood and relevant biblical passages were applied. Most candidates were able to offer relevant responses to the range of issues set. Some candidates found it difficult to offer specific Christian responses in any depth for A02 and A03 which meant they could not gain full marks for questions b) and c). Better responses tied Catholic Social Teaching closely to their answers or used prayer, Mass, parish activities or specific Catholic organisations to good effect.

Comments on individual questions

1(a) Describe Roman Catholic teaching which might be used in a discussion about race and gender. [8]

Candidates did need to take note that the question asked about both race and gender. There was a wide range of biblical example used to good effect to back up ideas, which went beyond syllabus recommendations. Most candidates began by explaining the given quote and its general relevance to the issue. Other general passages used for equality included Galatians, Jesus washing the feet of the disciples and the implications of Jesus' teaching to 'treat others as you would like to be treated' and 'love your neighbour'. On race, the Good Samaritan was a popular choice along with the Roman centurion, Zacchaeus and Leviticus' instruction on the alien. One candidate pointed out that a German had been elected to Pope! On gender, the stories of Mary and Martha and Deborah were cited with comment about Jesus' positive attitude to women, which was unusual in his day. Some candidates were quick to note the contradictory messages in St Paul's letters about gender and pointed to lack of women priests in the Catholic Church as a failure to practise what it preached in this answer or in (b). There was also some discussion about prejudice and discrimination that suggested that only God can judge. Weaker answers stated bible passages but did not explain their relation to the question or offered general responses such as 'Catholics are taught to be nice to other people.'

1(b) Explain how Roman Catholics might put teaching about equality into practice. [7]

Many ways to treat others equally were mentioned e.g. not stereotyping, not judging, non violent protest, lobbying MPs but there was a danger here for weaker responses to ignore religious practice. Better answers commented on the religious motivation behind acts that people of other faith and none might also do. They should also be ready to provide uniquely Christian or Catholic examples, either Catholic people or organisations or Encyclicals that have made contributions in these areas or mention prayer, offering Mass, going to Reconciliation or other religious practice. The Parable of the Good Samaritan was used to good effect in response to this question or in a). Better answers did more than recount the story, showing how it inspired Catholics to ignore differences. Those offering Martin Luther King Jr needed to explain that Catholics could follow his example, not just tell his story, to tie it in to the question. Too many think Martin Luther King Jr was a Catholic, rather than an example that Catholics might wish to emulate. Some candidates ignored racism and sexism.

1(c) 'It is impossible to treat everyone equally'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

Some candidates picked up on 'impossible' and thought nothing was impossible to God! However many failed genuinely to address 'impossibility'. Many recognised the difficulty of changing the minds of those brought up in racist or sexist backgrounds. Candidates did not limit answers to issues of race and gender and many explained the injustice of division of resources, the need for positive discrimination for some or how prisoners/ terrorists forfeited their rights to be treated equally. All were relevant responses. As always, there had to be a Christian point of view to gain full marks

2(a) Describe Roman Catholic teachings that could be used in discussion about the sanctity of life. [8]

When the definition of sanctity of life was known, most candidates confidently offered summaries of some aspect of Catholic teaching; its sacred nature, given at Creation when humans were 'made in the image of God'; life beginning at conception; the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit and a gift which only God can end. Weaker responses were quick to offer 'sacred' and then had little else to write. Others then wandered slightly off the point with extended discussions of abortion, euthanasia and contraception rather than linking these ideas to the teaching on sanctity of life.

2(b) Explain Roman Catholic attitudes towards euthanasia. [7]

This question was generally answered well. Many candidates were able to define euthanasia and explain Catholic teaching clearly, knowing that the Church regards it as wrong and its reasons for holding that view. Many used the 5th commandment or sanctity of life argument. On occasion candidates wrongly thought there might be types of euthanasia that were allowed by the Catholic Church. Better answers explained the difference between euthanasia and the 'double effect' of painkillers. There were some interesting discussions of the purpose of suffering. Very few took the opportunity to consider the moral implications of different forms of euthanasia. That the Hospice movement offers another way of 'dying with dignity' was included by many and gained credit. There were however some very generalised answers on the topic of euthanasia rather than about why Catholics disagree with it.

2(c) 'Euthanasia is not wrong if a person asks to die.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

Although generally well answered, not all candidates picked up on the issue of voluntary euthanasia specifically in their answers. The issue of autonomy was rarely mentioned, nor was the 'quality of life' argument. Very few used well-known examples such as Diane Pretty to illustrate their points. Weaker candidates often gave a one sided view arguing either that only God can decide when someone should die or that no-one should be expected to suffer.

3(a) Describe Roman Catholic teaching about family life. [8]

The CCC view of the family as 'the original cell of social life' and the importance of fidelity, commitment and openness to children was included by some candidates. Others discussed the family as 'domestic Church' reflecting God's love. Many wrongly thought a model of husband as head of the household and subservient wife was Catholic teaching. 'Honour your father and your mother' was used well to discuss children's role in the family balanced by St Paul's exhortation for parents not to annoy their children. Many commented on the nuclear family but some went on to see the importance of care in the extended family.

3(b) Explain why the Roman Catholic Church teaches that marriage should be for life. [7]

Most candidates attempted to answer the question, using the Vows, with better candidates exploring the idea of covenant and promises to God. Only the best responses discussed 'What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.' Many included a discussion of teaching on divorce and annulment in their answer, which was relevant. At times there was too much emphasis on adultery at the expense of other teaching in this question or in (a).

3(c) 'It is important for family life that women stay at home.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

It was very easy to wander off the point in this question and respond without any reference to Christianity, which meant full marks could not be given. Candidates mainly offered examples of the inequality of expecting women to stay at home while men could have a career. Some commented on the importance of a mother at home to raise a young family. Very strong views were expressed on both sides of the argument. Attempts to refer to Christianity used Old Testament roles or the Holy Family model but went on to say that times had changed.

4(a) Give an account of what is meant by a 'Just War'. [8]

Most candidates knew of the conditions for a Just War but needed to give more than a list for higher levels. In particular, bullet pointed or numbered lists were not developed enough for higher marks. Better candidates explained the argument that Just Cause and fighting justly made the evil of war morally acceptable for some. Some analysed World War II and the Gulf War to give accounts of just and unjust wars. Very few gave the background to Just War or its rationale. Some candidates did not know what Just War entailed and a few thought it was war without any killing.

4(b) Explain why some Roman Catholics might agree with non-violent protest. [7]

Many used examples of Jesus' own non-violent stances, for example his actions at his arrest and 'Turn the other cheek' as the most important reason for Christians to agree with non-violent protest. Others were concerned that violent protest could lead to breaking the 5th Commandment and start a spiral of violence, 'Those who live by the sword, die by the sword.' Very few understood the strength of non-violent protest such as its inclusivity (young/old; male/female) or creativity. The successes of Martin Luther King Jr and/or Oscar Romero were used by many candidates to good effect as positive examples of those taking a non-violent stance.

4(c) 'No-one should be forced to fight for their country.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

Answers suggest that it was difficult for candidates to see the main point of this question. Very few commented on Conscientious Objection although many used pacifism and some argued for non-combatant roles. Hardly anyone used St Paul's argument that Christians should obey the government as it is God's agent or that people had a duty to their country. Some candidates engaged with topical issues such as child soldiers and the difficulty for Muslim soldiers of going to war against countries where family might live. Most argued that people should not be forced to fight because they could lose their lives.

5(a) Describe Roman Catholic teaching about caring for God's creation. [8]

Most candidates knew that Adam and Eve were given control of God's creation in Genesis. Many knew the term 'stewardship' and could explain it. Occasionally there was discussion of care for humans as part of God's creation, which was given credit. Many candidates saw us as caretakers for the next generation and interpreted the idea of gleaning in the Old Testament as leaving resources for the future..

5(b) Explain how a Roman Catholic might put teachings about the environment into practice. [7]

This was another question that elicited more secular examples than religious. Candidates obviously know a range of practical ideas to reduce carbon footprints and save the planet, which are as relevant to Catholics as to others. Better responses also considered specifically religious ideas such as prayer, Cafod's 'Live Simply' campaign or reading Genesis and the Psalms and meditating or preaching on them.

5(c) 'Caring for God's creation is the most important thing Roman Catholics can do.' Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

Candidates considered whether care of the environment was the most important thing to do in the light of other problems. Poverty, equality, family, following the 10 commandments and worshipping God were seen by some as more important alternatives than care for the environment but on the whole the conclusion of many candidates was that taking care of the environment is very important.

2303

Paper 3 Buddhism (Full Course)

General Comments

This paper once again achieved a good level of differentiation among candidates with some performing extremely well. The answers given by some candidates to a number of the questions raised some concerns as candidates did not appear to have been made fully aware of the differences between Buddhist and Hindu philosophy, giving answers that were accurate for Hinduism but not Buddhism. This was particularly noticeable in question 1 and was reflected in the marks awarded.

Section (a) questions were generally well answered this year with most candidates giving an appropriate amount of detail.

Section (b) questions continue to cause the most difficulty for candidates with many merely repeating knowledge creditable in part (a) but failing to explain the application of this to the lives of believers socially, morally, spiritually or personally.

Section (c) questions seemed to provide more of a challenge to candidates than they did last year, with comparatively few achieving full marks. Many gave a one sided opinion or a statement of their own opinion with no supporting arguments. Far too many seemed to think that "everyone is entitled to their own opinion" was an argument that could be offered in support of the statement. As last year, many attempted to provide a viewpoint from a number of different religions which failed to provide a reasoned argument and became instead a statement (with varying accuracy) of the beliefs of a number of religions with regard to the question. Section (c) questions require opinions which are supported by reasoned argument and which make accurate reference to Buddhist beliefs. Many candidates chose to spend too much time on the part (c) questions relative to the number of marks available for them. Having said this there were some excellent answers on part (c) questions which showed a thorough understanding of the material and an ability to manipulate it skilfully from the most able candidates.

Many candidates used the word "Buddha" instead of "Buddhist".

Almost all candidates had enough time to finish the paper and there were few rubric errors.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe Buddhist beliefs about life after death. [8]

The response to this question was, on the whole, disappointing. Many candidates, even at the more able end of the spectrum, were unaware of the differences between the Hindu concept of reincarnation and the Buddhist concept of rebirth and answered on the former. Many got no further than a statement that you would be reborn as something else depending on how you had lived your life. Some mentioned enlightenment as an ultimate goal but seemed ignorant of the meaning of the term, many describing nibbana as the "Buddhist version of heaven". Some gave an excellent description of the Tibetan ideas regarding the bardo state and the Six Realms, clearly picking up on part (c). Only a few of the most able candidates were aware of the concept of anatta and attempted to relate it to the question, a few even discussing the skandas. Some seemed aware that Buddhists do not believe in a soul but clearly did not know what to make of this information and so went on to explain that the person was reborn, unaware of the contradiction this involved. Comparatively few candidates achieved the top marks available for this question; with many achieving only at level one or two.

1(b) Explain how believing in kamma might affect the life of a Buddhist. [7]

Candidates did not appear well prepared for this question with many responses limited to a simplistic answer about “what goes around comes around” and many seeming to believe that kamma is the result of judgement from the Buddha. Simple answers talked about doing good things so that good things will happen to you and so as to get a good birth. A few seemed to think that reaching nibbana is a reward for having a lot of kamma rather than the result of an escape from it. Very few indeed were aware of ideas such as the transfer of merit or kamma to others or the gaining of kamma through ritual action. The best answers talked about the way in which Buddhists might attempt to put the teachings of the Dhamma into practice in their lives or be motivated to try to break free of samsara. A worrying number of candidates wanted to use examples from “My Name is Earl” which, it should be noted, does not give an accurate representation of Buddhist beliefs about kamma.

1(c) ‘The Six Realms are not real.’ Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Buddhism in your answer. [5]

Many candidates clearly had no idea what the Six Realms were; some assuming that they were rules Buddhists were expected to follow whilst others made a vague guess that they were connected to life after death given part (a) and gave general answers about this. Answers that received marks in the lower levels of response tended to contain arguments that were limited to the fact that there is no scientific evidence of the six realms, that the Christian belief in heaven and hell is self-evidently to be preferred or that people are entitled to their own opinions. Those who said that they agreed with the statement because they respected the right of Buddhists to believe what they liked could not achieve beyond level 1 as they had not offered any arguments in support of their statement.

At the other end of the scale there were some outstanding evaluations about the metaphorical as opposed to the literal existence of the Realms, which was very encouraging. A few candidates wasted a great deal of time producing a very detailed description of the Six Realms which could not be credited in this question but did not offer any arguments as to their reality or otherwise.

2(a) Describe what Buddhists mean by the term dukkha. [8]

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates who knew what dukkha is. There were surprisingly few references to anicca or “unsatisfactoriness” / “dis-ease” however. Most linked the idea with craving and tanha. A general problem with this question was that candidates seemed uncertain which pieces of information to put into part (a) and which to put into part (b). However, candidates were, in general, well prepared for this question and achieved the full range of available marks.

2(b) Explain how the Dhamma can help a Buddhist to overcome dukkha. [7]

Good responses were offered by many candidates. Where candidates failed to achieve well in this question it was often because they described the Dhamma (Eightfold Path, Five Precepts etc) rather than explaining how it might help to overcome dukkha. The weakest responses tended to give very general answers to do with encouragement and help.

2(c) 'Religion should make people happy.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Buddhism in your answer. [5]

Most candidates managed to achieve at least at level 2 or 3. Many arguments were offered against the statement. Many pointed out that people are often forced into religion or that religion is responsible for wars (a fact that was assumed, rather than justified or challenged.) Candidates found it less easy to argue in favour of the statement and many fell back on to simplistic arguments such as people being entitled to their own opinions or people would not follow a religion that did not make them happy. A disappointing number of candidates failed to achieve full marks because they did not refer to Buddhism in their answer.

3(a) Describe Mahayanan Buddhist beliefs about Bodhisattvas. [8]

Not many candidates attempted this question and those who did were generally well prepared for it and achieved well. Some candidates gave outstanding answers on this question in particular, mentioning "real" bodhisattvas such as the Dalai Lama and "metaphorical"/ "mythological" ones. Where this question was attempted many candidates gained the highest level. A few attempted this question without having any real idea what a bodhisattva was. These struggled here, often hazarding a guess that Buddhists believe bodhisattvas are "wrong". There was, however, evidence of very good teaching in this part of the specification.

3(b) Explain How a Buddhist might try to develop the Six Perfections. [7]

Again this gave rise to some outstanding answers and nearly all those who knew what the Six Perfections are achieved well in this question. Some confused the Six Perfections with the Five Precepts or, on a few memorable occasions, with the Ten Commandments. There were some vague answers about meditating and doing good which were credited at level 1.

3(c) 'Anyone can achieve enlightenment.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Buddhism in your answer. [5]

Answers here tended to be surprisingly simplistic with very few making mention of the distinction between lay Buddhists and the monastic Sangha; or between Mahayana and Theravada beliefs in respect to this. Some argued convincingly that non-Buddhists could achieve enlightenment. Less able candidates tended to be outraged by the statement as "everyone has the right to be enlightened if they want to" or "you can achieve anything if you really want to". Although most achieved level 1 or 2, the number of candidates achieving level 4 on this question was disappointing.

4(a) Describe how Buddhists make use of sacred writings (scriptures). [8]

Very few candidates attempted this question. Many failed to mention examples of scriptures in their answers and some responses were very general, speaking of reading the scriptures for help and comfort and comparing it to the Christian Bible. Having said that, this question, along with 3a, produced some of the best answers on the paper. Some candidates produced truly outstanding answers talking about the different uses to which the different parts of the scriptures are put and the ritual ways in which they are used.

4(b) Explain why not all Buddhists use the same sacred writings. [7]

Again a wide range of answers were produced by this question. Many answered excellently, talking about the Sanskrit and Pali scriptures and the different uses to which they are put, as well as the different attitudes to scripture that exist in different branches of Buddhism. Less able candidates, predictably enough, reminded us that people are entitled to their own opinions and so can use whichever scriptures they wish. A few suggested that different scriptures could be used by a person at different times according to their needs.

4(c) 'Buddhism could not exist without the sacred writings.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Many did well on this question. Many candidates pointed out that Buddhism existed for many years before the scriptures were written down and a few were aware that some forms of Buddhism set little store by the scriptures. It was a little more worrying that a few thought the scriptures were necessary as the Buddha had used them to achieve enlightenment. Most who argued for the statement pointed out that we would not know about Buddhism without the scriptures. The full range of marks was achieved by candidates on this question.

5(a) Describe the main features of Zen Buddhism. [8]

Not many candidates attempted this question. Whilst there was a smattering of vague answers about gardens and making tea, the vast majority of candidates who answered this question did so extremely well hitting on the key features such as the emphasis on meditation rather than the Dhamma, and the use, for example, of koans to shock the mind out of its accustomed tracks. Many were aware of the Zen belief that everyone possessed "Buddha nature" which they need to discover rather than becoming enlightened, although there was, reasonably enough, some repetition here between parts (a) and (b). The majority of candidates who attempted this question achieved the top levels, although some lost marks because they confused Zen Buddhism with Tibetan Buddhism.

5(b) Explain how the Zen Buddhists differ from Theravadan Buddhists. [7]

Those who failed to achieve well here tended to assume that Theravadan (or Zen) Buddhism was very strict and had very devoted followers whereas the other was more "laid back" or "relaxed". There was often a fair amount of crossover with part (a) but this was understandable and where appropriate was credited in both parts, as despite the repetition, the response enabled the candidate to fulfil the requirements of a the AO2 assessment objective . The majority who attempted it handled this question well, often hitting right to the heart of the differences about the nature and importance of the Buddha and his teachings. Many achieved the top levels.

5(c) 'All Buddhists should worship in the same way.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

The familiar weaker answers about freedom of choice were, again, in evidence. The majority of candidates achieved at level 3 or 4 having offered valid arguments on both sides of the debate.

2304/01

Paper 4A Christianity (Full course)

General Comments

This paper was accessible to all candidates. Whilst the full range of ability was represented, there was a feeling that the overall performance by candidates this year was somewhat disappointing. However, this should not detract from the fact that there were some excellent scripts.

Whilst a number of candidates attempted questions 2 and 4, many of the answers to those questions were lacking in relevant detail and/or understanding of the topic. Once again this raises the issue as to whether or not, in some Centres, the biblical sections of the syllabus are taught fully and in as much depth as the other sections. It is clear, though, that some Centres have taught the section well and that their candidates had a good knowledge and understanding of the topics

Question 5 was rarely attempted and, when it was, many of the responses were disappointing and often confused.

Some candidates seemed to lack a basic knowledge and understanding of Christianity with many confusing or misunderstanding important events in Jesus life and/or applying beliefs and teachings from other religions (for example Judaism or Islam) to Christianity.

There were few rubric errors, although it was of some concern how candidates many handwriting was virtually illegible; other scripts were beautifully written and were a pleasure to mark.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe how some Christians keep Lent including Ash Wednesday. [8]

A number of candidates were not able to answer this question fully as, other than Christians giving up something for Lent, they were not able to describe anything else Christians do. Very few attempted to describe what Christians do during Holy Week. A number did not know when Ash Wednesday is or what Christians do on that day. Many candidates spent too much time writing about Callop Monday or Shrove Tuesday and, therefore, did not address the question fully. Conversely, some candidates gave very detailed and insightful answers.

1(b) Explain why Christians keep Lent. [7]

Unusually for a b) question, many candidates answered this part better than a). Many could relate Lent to Jesus' temptations in the wilderness and how it is a test of faith and self-control. Many also described how it made Christians grateful for what they had and created empathy with those who have little in life. However, there were some candidates who could not understand the theology of Lent and simply thought it was a good way to diet or give up smoking.

1(c) 'Fasts are more important than festivals.'
Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

In a number of cases, it was not clear whether Christian festivals were being addressed or general secular celebrations. Most candidates could consider more than one point of view but many answers were not well-developed.

2(a) What does Jesus teach in the Sermon on the Mount about the laws against murder and adultery? [8]

There was a lot of confusion with the Ten Commandments in the answers to this question. Most knew that adultery and murder were wrong but few were able to give Jesus' specific teachings about them from the Sermon on the Mount. A number of more-able candidates used teachings of Jesus from outside the Sermon on the Mount or later Christian teachings but, in doing so, did not fully address the question. Overall, the question was not well-answered and, once again, raised concern that the Sermon on the Mount is virtually ignored by some Centres.

2(b) Explain how the teaching about divorce in the Sermon on the Mount might affect the lives of Christians. [7]

Disappointing answers were the norm for this question. Whilst some candidates could say what Jesus taught about divorce, they could not explain how it might affect the lives of Christians. There was a lot of muddled theology and some answers simply ended up as the candidate's list of reasons why a person should be allowed a divorce, irrespective of what Jesus taught. Some good responses referred to the dilemma faced by practising Christians who find themselves in an unhappy marriage.

2(c) 'The teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is not helpful to people today.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Whilst many candidates seemed to equate the Sermon on the Mount with the Bible in this question, on the whole it was answered well. Many concentrated on the fact that the Sermon was written at a different time for a different audience and that many of the teachings are out-dated now and not relevant to our society. However, a number did say the teachings were timeless and a surprising number expressed dismay and sadness that society had rejected Jesus' teachings.

3(a) Describe the work of bishops and priests. [8]

This was a popular question. Whilst some candidates failed to differentiate between priests and bishops, they were still able to give quite detailed accounts of what priests did. Those who did describe the work of bishops separately, did so well and were clear about his pastoral role. Some candidates became unnecessarily bogged down in trying to differentiate between a priest and a vicar and a minister and other denominational clergy but, nevertheless, could see the important role a priest plays in the church and in the community.

3(b) Explain the importance of confirmation for some Christians. [7]

A number of candidates used this question as an opportunity to write everything they knew about confirmation often concentrating on the preparation and the service itself. However many responses did not include reference to the importance of confirmation therefore failed to answer the question. Even when the question was answered well, few mentioned the Holy Spirit at all or the fact that confirmation was a public acknowledgement of the individual's Christian faith. Sadly, some candidates confused Confirmation with Confession.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

3(c) In today's church, ordinary people are as important as ministers.'
Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Whilst some candidates relied heavily on the philosophy that all men are equal and some got a little confused by the term "ministers", this was generally a well answered question and most candidates could give a number of different points of view.

4(a) Describe the beliefs about the Trinity stated in the Apostles' Creed. [8]

This was a popular question and one that was answered comparatively well. Most knew the three elements of the Trinity and were able to say something about each. A few candidates drifted away from the Apostles' Creed in their answer but most remained firm and many could quote relevant parts of the creed.

4(b) Explain the meaning of the birth of Jesus for Christians. [7]

Unfortunately, in many answers there were too many stables, shepherds and wise men. Many candidates used the question as an excuse to tell the nativity story. Few were able to explain the importance of the birth of Jesus for Christians, therefore there was little mention of incarnation, messianic fulfilment and salvation.

4(c) 'The birth is the least important thing about Jesus in the Apostles' Creed.'
Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Generally well answered with most candidates able to find different points of view. Some candidates tended to ignore the "in the Apostles' Creed" bit of the question and simply talked about Jesus' life in general. There were some simplistic answers, for example, if Jesus had not been born - he could not have died.

5(a) Describe differences between Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christianity. [8]

A poorly answered question and yet a popular one. It is fair to say that the answers for this question were either good (in the minority) or poor (in the majority) with little middle ground. There was much confusion and misunderstanding about the two denominations with many thinking Orthodox was the same as Protestant. Many candidates concentrated on the church building and nothing else. Few had any idea of theological differences and many simply stated any Roman Catholic belief or practice they knew about and said the Orthodox did the opposite whether it was true or not. However the majority of answers that were good showed a breadth and depth of knowledge and were pleasing and reassuring to read.

5(b) Explain why some Christians support ecumenism and some do not. [7]

A number of candidates who attempted this question did not know what ecumenism was (some confused it with euthanasia). Some candidates simply used it as an excuse to discuss Taizé. Some candidates did write appropriate or good answers but they were in the minority, therefore few discussed issues like church unity or reconciliation.

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5(c) 'Christian worship should be the same everywhere in the world.'

Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Some candidates confused worship with belief in their answers; some talked about all religions worshipping together not just Christian denominations. Most answers were valid or appropriate but too many candidates simply relied on the fact that it is a "free" world and people should be able to do what they want.

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Paper 4B Christianity (Roman Catholic) (Full Course)

General Comments

Answers suggest that most candidates had adequate levels of knowledge but sometimes let themselves down by not reading the question correctly. Candidates should be aware that the higher levels of response demand selection and deployment of knowledge. Some responses despite appropriate content were very muddled. The (c) questions seemed to be more challenging for candidates to answer as there were not clear sides to be taken and many candidates failed to discuss the stimulus quote in any depth.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe how Roman Catholics keep Lent including Ash Wednesday. [8]

With regards to the practice of Lent, most students knew about fasting and Ash Wednesday, but lacked the detail of other Catholic practices of Lent e.g. Stations of the Cross, the colours, the various celebrations of Holy Week or even the charity acts of mortification. In better answers candidates wrote about giving to charity and prayer as well as fasting. Ways of fasting included; giving up what you liked e.g. chocolate, alcohol, cigarettes and the more modern example of hair straighteners or more abstract things like poor attitudes. Some responses referred to the idea doing extra things, especially if they benefited the poor. Ash Wednesday had to be mentioned for full marks and most candidates knew that there was an ashing service. Descriptions rarely went beyond receiving a cross of ash on the forehead – only the best responses included development through mentioning fasting and abstinence, the form of words, where the ash came from or the symbolism of ash. Many mistakenly thought Ash Wednesday was a Holy Day of Obligation or is in Holy Week. Some also included other days of Lent, which enriched their response. Many candidates could not express the fundamental purpose of Lent: reflection, repentance and change.

1(b) Explain why Roman Catholics keep Lent. [7]

Most candidates rightly knew that Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights and that this inspired Catholics to fast for forty days and forty nights themselves. Better answers explained this in more depth and explained Jesus' temptation by the devil. Some commented on preparation for Easter and acknowledging Jesus' sacrifice for us by making sacrifices. Better responses analysed the reasons that Catholics might give for keeping Lent, such as showing self control or looking at their lives and relationship with God.

1(c) 'Fasts are more important than Festivals.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Better answers saw that fasts and festivals are often bound together and that both have their merits. There were good examples on both sides of the argument. There were comments on the individuality of fasts and the commitment of those who fast, whilst festivals were seen as something enjoyed by children or celebrated by a community. Some referred to the ecumenical advantages of both fasts and festivals and interfaith possibilities of fasting.

2(a) Describe what is said and done at a Roman Catholic funeral. [8]

This question was a popular choice. In the best answers candidates knew and could explain the signs and symbols of funerals such as wearing black, the sprinkling of the coffin with water, incensing the coffin and the pall. They knew that prayers were said for both deceased and

mourners, that the body was blessed and that hymns and readings were about life after death. Many described the burial rituals. Weaker responses mentioned priests and family saying a few words about the deceased. Most understood the funeral as a way of saying goodbye.

2(b) Explain how belief in the afterlife might affect the daily life of Roman Catholics. [7]

There had to be some comment on the effect of belief in life after death on daily life for top levels. Some candidates wrongly thought that Catholics believe in reincarnation and would want to secure a good next life through good behaviour. Many wrote about being good without giving examples. Better answers included examples such as keeping the ten Commandments, helping others, praying and on occasion candidates thought they might go to reconciliation or ensure a good death with Sacrament of the Sick. Some considered the comfort of knowing that loved ones had now achieved life after death. The question also attracted odd or extreme responses such as; people would commit suicide, perform euthanasia or turn to drink or drugs because they believe in life after death.

2(c) 'When people worry about going to heaven it stops them enjoying life.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

There was not much argument beyond 'do not worry, you only live once!' Most thought that a good life meant people had missed out on fun. Very few considered that being good could be enjoyable. Better responses considered the Grace of God and the possibility of confession to alleviate worry.

3(a) Describe Jesus' teaching about prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. [8]

Few candidates chose this question. Not all of those who did choose it knew Jesus' teaching on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount and then wrote anything they knew from Matthew 5-7, usually the Beatitudes, or confused it with Moses on Mount Sinai. When the Sermon on the Mount was known, candidates easily picked up marks by offering reference to the need to pray in secret, not to babble or show off or Jesus' response to 'Teach us how to pray' - the Lord's prayer. In occasional scripts 'the Our Father' was discussed well as a way of prayer that Jesus wished his followers to use. The different parts of Sermon on the Mount need to be known thoroughly for this examination paper.

3(b) Explain how praying daily might affect the life of a Roman Catholic. [7]

In better answers daily prayer was seen to be helping Catholics to feel better, be closer to God or think that they were being helped through difficult and trying times. Good answers explained how an individual's prayer life might be developed by praying every day or the benefit of ritual or scheduled prayer. Others considered praying with children or corporate prayer. Occasionally the types of daily prayer that could be said were referred to.

3(c) 'The two great commandments are too difficult to follow'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Christianity in your answer. [5]

When the Two Great Commandments were known, candidates had no problems in considering the difficulty or ease of following them. Some contrasted following the ten Commandments which they saw as more detailed, or commenting on the Two Great Commandments as a summary of the Decalogue stressing positives rather than 'Thou shalt not' and easier to learn. Many saw it as the challenge of the Christian life to keep Two Great Commandments and exhorted everyone not to give up trying. Some offered Mother Teresa as role model.

4(a) Describe the work of Bishops and Priests in the Roman Catholic Church. [8]

This question was not a popular choice. The work of Bishops and priests was quite well known and candidates could write about administering sacraments, celebrating Mass and spreading God's word. For top marks candidates needed to separate out the role of Bishop and priest and this was rarely done.

4(b) Explain how Religious Orders might help with the work of the Roman Catholic Church. [7]

Very few students knew what Religious Orders meant let alone how they could help the work of the Church. The term Religious Orders was frequently taken to mean papal instructions or rules rather than monks and nuns, which meant that very few candidates offered valid attempts to answer the question. Better responses offered named individuals, such as Mother Teresa or Brother Roger or Communities, such as Dominicans and assessed their contribution to their local parish or to the wider Church. From some centres candidates demonstrated an excellent understanding of the difference between apostolic and contemplative orders.

4(c) 'In today's Church lay ministers are as important as priests'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

In contrast the term 'lay ministers' was understood and after discussion of both sides of the argument most candidates came to the conclusion that priests and lay ministers had equal importance for various reasons.

5(a) Describe how Roman Catholics might use the Bible in worship. [8]

In some responses, how the Bible is used in worship was answered as: "how the Bible is used generally" but most candidates offered some ways that the Bible is used in worship. Most commented on its function in Mass and the special respect shown to it through being kissed or incensed. Many compared its use in public liturgy and private prayer. Many considered the type of prayer found in the Bible or inspired by it such as the Our Father, Hail Mary, psalms or hymns or its use as a focus for prayer. Others commented on its use in sacraments or for festivals. Examiners were unable to credit any marks to those candidates who completely ignored the word 'worship' in the question.

5(b) Explain why the Bible is important for Roman Catholics. [7]

The importance of the bible as the Sacred Text of Christians was also well understood. Many explained what it means to speak of the bible as the Word of God. Most candidates commented on the Bible as providing Jesus' history and a moral guide for Christians. Others explained that it gives the structure for the Church's calendar and Mass. Weaker candidates answered in a circular way, repeating information from question a) "The Bible is important because it used in Mass/ prayer..."

5(c) 'Christianity could not exist without the Bible.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answers and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

This question provoked many different responses. While it was generally claimed that Christianity could survive without the bible it was clear to candidates that it might be different and that it is useful to have a central authority, otherwise what would RE teachers use to refer to; priests teach from; ordinary people look to for answers and proof? Many compared the oral tradition and the written tradition, worrying about Chinese whispers. Many others saw that the earliest Christians did not have the Bible but still believed and held the Eucharist as the centre of Christianity. Others thought that Christianity would have died out as communities would not form.

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Paper 5 Hinduism (Full Course)

General Comments

In general candidates were well prepared and many produced outstanding and detailed answers and the full range of marks was accessed throughout the paper. There was a tendency among some candidates to provide a great deal of detail when describing a ceremony or belief, but far less when asked to explain the reasons for it or relate it to daily life and this did have an effect on the overall marks of a number of candidates.

Section (a) questions were generally well answered this year with most candidates giving an appropriate amount of detail. Many candidates showed a thorough knowledge of the specification and were able to produce excellent answers.

Section (b) questions continue to cause the most difficulty for candidates with many merely repeating knowledge creditable in part (a) but failing to explain the application of this to the lives of believers socially, morally, spiritually or personally.

Section (c) questions seemed to provide more of a challenge to candidates than they did last year, with fewer achieving full marks. Many gave a one sided opinion or a statement of their own opinion with no supporting arguments. Far too many seemed to think that “everyone is entitled to their own opinion” was an argument that could be offered in support of the statement. As last year, many attempted to provide a viewpoint from a number of different religions which failed to provide a reasoned argument and became instead a statement (with varying accuracy) of the beliefs of a number of religions with regard to the question. Section (c) questions require opinions which are supported by reasoned argument and which make accurate reference to Hindu beliefs. Many candidates are still choosing to spend too much time on the part (c) questions relative to the number of marks available for them. Having said this there were some excellent answers on part (c) questions which showed a thorough understanding of the material and an ability to manipulate it skilfully from the most able candidates.

Almost all candidates had enough time to finish the paper and there were few rubric errors.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe the Sacred Thread Ceremony. [8]

Some candidates answered this question extremely well and were able to give an exhaustive amount of detail. On the whole, however, this question was not well answered. Some candidates gave very general answers relating to ceremonies in general and picked up marks at level 1 where appropriate. Quite a few confused the ceremony with the rakshabandan ceremony which is not specifically covered by the specification, and presumably because of this confusion quite a few, believed that the thread was given by the boy's sister or a female member of his family. Many knew that the ceremony marked the beginning of an ashrama but mistakenly associated it with the beginning of the householder or grhastha stage of life.

1(b) Explain why the Sacred Thread Ceremony is important to some Hindus. [7]

Where candidates had struggled with part (a) they tended to give very general answers about celebrating with friends and family and feeling part of the religion; usually picking up marks at level 1 or 2. Where candidates had answered well on part (a) they usually answered well here also. Some answers were very good, considering a wide variety of possibilities to do with karma, varnashramadharma, family life, duty and so on. Many compared the importance of the ceremony to that of the Jewish Bar Mitzvar, some more convincingly than others.

1(c) 'Family is more important than anything else.' Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Hinduism in your answer. [5]

This question tended to be well answered even where candidates had struggled with parts (a) and (b). The more simplistic answers tended to talk about personal experience, of the importance of family support and blood being thicker than water. Some talked about difficulties within family life such as conflict surrounding arranged marriages. More complex answers dealt with the tension that sometimes exists within Hinduism between varnashramadharma, including family life, and the quest for moksha. A significant number wrote of the sadhus and holy men who had abandoned family ties on the quest for moksha and who would therefore disagree with the statement. Few candidates failed to achieve and many scored at the highest level.

2(a) Describe how sacred writings (scriptures) are used by some Hindus. [8]

Very few candidates attempted this question and it was not uncommon for those that did to leave part (a) blank. Those that did answer sometimes made the mistake of giving a description of the various Hindu scriptures including the ideas of smṛti and śruti scriptures (often very well) but not then answering the question by describing how they are used. Some however, managed to give outstanding answers to the question, describing the reproduction of the stories in drama during festivals and in popular media as well as the recitation of the scriptures at festivals, puja and family ceremonies. Some mentioned the role of scriptures in horoscopes as well as in general study and life, particularly for brahmins.

2(b) Explain how reading the sacred writings might strengthen the faith of a Hindu. [7]

This question was generally well answered by the small number who attempted it. Mention was made of general concepts of comfort and guidance but also of the examples of dharmic behaviour set in the scriptures and the philosophical concepts found there.

2(c) 'The Vedas are not relevant to modern life.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

This question was almost universally well answered where it was attempted. Candidates contrasted the status of the Vedas as authoritative with the changes in life and society since they were written. Some mentioned the idea of all truth being contained within the Vedas and some suggested alternative scriptures that might be more relevant and helpful in the modern age. Some pointed out the impossibility of achieving moksha without the guidance of the Vedas. Finally some suggested that since much of the Vedas are concerned with the performance and meaning of sacrifices which are no longer carried out they cannot be relevant in the modern world.

3(a) Describe the role of a priest in a Hindu community. [8]

This question produced answers which achieved the full range of available marks. Many described the role in very general terms and often indistinguishably from the role of a Christian priest. Others confused the idea of a priest with that of a guru or sadhu. Some candidates successfully described the differences in the roles that have developed between those practising in India and those in the Hindu diaspora.

3(b) Explain how visiting a mandir might help a Hindu. [7]

Many of these answers tended to be quite "waffley" with vague descriptions of nice places to meet up with your friends. The answers which achieved the higher levels took account of the religious and cultural value of a mandir with many, again, providing a contrast between the situation in India and Britain. Many talked of communal worship at festivals and eating together. A few talked about pilgrimage and one mentioned the Neasden Temple as a symbol of cultural

identity. Few candidates failed to achieve level 2 on this question, but comparatively few achieved at the higher level.

3(c) 'Every Hindu community should have a mandir.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Hinduism in your answer. [5]

Again, most candidates achieved at least level 2 as they could give reasons why a mandir would be helpful to the community. A much higher proportion than on part (b) achieved the top level, pointing out that a mandir might be a waste of money where worship in the home is perfectly acceptable. Again some discussed the different answers that might be given to the question in India and Britain.

4(a) Describe Hindu beliefs about Brahman (God). [8]

There was a wide range in the quality of answers to this question. Some gave a basically Judeo-Christian description of the concept of God and seemed unaware of any variation in Hinduism. Most gave a description of the Trimurti; sometimes, but not always explaining the idea of a single reality underlying it. Some gave a description of the god Brahma. There were, conversely, a few outstanding answers which considered various interpretations of Brahman as saguna and nirguna (with and without attributes) and as manifested in the sound "Om". The best answers were truly outstanding however given the centrality of the concept, the proportion of candidates achieving the top level was slightly disappointing.

4(b) Explain why some Hindus use pictures or statues of the gods and goddesses in their worship. [7]

Most managed to acquit themselves well in this question with only a few merely describing how murtis are used in worship. Some gave detailed explanations of why murtis should not be used which did not answer the question and was not, in itself, sufficient to achieve the highest levels. Many discussed the usefulness of having something visual on which to focus devotion. Perhaps responding to the statement in part (c) many suggested that images are useful to help focus attention on to a particular deity. Many of the highest achieving answers discussed the concept of god being omnipresent and therefore present in the image as well as the idea of installing the murti to make the presence of God particularly strong in it.

4(c) 'It does not matter which god you worship.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Hinduism in your answer. [5]

Most did well on this question. Some contrasted the Hindu idea of many gods with the exclusive monotheism of the Western religions, concluding that it did matter which god you worshipped if you were a Christian but not if you were a Hindu. This was an appropriate response which was fully credited as long as full account was taken of the Hindu standpoint. Others suggested that different deities were worshipped for different reasons but that in actuality it did not matter as all gods are, ultimately, One. Few failed to achieve at least level 3 and a high proportion achieved level 4 compared to most other questions.

5(a) Describe how Hindus celebrate Durgapuja (Navaratri). [8]

There were a number of very vague answers describing festivals in general with little or no information specific to Navaratri. Conversely many answers were detailed and exhaustive, sometimes giving information on regional differences in celebrating the festival in India. Some also discussed differences in the way the festival is kept in India and Britain. Candidates achieved across the full range with a good proportion doing well. Some candidates failed to

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achieve as well as they might as they spent the time describing in detail the stories associated with one or more of the goddesses which they did not then relate to the question asked.

5(b) Explain how stories about the gods might affect the way Hindus live their lives. [7]

Some followed on from the previous question by considering the stories associated with the goddesses. Some discussed the Ramayana or the example set by Krishna and the Bhagavad Gita. Discussions on the example set by gods and the consequent working out of dharma were frequent, as were considerations of the gods as encouragement.

5(c) 'Festivals are the most important part of Hinduism.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Most candidates were able to offer at least one valid argument in support of each side of the discussion. Many talked about festivals as encouragement and time for families, referring back to question one. Others contrasted the importance of time alone for contemplation leading to moksha, or personal worship and devotion to a god.

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Paper 6 Islam (Full Course)

General Comments

As in previous years there were some excellent responses but also this year a greater number of weaker responses which tended to lack an understanding of the religious and spiritual aspects of Islam. This was particularly noticeable in AO2 responses. Many candidates were able to give appropriate or good answers to AO1 questions where factual information was required. However, many AO2 responses also focused on factual information showing limited engagement with how beliefs or practices might affect Muslims. Good responses showed candidates able to discuss the importance of Islam for the Muslim community and an individual Muslim's spiritual development. AO3 responses are now becoming the longest answers for some pupils and must have taken a disproportionate amount of time for some of them. Many Centres are still advising pupils to adopt a formula when responding to these questions which for many is helpful but the better responses included a discussion of or comments about the different points of view not just a statement of them.

There were very few rubric infringements this year, all coming from a very small number of Centres. Examiners were pleased to find most candidates filling in the front of the answer booklet with the numbers of the questions answered. Written Communication was generally good but candidates still need to be reminded that legibility is included in this assessment.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe the role of an Imam. [8]

There was the full range of responses to this compulsory question. Most candidates had a valid or competent knowledge of the Imam's role at the mosque and within the community. A few candidates did not know what an Imam is but some were able to talk about him leading prayer from the stimulus. There were a number of candidates who equated the Imam to a Christian Priest thereby displaying a lack of sound understanding. Good responses included reference to his religious duties in the mosque, his involvement in rites of passage ceremonies, his teaching of young Muslims and his pastoral role within the Muslim community.

1(b) Explain the importance of the mosque for a Muslim community. [7]

Many answers offered little more than a description of the mosque without explaining how these features helped the Muslim community in its worship or daily life. Some candidates focused solely on the mosque being a place for the individual to go and pray without reference to communal prayer and how this can strengthen the Ummah. Good answers saw candidates engaging with the question in a broader sense and explaining how the mosque is the centre of the community, especially in non-Muslim countries. Not only did they give examples of when the mosque was used for communal prayer but also discussed its significance for social events, festivals, learning and rites of passage.

1(c) 'You must attend the mosque regularly to be a true Muslim.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

This was answered well by the large majority of candidates who had definite views on regular attendance at a place of worship. Good responses discussed what was meant by "regularly" and some even explored what was meant by "true". Arguments used to defend the quote included that to do so is an act of submission to Allah and that prayer (a pillar of Islam) is looked upon more favourably when done as a community. In opposition candidates reasoned that not every Muslim is able or required to attend the mosque, any clean place is indeed a mosque and being a true Muslim is not just about prayer. The best answers saw candidates commenting on the strength or weakness of different views.

2(a) Describe how Muslims keep Ramadan. [8]

This proved to be the most popular choice of question by far and was answered competently by a large number of candidates. A very small minority did not know what Ramadan was and described Hajj instead. Weak responses referred only to going without food and drink for the month while good answers described; how the fast was begun and broken each day, how Muslims abstain from evil actions and thoughts, who is exempt from fasting and how they read the Qur'an and go to the Mosque more at this time. The best answers portrayed a clear knowledge of Ramadan being a spiritual time for Muslims.

2(b) Explain how keeping Ramadan might affect the life of a Muslim. [7]

The responses to this question ranged from excellent to poor. Some candidates focused purely on the dangers of fasting, which they felt could lead to starvation, eating disorders and bad tempers. These negative answers were very secular and lacked the religious understanding required in AO2 responses. Good answers came from Centres which had clearly taught about the effects of Ramadan on a Muslim's spiritual development. These responses included reference to strengthening of the Ummah through this shared experience, Muslims feeling grateful for Allah's gifts and their identifying with the poor and disadvantaged, the development of self discipline, mercy and an attitude of forgiveness and the fact that Saum is an act of 'Ibadah which stands Muslims in good stead on the Day of Judgement.

2(c) 'Fasting is the least important of the Five Pillars.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

There was a tendency with some candidates to describe all five pillars in this question rather than address the question. Good answers once again discussed the views offered and debated why one pillar might be considered less important than another or why all pillars should be viewed as equally important. Reasons offered included; some pillars were practised daily whilst others were annual, some pillars were easier to perform than others, some seemed to be more altruistic than others and the fact that all were decreed by Allah, so carried equal significance.

3(a) Describe the use of calligraphy in Islam. [8]

This was the least popular question but answered well by many who tackled it. It was possibly part (a) that stopped many candidates from attempting it. Most candidates knew what calligraphy is and how and where it is used. Weaker answers tended to describe calligraphy as geometric patterns while good answers referred to it as 'beautiful writing' used to decorate the mosque, the Qur'an, the Kiswah, other buildings and used in place of statues and drawings to avoid shirk. The best answers also made reference to it as being taught to children and when copied it was seen as an act of worship.

3(b) Explain why Muslims practise both Salah and du'a. [7]

There were some very pleasing responses to this question. Most candidates knew the difference between the two and could offer suggestions as to why both were important. The best answers showed an understanding of how formal, regular prayer strengthens the ummah, is an act of submission and being fard is a duty to Allah, while du'ah allows Muslims to come close to Allah and enables them to ask Him for help at a personal level.

3(c) 'Islam is all about prayer.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Once again some candidates spent a lot of time describing the Five Pillars without tackling the specific question. However, there were some very good responses to this question where candidates debated what is at the heart of Islam and whether five prayer times each day suggests that prayer is meant to be an underpinning aspect of the religion. Some candidates showed an excellent understanding of how prayer is an act of submission to Allah and as Islam means submission the quote is therefore a valid one.

4(a) Describe a Muslim marriage ceremony. [8]

Good answers referred to what actually takes place during the wedding ceremony and noted that customs can vary and be culturally linked but are likely to include some common factors such as: readings from the Qur'an, consent from both parties, at least two witnesses, prayers, the marriage contract being spoken and written, the mahr and the walimah. Weaker answers tended to focus entirely on marriages being arranged and the bride and groom not seeing each other before the wedding. Some included a variety of things that might occur before a wedding rather than describing the ceremony itself.

4(b) Explain why family life is important for Muslims. [7]

Weaker answers focused on parents arranging marriages for their children or commented generally on why family life is important. Good answers came from candidates who had taken on board the part of the question that said "for Muslims". Here, they gave examples of how Muslims benefit specifically such as: the family promotes the rules of Islam, educates children in the customs and rituals of the religion, follows the sunnah of Muhammad, teaches respect for the elderly and forms the basis of Muslim society.

4(c) 'Parents should not decide whom their children marry.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Many candidates appeared to be very negative in their understanding of arranged marriage and therefore fell into the trap of only presenting one side of the argument which rested mainly on how unfair this process is. This was unfortunate as it prevented them from reaching levels 3 and 4. Those candidates who had a deeper understanding of what is meant by arranged marriage were able to put forward arguments to support both sides. The best responses debated whether love should be the deciding factor in choosing a spouse, whether it is a person's right to choose their own marriage partner, or whether parents' experience and guidance are vital when making the important decision to bring two families together.

5(a) Give an account of the life of Muhammad ﷺ. [8]

Most candidates who attempted this question were able to give a thorough account of his early life and revelation experience, but they often stopped short of the later important events preventing them from reaching the higher levels of response. Some candidates however had an extensive knowledge of the life of Muhammad ﷺ and answers were accurate and comprehensive. The best responses included the setting of Muhammad's ﷺ life, his early years, marriage, call, persecution, flight to Madinah, battles with Makkah, return in 630 CE and his final sermon.

5(b) Explain the difference between Sunni and Shi'ah Muslims. [7]

It was noted this year that most candidates who chose question 5 answered part b competently with a good understanding of how Sunni and Shi'ah Muslims differ and how and why the split came about. Good answers contained appropriate detail about the caliphate, worship practices, the rights of women and the divinity of the Qur'an and imams. These candidates carefully linked present day practices to the historical rift following the death of Muhammad ﷺ. The weaker responses to this question tended to focus on the belief that Sunni Muslims are "peaceful" and Shi'ah Muslims have a "violent disposition" which resulted in some candidates not even producing a valid response to the question.

5(c) 'Followers of Muhammad should forget their differences.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Answers to this question tended to be more superficial than any other part c) question. Many candidates focused on war and then discussed whether it is right to kill other people simply because you have different beliefs to them. This meant that some responses were not particularly rooted in Islam. Other candidates found themselves once again describing the differences between Sunnis and Shi'ahs, without evaluating whether or not it is right to have such differences. Many simply stated their point of view in a final sentence. The best answers came from candidates who debated whether two people could both call themselves Muslims if they behaved/believed differently or whether in today's world the differences of the past should be reconciled. Some good responses reasoned that to forget "differences" in Islam might also apply to gender issues not just differences between Sunni and Shi'ah.

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Paper 7 Judaism (Full Course)

General Comments

As has been the case in previous years, most candidates demonstrated an impressive knowledge and understanding of Judaism. Very few candidates made rubric errors. With a few exceptions, candidates were able to make effective use of the time allowed. Time did become an issue, however, for those candidates who chose to set out intricate plans prior to each answer. Experience would suggest that this is not a beneficial strategy. Whilst those questions on Kashrut, Shabbat and the Holocaust were all relatively popular, the question on beliefs about Messianic hope and G-d was certainly less so. As has been previously noted, candidates are making effective use of formulaic approaches to certain questions, especially in explaining and evaluating.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Describe what happens at a Brit Milah. [8]

In previous years this paper has included a picture stimulus for the first question. This year it was felt more appropriate and helpful to insert the quotation from the Torah. The vast majority of candidates made good use of it, although a small number still confused Brit Milah with Bar Mitzvah, and even Bat Mitzvah. This would suggest that the passage had not been read. Brit Milah was often well described, with reference being made to the key participants and events. The weakest candidates only referred to a generic family celebration, whilst others sometimes confused the roles of mohel and sandek.

1(b) Explain the importance of the family in Judaism. [7]

Nearly all candidates were able to make a valid attempt at this question. The main distinction was between the more detailed response and those that highlighted qualities that might apply to families from any religion or culture. The former made reference to other rites of passage, family orientated festivals, the importance of education and even the notion of the Jewish people as an extended family reaching back to Abraham. The connection between Jewish identity and the family was made by some.

1(c) 'Children should follow their parents' religion.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Judaism in your answer. [5]

As already mentioned, candidates are adept at structuring the evaluation questions. A small number omitted any reference to Judaism. Candidates tended to represent the strong family tradition within Judaism as one side of the debate, whilst contrasting it with a more autonomous approach. Arguments tended to be well balanced, often referring back to Brit Milah. This worked well but sometimes candidates did get sidetracked by the issue of circumcision.

2(a) Describe Kashrut (dietary laws). [8]

This question was a popular and frequently well answered option. More able candidates were able to describe the food laws with regard to meat, fish, poultry and so on. Reference was often made to the separation of meat and milk, as well as the implications for the Orthodox Jewish kitchen. Credit was also given to those who gave an account of the method of slaughter and removal of blood. A good knowledge of the terminology prevailed in many responses. Some candidates went on to refer to specific food laws for certain festivals. Weaker responses often confused the different criteria, sometimes stating the opposite to the reality.

2(b) Explain how Kashrut (dietary laws) affects the life of a Jew. [7]

In general, candidates were able to explain some of the restrictions that the food laws might impose upon the Jewish community. These revolved around the complexity of the Orthodox kitchen, the need for the hechsher, the implications for the social life of the Jew and the limited number of eating establishments that might be available. The more able were also inclined to focus on the positive aspects of Kashrut. They made reference to the covenantal relationship with G-d and how this might be strengthened. They also explained that the food laws might help to bind the community together and enhance their sense of their own holiness.

2(c) 'What people eat shows what they believe.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Judaism in your answer. [5]

Most candidates were able to construct a well balanced response to this question. One side of the debate tended to be that many religions - including Judaism - have food laws that demonstrate the follower's devotion to their faith. Some candidates were still inclined, however, to omit explicit reference to Judaism. This tendency always prevents candidates from reaching the highest marks. Secular examples like vegetarianism and organic foods were also referred to and credited. It was also often argued that diet might simply be the result of taste or economic necessity.

3(a) Describe how Shabbat is celebrated in the Jewish home. [8]

This question, based around the celebration of Shabbat, was also very popular with candidates. Not all recognised that the first part was specifically about the Jewish home in relation to Shabbat and included information about the synagogue. Other candidates focussed more on the restrictions than what does actually happen. Knowledge about the content of the Shabbat meal was not always developed. This was also sometimes the case with descriptions of havdalah. The most able distinguished between Orthodox and Progressive worship. Candidates were credited for describing the preparation for Shabbat.

3(b) Explain why the synagogue is important during Shabbat. [7]

Most candidates were able to recognise the importance of communal worship for Jews during Shabbat. They explained the significance of prayer and the role of the rabbi. A significant number overlooked the importance of hearing the Torah read. Good use was sometimes made of the different features of the synagogue and how these might be an aid to worship. Once again, differences between the Orthodox and Progressive traditions were both welcome and credited.

3(c) 'Shabbat is just a day off work.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Judaism in your answer. [5]

Answers to this question were generally well structured. Candidates frequently argued that there is a sense that Shabbat is a day off, but that it is also far more than that. Frequent reference was made to the demands of the Torah and to the precedent set out by G-d during the Creation. At times reference to the different denominations was somewhat unhelpful. Some candidates gave the impression that Progressive Judaism is a watered down version of Orthodoxy in which Shabbat has little, or no, religious significance.

4(a) Describe what Jews believe about the Messianic hope. [8]

Traditionally the questions examining Jewish beliefs have been less popular options and this year was no exception. Of those who responded to it, many were able to describe the salient Jewish beliefs about the Messiah. Having set out some of the better known expectations of the Messianic Age - about the Temple, a time of peace and so on - some candidates made a distinction between the Orthodox and Progressive beliefs. Such depth of knowledge was impressive. Examiners credited those candidates who described the different attitudes to be found in Judaism and Christianity. The least able candidates often confused the Messiah with another area of Judaism, most frequently beliefs about G-d.

4(b) Explain why believing in G-d is important for a Jew. [7]

This question was often well answered, even when the preceding one did not bode well. The question gave great scope to candidates for explaining how beliefs about G-d impact upon the lives of the Jewish community. Candidates occasionally saw the question as an opportunity to discuss proofs for the existence of G-d, which limited the level they could attain. Reference was often made to the covenant and then the implications of the mitzvot. Other candidates approached the topic by discussing the structure that might be provided by adherence to either festivals or rites of passage.

4(c) 'Believing in G-d is the most important part of Jewish life.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

Candidates generally performed well on this question. They were able to structure their answers relatively easily, articulating arguments both for and against the proposition. Any reference to G-d was taken as a reference to Judaism, although the best responses made their understanding more explicit. The majority of candidates felt that belief in G-d was vital to Judaism, although the more able pointed to the absence of a universally accepted creed. It was sometimes recognised that Judaism is often perceived as a religion based more on practice than belief.

5(a) Describe what happened to Jews during the Twentieth Century Holocaust. [8]

Although not the most popular optional question, this was chosen by a significant number of candidates and generally answered well. As in previous years, candidates were able to demonstrate an impressive knowledge of how the Jews suffered during the Holocaust. This often included an account of the restrictive legislation leading up to The Final Solution. Some of the best answers included a description of how the Holocaust impacted on the religious beliefs of the Jews.

5(b) Explain why the State of Israel is important to many Jews. [7]

Many candidates made good use of the previous response in presenting Israel as a sanctuary from persecution. Stronger answers referred to a range of other examples of the role and importance of the state including the Western Wall, Yad Vashem and the covenant with Abraham.

5(c) 'Jews do not need a special country.'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Judaism in your answer. [5]

This question provoked some interesting responses. The most able candidates set out some of the different Jewish positions such as a preference for integration in the Diaspora and the objections of some Ultra Orthodox Jews. In general the focus was understandably on the omnipresence of G-d. This was balanced against the importance of the land of Israel for a Jew.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

Consequently there were clearly no problems including religious content and few candidates were unable to develop at least two arguments. Responses tended to be well balanced.

2308

Paper 8 Sikhism (Full Course)

General Comments

The overall performance of students on this paper demonstrated that the majority had a sound knowledge of the topics selected and were able to demonstrate the skills that enabled them to access Level 3 and 4.

Many candidates used specialist language with confidence.

Most candidates were able to plan and use time effectively. There were very few examples of rubric error.

Some candidates offered material appropriate for responses to section b) in their responses to section a). Whilst the information was often appropriate for section b), it could not necessarily be give credit in the a) section. Candidates need to be encouraged to direct their responses more effectively to the appropriate parts of the question.

Many candidates showed extremely well considered arguments in their responses to the section c) parts of the question, clearly demonstrating the ability to consider a number of views and to evaluate them effectively.

1(a) Describe how the Guru Granth Sahib Ji is shown respect by Sikhs. [8]

This proved to be accessible to the majority of candidates, although some were unable to describe without considerable explanation. The main ways in which respect is shown to the Guru Granth Sahib Ji were covered in breadth and depth –many candidates demonstrating a wide knowledge of physical and personal examples of respect. Use of specialist language was evident.

1(b) Explain the importance of the langar in the life of a Sikh community [7]

Candidates were able to explain the importance of service (sewa) within the context of the langar and many used their knowledge effectively to explain the concept of equality within the community. The majority of candidates clearly knew about the langar and its function.

1(c) 'Religious people need a sacred book'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Sikhism in your answer. [5]

Many candidates presented arguments for and against the statement sometimes showing that they could present two viewpoints that agreed with each other for different reasons. A few failed to include reference to Sikhism which meant that they were unable to access the highest level.

2(a) Describe how the birth of a baby is celebrated by the Sikh community. [8]

Full and accurate answers were offered by most candidates who attempted this question. It is clear that they had been thoroughly prepared for the section on Rites of Passage and were able to include the main points. A very few candidates did not progress beyond the choosing of the name.

2(b) Explain how being brought up in a Sikh family might strengthen the faith of a child. [7]

Candidates produced interesting and full answers in many cases. They were able to establish links between structure and behaviour and the demonstration of belief by family members that might lead to a strengthening of the faith.

2(c) 'Children should be free to choose their own religion'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Sikhism in your answer.

The balance of argument between the need for religion to continue through the family if it is to be relevant in future generations, and the rights of children to make up their own mind was clearly an issue in this question. Many failed to come to an outright conclusion –which was entirely acceptable in the context of the question. This question did result in some long, repetitive answers.

3(a) Describe a Sikh place of pilgrimage. [8]

Some candidates misunderstood this question, and gave general answers about the nature of pilgrimage in general. Some suggested that the faith has no specific places of pilgrimage, but that there were a number of places likely to be seen as places of pilgrimage. The majority referred to the Golden Temple at Amritsar in some detail, including the main features and background which have resulted in its' importance.

3(b) Explain why hopes for a homeland (Khalistan) is important for a Sikh. [7]

This was the least well answered question on the examination paper. Many candidates gave general answers with no specific details. Some concentrated purely on political issues. The best responses were a fusion of religious, historical and political reasons.

3(c) 'Visiting a sacred place is an important part of a religion'
Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Sikhism in your answer. [5]

Many considered the desirability of visiting sacred places to enhance belief, although most recognised that this is not obligatory in Sikhism. Some suggested that it was unnecessary in order to maintain a strong faith. Links to a variety of holy places including gurdwaras were made.

4(a) Describe Sikh beliefs in one God. [8]

Despite the fact that this is a central belief for the faith, some candidates who chose this question struggled to write a full answer. Many did understand the immanence (sargun) and transcendence (nirgun) of God, also that he is Creator and without beginning or end. Some made links to the beliefs stated in the Mool Mantra, including quotations.

4(b) Explain how samsara might affect the life of a Sikh. [7]

Candidates could explain both what samsara is, and how it might affect a Sikh. Answers included the benefits of sewa in all forms as a way of working towards a release from samsara.

4(c) 'Reincarnation means that Sikhs should not worry about life after death'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. [5]

A wide range of answers indicated some serious thought from many candidates. Some suggested that the opposite was the case, and that reincarnation meant that Sikhs should worry, whilst others felt that a 'second chance' meant that there was nothing to be concerned about. Many considered both options had some merit.

5(a) Describe the work of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. [8]

This was a popular question, giving candidates the opportunity to describe the khalsa and Vaisakhi as well as the biography of a well known leader. Most could describe the formation of the khalsa in great detail, although this was not required. A few candidates confused Guru Gobind Singh Ji with others of the ten gurus.

5(b) Explain how the initiation ceremony (khalsa) is important to Sikhs. [7]

Many candidates found this straightforward and could explain the importance of each part of the khalsa as well as its overall importance. Some suggested that it might not be important to some members of the faith and that the added responsibility was not for all believers. A number of candidates tried to explain this but found that they could not follow their points through to any conclusion and this limited access to higher levels.

5(c) 'Initiation ceremonies are not important for a believer.'

Do you agree? Give reasons to support your answer and show that you have thought about different points of view. You must refer to Sikhism in your answer. [5]

Some candidates suggested that they are an outward sign of inner faith and demonstrate belonging, whilst others suggested that they were unnecessary and meaningless without belief. Candidates demonstrated a wide variety of opinions often backed up with clear reasoning.

2309

Paper 9 Religion, the media and entertainment (Full Course)

General Comments

The paper was accessible to all candidates and there were few papers that did not achieve respectable marks. The stimuli were used by the majority of candidates, and even when misconstrued (the photo from The Vicar of Dibley as a Muslim man, a woman and a baby) were used to answer the question. There was very little evidence to show that candidates did not have adequate time to complete the paper. Some candidates demonstrated the ability to write copiously in the time allowed.

The majority candidates were able to tackle the questions providing they understood the terminology. The main problem candidates encountered was that of failing to answer/addressing the specific focus of the question. There was a diversity of approaches to the questions with some different interpretations of the sources. Some candidates used a range of different religions in their answers, which was encouraging to see. The better prepared candidates had access to specific examples and teachings to support their statements and were able to show their understanding of Media influences. Some candidates need to have better understanding of the word "attitude" and the realisation that this is a trigger word to different viewpoints.

Comments on Individual Papers

1 What is the attitude of the religion(s) you have studied about the way religious leaders are portrayed in films?

Some candidates misinterpreted the question and did not focus on films or religious leaders. Indeed some candidates felt that Dot Cotton (Eastenders) was a religious leader. Bin Laden and Hitler were used as examples but the main focus was usually on God/Jesus/Allah/, Prophets such as Muhammad Δ ; priests/vicars; the Pope or the Archbishop of Canterbury, whilst some focused on Martin Luther King, Oscar Romero or Malcolm X. Films discussed included: The Passion of the Christ (there were differing views here of whether Christians viewed the film as appropriate or offensive); Dogma, Romero, Mississippi Burning, the Da Vinci Code, with some diversion into Father Ted and Vicar of Dibley. Some candidates quite profoundly commented on the fact that some Christians do not like seeing Jesus defenceless (Passion of the Christ) and human even though the Bible says he is. The sin of *shirk* was discussed by those candidates focusing on Islam.

2 Look at Source A. What is the attitude of the religion(s) you have studied towards the way lifestyles are portrayed in the media?

This was usually successfully accessed although some candidates only focused on the keyword 'lifestyles' and missed out any reference to media. There were different interpretations of the term 'lifestyles': some referred to the antics of celebrities, such as Paris Hilton, whereas others focused on lifestyles in general: Muslims as terrorists; racism; abortion/drinking in soap operas; size zero models; commercialism (advertisements) and materialism. Some focused on the invasions of privacy by the media. There were positive and negative interpretations of the source but most seemed to think it was not the lifestyle a religious person should have. Better responses supported the statements with scripture for example; 'Body a Temple'; Decalogue; Qur'an: Zakat.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

3 Look at Source B. Explain the attitudes of the religion(s) you have studied towards the dramatization of sacred stories.

Some candidates failed to understand the term 'dramatisation' and the words 'sacred stories' were sometimes interpreted loosely. The better answers used specific examples of dramatisations: the Manchester Passion Play; Nativity stories by Primary Schools; and re-enactments of the Via Dolorosa but there was little reference to the fact that dramatisations were a focal point in Medieval times. There was quite a lot of repetition of question 1: the sin of *shirk* was discussed. Some candidates recognised the source as from the Vicar of Dibley and this assisted them in their responses. Bollywood films were discussed along with cartoon versions of biblical stories such as Story Keepers and the Prince of Egypt.

4 Look at Source C. Explain how and why the Internet and computers can be used in evangelism.

Again, as in previous years, some candidates did not understand the term 'evangelism': indeed some candidates interpreted it as 'euthanasia', some as 'a religion' and many talked about Evangelists in general. A lot of candidates failed to achieve the highest level because they did not address the focus of both parts of the question 'how' and 'why'. Better answers explained the religious purpose/significance of evangelism with reference to scriptural authority. Most candidates were able to show how the Internet can be used, including pop ups; web pages and chat rooms. Quite a few discussed the fact it was much better than going door to door or standing on a street corner handing out leaflets. Some candidates failed to respond to the word 'evangelism' and talked about the internet being used by paedophiles.

5 'Television has taken over from religion in teaching about moral issues'.

Some candidates interpreted this question as TV is bad for moral issues or good for moral issues. Some did not understand the term 'moral issues' but most were able to focus on moral issues in the soaps or the Heaven & Earth Show, Songs of Praise or Religious Programmes on Digital. The better answers addressed the role of television versus the role of religious teachings in the places of worship, in the family and also in RS lessons and Sunday school. A few pointed out that TV is purely for entertainment and although moral issues may be discussed there are drawbacks to this mode of teaching. Others pointed out that there are often numbers to call given at the end of episodes of soaps which have addressed upsetting issues. Several candidates gave long narrations of the Dot and Ethel assisted suicide episode of Eastenders.

**2310
Coursework**

General Comments

Work for this component continues to be of a very high standard. The decrease in the size of the entry for this component continued this year as centres move to taking the alternative Media paper 2309.

The standard of marking and administration by Centres was generally very good, however, the Centre Authentication statements still caused problems for some.

Almost all of the work submitted was on approved titles. Where this was not the case centres are urged to seek approval for titles used.

A very small number of centres had their marking adjusted.

Again, the main cause of correspondence with centres was missing Centre Authentication Statements.

Nevertheless, teachers, who are inevitably under great pressure must be commended overall for their work and expertise. The use of the internet as a source of information seems now almost universal as does the word-processing of coursework. Both of these are highly commendable though students may need to be reminded that books can also be used as reference material and that the use of a dozen different fonts with complex page layouts does not help improve work with poorly prepared content, in any way. Candidates must acknowledge downloaded material so that there can be no suggestion of intentional plagiarism.

Again, the increasing maturity of the candidates' responses should be noted as should the degree of humanity which so often appears in the work submitted.

Abortion remains the most popular topic overall for coursework.

Some concern was expressed at stereotyping, particularly in non-Christian religions. Religions are often presented as having just one place or style of worship e.g. Judaism defined from a purely Orthodox viewpoint.

**General Certificate of Secondary Education
Religious Studies A: World Religions (1930)
June 2007 Assessment Session**

Unit Threshold Marks

| Unit | | Maximum Mark | a* | a | b | c | d | e | f | g | u |
|---------|-----|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| 2301 | Raw | 64 | 61 | 54 | 47 | 40 | 33 | 26 | 20 | 14 | 0 |
| | UMS | 64 | 56 | 50 | 44 | 38 | 32 | 26 | 20 | 14 | 0 |
| 2302/01 | Raw | 64 | 54 | 48 | 42 | 36 | 30 | 24 | 19 | 14 | 0 |
| | UMS | 64 | 56 | 50 | 44 | 38 | 32 | 26 | 20 | 14 | 0 |
| 2302/02 | Raw | 64 | 59 | 52 | 45 | 38 | 32 | 26 | 20 | 14 | 0 |
| | UMS | 64 | 56 | 50 | 44 | 38 | 32 | 26 | 20 | 14 | 0 |
| 2303 | Raw | 64 | 60 | 53 | 46 | 40 | 32 | 24 | 17 | 10 | 0 |
| | UMS | 64 | 56 | 50 | 44 | 38 | 32 | 26 | 20 | 14 | 0 |
| 2304/01 | Raw | 64 | 54 | 47 | 40 | 34 | 27 | 21 | 15 | 9 | 0 |
| | UMS | 64 | 56 | 50 | 44 | 38 | 32 | 26 | 20 | 14 | 0 |
| 2304/02 | Raw | 64 | 54 | 47 | 40 | 34 | 28 | 22 | 17 | 12 | 0 |
| | UMS | 64 | 56 | 50 | 44 | 38 | 32 | 26 | 20 | 14 | 0 |
| 2305 | Raw | 64 | 61 | 52 | 46 | 40 | 33 | 26 | 19 | 12 | 0 |
| | UMS | 64 | 56 | 50 | 44 | 38 | 32 | 26 | 20 | 14 | 0 |
| 2306 | Raw | 64 | 59 | 53 | 47 | 41 | 34 | 27 | 20 | 13 | 0 |
| | UMS | 64 | 56 | 50 | 44 | 38 | 32 | 26 | 20 | 14 | 0 |
| 2307 | Raw | 64 | 61 | 54 | 47 | 41 | 33 | 26 | 19 | 12 | 0 |
| | UMS | 64 | 56 | 50 | 44 | 38 | 32 | 26 | 20 | 14 | 0 |
| 2308 | Raw | 64 | 61 | 54 | 47 | 41 | 34 | 27 | 21 | 15 | 0 |
| | UMS | 64 | 56 | 50 | 44 | 38 | 32 | 26 | 20 | 14 | 0 |
| 2309 | Raw | 43 | 42 | 37 | 31 | 26 | 21 | 16 | 11 | 6 | 0 |
| | UMS | 32 | 28 | 25 | 22 | 19 | 16 | 13 | 10 | 7 | 0 |
| 2310 | Raw | 64 | 63 | 55 | 46 | 37 | 29 | 22 | 15 | 8 | 0 |
| | UMS | 32 | 28 | 25 | 22 | 19 | 16 | 13 | 10 | 7 | 0 |

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

| | Maximum Mark | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | U |
|-------------|--------------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| 1930 | 160 | 140 | 125 | 110 | 95 | 80 | 65 | 50 | 35 | 0 |

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

| | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | U | Total No. of Cands |
|-------------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|--------------------|
| 1930 | 8.7 | 26.2 | 47.8 | 68.8 | 83.9 | 92.9 | 97.7 | 99.4 | 100.0 | 23258 |

23258 candidates were entered for aggregation this session

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

**General Certificate of Secondary Education
Religious Studies A: World Religions Short Course (1030)
June 2007 Assessment Session**

Unit Threshold Marks

| Unit | | Maximum Mark | a* | a | b | c | d | e | f | g | u |
|-------------|-----|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| 2391 | Raw | 43 | 41 | 36 | 31 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 0 |
| | UMS | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| 2392/0 1 | Raw | 43 | 36 | 32 | 28 | 24 | 20 | 16 | 12 | 8 | 0 |
| | UMS | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| 2392/0 2 | Raw | 43 | 39 | 34 | 29 | 25 | 21 | 17 | 14 | 11 | 0 |
| | UMS | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| 2393 | Raw | 43 | 40 | 35 | 30 | 25 | 21 | 17 | 13 | 9 | 0 |
| | UMS | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| 2394/0 1 | Raw | 43 | 35 | 31 | 27 | 23 | 19 | 15 | 11 | 7 | 0 |
| | UMS | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| 2394/0 2 | Raw | 43 | 37 | 32 | 27 | 23 | 19 | 15 | 12 | 9 | 0 |
| | UMS | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| 2395 | Raw | 43 | 40 | 35 | 30 | 25 | 20 | 16 | 12 | 8 | 0 |
| | UMS | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| 2396 | Raw | 43 | 39 | 34 | 29 | 25 | 21 | 17 | 13 | 9 | 0 |
| | UMS | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| 2397 | Raw | 43 | 40 | 35 | 30 | 25 | 21 | 17 | 14 | 11 | 0 |
| | UMS | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| 2398 | Raw | 43 | 41 | 36 | 31 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 0 |
| | UMS | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| 2399 | Raw | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| | UMS | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |
| 2400 | Raw | 43 | 38 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 21 | 17 | 13 | 9 | 0 |
| | UMS | 43 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 0 |

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

| | Maximum Mark | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | U |
|-------------|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| 1030 | 86 | 68 | 60 | 52 | 44 | 36 | 28 | 20 | 12 | 0 |

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

| | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | U | Total No. of Cand.s |
|-------------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------------------|
| 1030 | 5.4 | 14.7 | 30.3 | 48.7 | 66.2 | 80.7 | 91.2 | 97.4 | 100.0 | 18826 |

18826 candidates were entered for aggregation this session.

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

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