

Religious Studies A

GCSE 1930

GCSE Short Course 1030

Report on the Units

June 2008

1930/1030/MS/R/08

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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GCSE World Religions

General Comment

The examination papers across the World Religions specification proved accessible to the range of candidates, discriminated well and gave opportunities for candidates of all ability to demonstrate what they knew, understood and could do in relation to the Religious Studies assessment objectives.

Over the years that this specification has been running, the quality of the responses has improved considerably leading Principal Examiners to comment on the exceptionally high standards achieved by many candidates in all the assessment objectives. Responses, particularly to the evaluative sections (c parts) were sometimes outstanding, well argued and maturely handled. However the enthusiasm some candidates had for this section of each question led them to spend far too much time on a part of the question that is worth only 5 marks, writing as much as two sides in some cases. Wordy and unplanned responses are bound to waste time and it was noticeable that some failed to complete the paper to their overall disadvantage. The provision of an eight page answer book for these examinations is an indication of the expected length of responses and a more concise and focused approach would benefit candidates.

2391 Paper 1 – Christianity through a study of either Luke or Mark

General Comments.

It was noted that there was evidence that in Section B Mark, answers proved weaker on the questions chosen and any perceived difficulty over the choice of questions on the paper was carefully examined and taken into account at the standardisation meeting.

Comments on Individual Questions.

Section A Luke.

Question 1

- (a) This proved to be an accessible question. Well answered overall. A lot of candidates had learned this thoroughly. Most were able to write about three main details of the temptation narrative with accurate quotations.
- (b) Performance varied here. The best answers focused on their understanding of what the temptations of Jesus symbolised and applied the lesson to Christian life today. Some weaker answers ignored the phrase 'following their beliefs' and wrote only about avoiding more banal temptations such as eating chocolate or watching too much T.V.

Some answers were vague and lacking in substance merely reiterating in a variety of ways that Christians should follow Jesus' example.

- (c) The majority of answers were strongly one-sided in favour of the statement. Most successfully gave evidence of the strength of temptations particular to society today such as alcohol, drugs, peer pressure, however, there was, generally a lack of perception about the time of Jesus with most guessing that people might have been tempted to do wrong acts to survive. A few came to the conclusion that there have always been temptations and the essence of them is the same.

Question 2

- (a) Surprisingly, there were many inaccurate and mistaken answers to this question which limited the performance of a fair number of candidates on this question. (A common fault was to refer to the healing of Ten Lepers.)
- (b) There was a tendency to be very vague and general in answers to this question. Some picked up and tried to develop the idea of Jesus caring for those not accepted into society. Mother Teresa was often quoted in this regard and her story over-embellished so that, in some cases the answers lost focus.
- (c) This provoked strong responses from some candidates about how God loved everyone equally and also that they knew of non-Christians who had experienced miracles. Definitions of miracles were hazy ranging from the birth of a baby to a cure for cancer but there were some thoughtful answers, which attempted to show contrasting opinions.

Question 3

- (a) Generally well answered with the majority of answers gaining level 4 marks for excellent or very good accounts of the parable.
- (b) Many candidates wrote about the value of parables and the reasons they might have been used. Some quoted examples from the set texts and the best answers were from those who drew on their understanding of other parables as well as the one in part (a). Some answers included information here better suited to answering part (c).
- (c) Some answers were only one-sided arguments about whether parables succeeded as a way of teaching about Christianity and whilst some reasonable arguments were made they did not develop any alternative view.

Question 4

- (a) Some knew this very well but others guessed at the details and a fair number of answers recorded the incident of the women at the tomb only.
- (b) There were a few very good and excellent answers here but this question appeared to stimulate waffle about life after death and little else. A fair number of candidates confused the Resurrection with the Crucifixion and many did not mention the Easter festival at all. Some ideas about a promise of life in Heaven with God/Jesus were simplistic and often misguided as to Christian belief.
- (c) Those who muddled the connection between the Resurrection and Crucifixion in (b) also did so in this question. Some arguments were superficial but many successfully made a comparison with other parts of the gospel, mainly Jesus' teachings, and reached a conclusion on the gospel as a whole.

Section B Mark.

Question 5

- (a) Overall performance on this compulsory question was good or satisfactory rather than of the highest level. Credit was given for accuracy to the account in Mark but good summaries without every detail from Mark 15 1-15 could and did gain full marks.
- (b) Generally well answered, many candidates answered using wider information about Jesus' courage than that shown in the trial before Pilate. Jesus' suffering on the cross was often referred to and there was evidence that candidates understood the implications for Christians of the need for courage. Some answers used the example of specific Christians to good advantage.
- (c) Some genuine and thoughtful attempts to get to grips with this question. The achievement was varied but the majority attempted to offer balanced views and valid alternatives to the statement.

Question 6

- (a) It was noted that hardly any candidates attempted to answer this question perhaps because of its perceived difficulty and this has been noted for future question setting.
- (b) See the comments on 3(b), which have also taken into account the performance on this question.

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- (c) See the comments on 3(a), which have also taken into account the performance on this question.

Question 7

- (a) This was a popular question. Candidates who chose this question were comfortable with the prescribed text and answered well overall.
- (b) Mostly, answers matched the performance on part (a) with a similar achievement on this question, knowledge of the text making the explanation of its application in Christian life a straightforward exercise.
- (c) There were many well-argued answers to this question.

Question 8

- (a) This was answered reasonable well although in some cases there was confusion with other resurrection and post-resurrection appearances.
- (b) See comments on 4(b), which have also taken into, account the performance on this question.
- (c) This was answered well if differentiation was made between the Resurrection and the Crucifixion. The most common valid alternative arguments included Jesus' death, his healings and his teachings. Few appeared aware that this account is part of the disputed longer ending of Mark.

2392/01 Paper 2A – Christian Perspectives on Personal, Social and World Issues

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. As mentioned in previous years, 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 candidates offering extensive responses to (c) parts of the questions which clearly took up a disproportionate amount of time compared to the mark allocation of 5 marks. Some of these responses despite their length did not achieve the full 5 marks as they did not contain and reference to Christianity. The tendency for some candidates to offer what appeared to be prepared responses rather than attempt to answer the question as stated was evident in the work of some centres. Examiners commented that the wording of the (b) part of some of the questions appeared to unsettle some candidates. The wording of these questions was intended to direct candidates towards demonstrating 'in depth' understanding of the topics by asking them to explain underlying rationale for Christian views rather than just stating them.

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. 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. Answers which 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. This was particularly evident in responses to question 1(a), where bland generalisations with little reference to Christianity were frequent responses. 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. A substantial number of answers 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:

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates in response to this question focused on appropriate texts, including those in the specification. The best responses noted that modern Christian teaching emphasised the equality of the marital relationship in contrast to previous generations. Some candidates were sidetracked by the equality issue and focused on it to the detriment of their response. Others wrote about the roles of family members as if Christians were stuck in a 'time warp' where the Father dominates the family and women are subservient. Examiners noted that some candidates fell into describing family types rather than roles and limited their responses accordingly.
- (b) As mentioned in the general comments, the question was intended to direct candidates away from offering a statement of views and towards explaining why Christians hold these

views. The best responses referred to the apparent contradiction in Jesus teaching as leading to different interpretations of the significance of the marriage. These responses often referred to the sacramental view of marriage as well as to the idea of forgiveness and differences in attitude between the New Testament and the Old Testament. Examiners noted that a significant number of answers tended to confuse annulment with divorce, referring to it incorrectly as the way out for Roman Catholics for whom divorce is impossible.

- (c) Some answers focused entirely on the issue of forgiveness and ignored the relationship context of the stimulus. Other responses referred to different kinds of relationships as well as marital or family ones, including the relationship of the believer and God. Biblical support for forgiving was offered by many answers (70 times 7) but this was often qualified by the assertion that some things can't be forgiven, such as adultery in a marriage.

Question 2

- (a) A majority of candidates were able to substantiate the view that Christians would promote equality, by reference to the idea of all people created in the image of God, or to Paul's statement about 'neither Jew nor Greek'. Candidates at several centres pointed to the questionable significance of the latter text to support equality for all as it can be read as only referring to Christians. The parable of the Good Samaritan figured in many responses with sound justification as did the teaching and actions of Christians who have worked to embed equality in society, such as M L King or T Huddleston. A significant proportion of candidates balanced their account with reference to the perceived inequality in the Roman Catholic Church in refusing to admit women to the priesthood.
- (b) This question was intended to elicit responses which showed how the differing reactions of Christians to prejudice are based on the teachings and underlying principles of the faith. Many responses failed to address this in any depth, answers giving an account of what Christians might do rather than suggesting why as well. Other responses gave a full account of Christian teaching about prejudice, often repeating what was offered in (a), without reference to what Christians might do or how they might react. A significant number of answers attempted to do what the question asked, and in the process demonstrated a mature understating of the link between beliefs and actions.
- (c) For many candidates the stimulus was considered to be a truism as people like M L King had shown that this could be done so everyone else can do the same. Some responses did not contain any other point of view, however the majority went on to consider that for most people avoiding discrimination was struggle and that the demands could be too great.

Question 3

- (a) A considerable number of responses gave the view that as some methods of contraception caused the death of a foetus the question was really about abortion and the issues surrounding it. Whilst this sort of response could be given credit, they did not fully address the topic in the question. Others answers seemed to confuse contraception with conception and wrote about fertility treatment and Christian attitudes to it. Answers which did approach the question appropriately referred to the contrasting views of Christians who saw the prevention of life being created as being against the teaching of the (RC) church and of the command to go forth and multiply with the views of Christians who saw contraception as giving couples the chance to plan a family size that they could cope with. The possibility that contraception might promote promiscuity was discussed by a number of candidates as was the danger to a woman's health of prolonged use of chemical methods.

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- (b) As referred to above, examiners were looking for the capacity of the candidates to link underlying principles and beliefs to attitudes and actions. Hence, responses which just rehearsed various positions held by Christians without any explanation of why they held those views could not achieve the highest level of response.
- (c) The best responses to this stimulus referred to the inevitability of the involvement of religion in a discussion about birth or death, because religion concerns itself with meaning and purpose in this life and beyond. As an alternative many candidates offered the view that in the end birth and death are just things that happen as part of nature and in some cases are affected by medical processes, but religion is an irrelevance to them.

Question 4

- (a) Many candidates selecting this question offered a general response about fertility treatment which could be given some credit but not at the highest levels. More credit could be given to responses which focused on the issue of whether the embryo, if it is considered to be a human life, should be subject to experiments and eventual destruction.
- (b) The majority of candidates saw a connection between agape love and the Christian impulse to help people as underlying how their actions might be determined. A number of candidates drew upon knowledge of organisations like the Samaritans to show how Christians might be drawn to them to assist those who have attempted suicide to find meaning in their lives. Other candidates explained the underlying reasons for a condemnatory attitude towards suicide in some Christian cultures, past and present.
- (c) The significance of the stimulus eluded some responses. Many took the view that nothing should stand in the way of medical research, least of all religion as research would always be for the good of mankind. More considered responses noted that in some areas such as cloning, medical research seemed to be going beyond what was good or desirable and that religion could and should act as a balance to the over-enthusiastic work of some researchers.

2392/02 Paper 2A – Christian (Roman Catholic) Perspectives on Personal, Social and World Issues

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Better answers looked at the role of love, care, respect, acceptance and forgiveness in families as well as the parental role of being the first educators in the faith. Most responses, however, rarely went beyond traditional roles of husband as provider and wife as home-maker and nurturer as Catholic teaching. Some linked the role of man as head of his home with Christ as head of his Church. Very few looked at the role model of the Holy Family. Most answers included some bible quotes – ‘Honour your Father and Mother’ and ‘Fathers do not irritate your children’ were used to good effect in most answers. 1Tim 5:8 and Col 3:20-21 were also cited. Some candidates also considered the roles of the extended family.
- (b) Not all candidates offered answers to both parts of the question. Most stated that divorce is not allowed in the Church and could give a good explanation of annulment with conditions. Most candidates could see the difference between divorce as the end of a marriage and annulment as there never having been a marriage. There were markedly better explanations of annulment this year. A few answers considered the issue of remarriage following divorces and annulments.
- (c) Candidates easily formed arguments for and against this quotation. Most recognised the importance of vows and commitment made in the sacrament of Marriage. Some saw it as unkind for children’s sake. Some saw the danger of undermining the institution of marriage. Some saw the importance of marriage counselling and forgiveness in relationships. Some better answers, while acknowledging the indissoluble nature of Roman Catholic marriage, were aware that divorce is needed before tribunals will consider annulment. Others felt it kinder to allow husbands and wives to leave abusive, adulterous or unhappy relationships.

Question 2

- (a) Many correctly chose and named a well-known Christian – usually Martin Luther King. Better answers were comprehensive in their accounts of what their chosen person accomplished in overcoming prejudice and discrimination and its Christian motivation. Some chose non-Christians such as Ghandi or people like Mother Teresa whose main work was not against prejudice and discrimination and were given credit for the links between their work and the kind of activities Christians might be expected to do in fighting prejudice and discrimination but could not gain full marks.
- (b) Many candidates were able to offer Jesus’ teaching on neighbours from the Good Samaritan and Sermon on the Mount. Many quoted ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ as an important rule or ‘Do unto others’ as an example of ‘what goes around comes around’. Better responses offered comment on what these mean for Christians. The Commandment’s ideas about not envying neighbours was discussed to good effect.
- (c) Again, candidates easily formed arguments for and against this quotation. Most saw that there were those for whom the teachings about discrimination had been put into practice e.g. their choice in question (a) so it was not impossible. Others saw free will and sinful nature as difficulties. Some candidates looked at positive and negative discrimination.

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Most answers looked at the need for Christians to educate others if teachings were to be put into practice.

Question 3

- (a) Although some responses thought that the Church did allow use of artificial contraception, most were able to give correct Catholic teaching on artificial contraception and the purpose of sexual intercourse. Teaching on natural family planning was rarely offered but understood when given. Better answers, in approaching this question, showed Catholic teaching on artificial contraception and natural family planning. The Church's attitude to abortifacients such as the morning after pill led into the next question. Some candidates discussed the unitive and procreative aspects of sex within marriage and saw that contraception could damage both. Weaker responses likened contraception to killing and little else. Some answers made good use of teaching in *Humanae Vitae* and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- (b) This question was well done in general and candidates offered a range of bible passages in support of life beginning at conception, abortion being murder and so breaking the 5th Commandment, Double Effect and the sanctity of life. Some still think that the Church does allow abortion in some difficult cases such as rape or if the mother's life is in danger rather than the catechism teaching that it is 'intrinsically evil in all cases'.
- (c) Again, candidates easily formed arguments for and against this quotation. Many restated Catholic teaching and suggested Natural family planning rather than artificial contraception. Others thought about spreading sexually transmitted diseases and not being ready for a child as well as a possible rise in abortions as justification for the use of artificial contraception.

Question 4

- (a) Answers could give teachings such as life beginning at conception and use of the embryo therefore breaking the 5th Commandment but found it difficult to offer comment on the use of embryos. Better responses looked at recent concerns over fertility treatment and human/animal embryo combinations and linked Catholic teaching to these issues.
- (b) General teachings on life is sacred offered by candidates were because Jesus died for us or that God gave life and has a purpose for our lives. Better responses also looked at Creation in Genesis.
- (c) Again, candidates easily formed arguments for and against this quotation. The usual conclusion was that medical research helps 'millions' and cures horrible diseases so beliefs should not stand in the way of its work.

2393 Paper 3 - Buddhism

General Comments

This paper once again achieved a good level of differentiation among candidates with some performing extremely well; having subject knowledge and evaluative skills well beyond the demands of GCSE. Others clearly have limited subject knowledge and give general and vague answers or use a small body of knowledge repeatedly whether it is relevant to the question or not.

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. There does, however, seem to be a noticeable improvement from previous sessions and there is evidence that some centres are preparing their students well for the requirements of part (b) questions.

Section (c) questions continue to provide a challenge, with comparatively few achieving full marks. Many gave a one sided opinion or a statement of their own opinion with no supporting arguments. Too many seem to think that “everyone is entitled to their own opinion” is an argument that can 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.

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

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to give a creditable answer to this question and some gave an impressive amount of detail describing stupas from a variety of Buddhist traditions as well as the symbolism portrayed by them. The weaker answers used the stimulus well to provide a basic answer to the question. Some responses gave very general answers that would be applicable to any place of worship rather than a stupa in particular; or described the practice of puja. These were credited at level one or two.
- (b) Answers to this question were generally good. Candidates considered obvious ideas such as encouragement; meeting with other Buddhists etc; but also many gave particular answers about merit, drawing inspiration from the life of the Buddha and meditation. While stupas are not necessarily monasteries some credit was given to candidates who suggested that visiting a stupa might allow them to gain wisdom and teaching from the Sangha. There are, however, still a number who talk about Buddhists “pleasing” the Buddha or God by going on pilgrimage to a stupa and this was disappointing.

- (c) This was well answered by the vast majority of candidates. Almost all were able to give valid arguments in support of both points of view. Many spoke of home worship and shrines, the difficulty of visiting a stupa, particularly for those who did not live in Buddhist countries; and the problems that might be caused by attachment or craving for pilgrimage. Against this many argued that stupas, while not necessary, might be helpful in encouraging and teaching the Buddhist. A large proportion of candidates gained full marks on this question.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates took a variety of approaches to this question. Some described the “average day” in a monastery and gave a “blow by blow” account of how bhikkhus and bhikkhunis use their time. Others gave a description of the extra precepts and how following these might affect the life style of a monk or nun. Candidates who adopted either of these approaches tended to do well. Some weaker responses gave general answers about meditation and worship or adopting a very “simple” lifestyle and these were credited at level two or three. It was encouraging to see that the vast majority of candidates did know what was meant by the terms bhikkhu and bhikkhuni, with only very few suggesting that they were enlightened beings or “older” Buddhists.
- (b) This was well answered with almost all who attempted this question achieving reasonably well. Common answers were concerned with encouragement, teaching, providing services such as rites of passage or banking, and reciting the scriptures. Some described the reciprocal relationship with lay Buddhists supporting the Sangha through donations of food and help and in return receiving kamma or merit.
- (c) Again this was generally answered well with most candidates understanding what was required by the question. Answers were generally balanced and well reasoned and a reasonable number of candidates achieved full marks. A few contrasted Buddhists to non-Buddhists and, given that the Sangha can refer to all Buddhists, this was credited when appropriate. There were some very well reasoned pieces of critical thought on this question.

Question 3

- (a) This was not a popular question and the few that did attempt it clearly struggled. Most gave vague and general answers about festivals in general or puja in temples and some were clearly guessing. Many viewed the Rain Retreats as a “holiday” and there were many general references to meditation. Having said this, there were a number of excellent answers.
- (b) Again, answers tended to be vague and general with most answers not achieving beyond level one or two. Many referred to gained kamma or time spent in meditation but did not go beyond this. Once again, however, there were a small number of outstanding answers which displayed excellent subject knowledge and the ability to relate it to the demands of the question. Some mentioned practical considerations and talked about the comparative importance of the Rain Retreats in different countries; particularly those which do not experience a monsoon.
- (c) Most managed a good, balanced discussion of the question although many were not aware that Buddhism could be argued to have a different approach to this issue than many other religions. Better answers discussed the issues of attachment to the world that could arise from festivals and how they might be irrelevant to the search for enlightenment. Others talked in general terms of kamma and encouragement, with some more able answers mentioning that festival days are an opportunity to listen to the Dhamma being recited and expounded.

Question 4

- (a) Responses to this question were disappointing. The various discrete forms of meditation are required under the specification and questions on particular kinds of meditation have been asked in the past. Metta bhavana is one of the more accessible kinds of meditation required and yet very few answers managed to give more than a very general description of meditation (relaxing and clearing the mind using candles, incense and so on). Some gave a fair description of samatha meditation, but few made specific mention of the concepts of compassion or loving kindness. Having said that, those who did have the appropriate subject knowledge gave excellent answers, frequently achieving top marks.
- (b) Performance on this question was guided by how well the candidate had approached part (a). Those who knew what metta bhavana meditation was scored very highly and were able to speak about compassion in the world and about the change of attitude that can lead to enlightenment. Others tended to give very general answers about becoming calm and relaxed. Some gave very detailed answers that would have been better suited to a question on vipassana meditation.
- (c) This question was well answered by the majority of candidates. Many talked about what exactly was meant by “attachment” and pointed out that for the majority of Buddhists there is no requirement to abandon family life. Some pointed out that Buddhists do, as a matter of fact, care about others giving specific examples or merely claiming that Buddhists are “nice people”. Candidates found it harder to find arguments to support the statement but talked about how craving could lead to dukkha and that attachments could therefore become unhealthy. The majority of candidates who attempted this question achieved level three or four.

2394/01 Paper 4A - Christianity

General Comments

Candidates generally performed well. As usual, there were candidates who scored highly and would have done well on 2304/01 but there were still those who wrote little. However, it is fair to say that there were less candidates who wrote very little.

Part (a) questions were often very well answered (some were better than equivalent answers given by full course candidates).

Part (b) answers continue to improve as do part (c) questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) In many answers there was too much done and not enough said. However, many responses did answer well referring to either infant baptism or believers' baptism or both. There was some confusion between baptism, Christening, believers' baptism and confirmation. More detail of said and done was needed.
- (b) Generally well answered though some answers were concerned with "non-religious" matters, e.g. looking after, feeding etc. rather than spiritual care.
- (c) Generally well answered with some interesting discussion about belief and practice versus baptism as an indication of faith.

Question 2

- (a) A wide range of responses to this question therefore it did achieve its purpose. Too many answers put Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday in the answer and too many waffled on about Lent in general. However, a satisfying number did respond well with good knowledge of Holy Week. Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday were the best answered days and Good Friday and Holy Saturday the least well answered. Some candidates spent too much time talking about what actually happened to Jesus rather than what Christians do now.
- (b) Quite a range of answers but, on the whole, well answered with quite a lot of "specialist" words used, e.g. redemption.
- (c) Gratifying to see that so many more candidates now know what Pentecost is! Generally well done.

Question 3

- (a) Once again, not enough "said" included in the answers. It was not a particularly popular question and those who answered it did not really include sufficient breadth or depth. Some responses got caught up in the Transubstantiation v Consubstantiation debate and thus wasted valuable time. The odd one or two confused Eucharist for Ecumenism. Some answers described Eucharist very well.
- (b) Generally well done with some supporting biblical passages.

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- (c) Not very well answered. Some responses did cope well but were mostly lower level answers.

Question 4

- (a) This question was not done well. Very little "said" other than some reference to vows and "I now pronounce you man and wife, you may kiss the bride!" Hardly any mention of why marriage was ordained.
- (b) Many answers were limited to being faithful and not committing adultery. Few talked about referring to Christian teaching for guidance and help.
- (c) Generally this was quite well answered, which was pleasing. Not all understand the term "practising", they think it is a Christian who is trying to get better at it!

There seems to be an improvement in (b) answers, which is most encouraging. Each question gave the opportunity for a wide range of responses. Time was used well. Some candidates wrote a lot in the hour; a few still wrote very little. There were very few rubric errors.

2394/02 Paper 4B - Christianity (Roman Catholic)

General Comment

On the whole candidates performed fairly well.

There were some good responses to the questions but there was not always the depth of knowledge and understanding to gain higher levels. Often answers were very short.

Most candidates were able to describe Church teaching or practice for the part (a) questions and offer some form of argument to the stimulus questions in part (c). The part (b) questions tended to differentiate the most.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

The Marriage question was generally answered well in comparison to others and students were well prepared on the signs and symbols and order of the marriage service, although only few answers could illustrate how married couples live out their marriage vows and demonstrate Catholic teaching in their marriage in any depth.

- (a) Better responses described the marriage service or nuptial mass in order, giving examples of both what is said and what is done. Most answers were able to offer the vows though not always quoted accurately and the exchange of rings. Some only gave actions or words so could not achieve higher grades. Better responses gave fuller accounts including examples of appropriate subject matter of hymns, readings and homily. Some responses stated that the couple were allowed to make up their own vows but it was pleasing that few wasted time on irrelevancies such as the etiquette or customs of marriage.
- (b) Better responses were able to build on the answer to (a). Many candidates listed the Intention of marriage as reflected in the vows along with 'openness to have children' and offered examples of this in practice in marriages. Many became distracted by making points about divorce.
- (c) Most candidates were able to refer to Catholic teaching about the family being the best place to raise children. They could also see that other relationships, including one-parent families and cohabiters were also capable of bringing up children successfully. Those who did not include a Christian view could not gain full marks.

Question 2

- (a) Some took lines of the prayer and discussed the teaching about Mary's role e.g. 'Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus,' which led to discussion of Mary as mother of God. In general, beliefs about Mary and her role were not commonly known. Some confused the Hail Mary with the Lord's prayer. The better responses developed answers well and demonstrated good knowledge of the different elements of the Hail Mary. On the other hand there were frequent misunderstandings as to the meaning of Immaculate Conception and the commonly stated doctrinal error that Mary herself forgives sins!
- (b) Many struggled to answer part (b). Weaker answers saw her coping with her 'teenage pregnancy' or example of perpetual virginity as a role model for young Catholic girls.

Stronger responses looked towards her obedience to God and response to her vocation as something to copy. There were some examples of those who had done this - e.g. Mother Teresa, priests and nuns. Most concluded that the world would be a better place if young Catholics would try to be more like Mary.

- (c) Candidates easily saw different points of view. While most thought the exceptional circumstances of her call too difficult to replicate in their own lives - they would never bear the Son of God and were not without sin, they saw aspects that were more achievable and that to aspire to be like Mary would be a good thing.

Question 3

- (a) Weaker responses continue to be unable to offer the correct days for Holy Week and were given no credit for Shrove Tuesday or Ash Wednesday. There was some confusion about what happened on each day. Most responses did not know which days are relevant to Holy week. The vast majority included Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday. Most answers did not focus at all on how Holy Week is celebrated, and some of those who did focused mainly on the commercialised aspects e.g. Easter eggs.
- (b) There had to be some explanation of the Christian Sunday for higher levels, not just the Jewish Sabbath. Better responses commented on the Resurrection rather than God resting on the seventh day. Some made good use of the 3rd Commandment.
- (c) Candidates easily saw a discussion of importance between Easter and Christmas and argued on both sides before coming to conclusions either way. The best responses supported their opinions with arguments which indicated a good understanding of the nature of these feasts.

Question 4

- (a) This question attracted many variable answers. Very few could describe the sacrament in any depth and detail. For example anointing was rarely mentioned. If the service was known then there was a clear description of signs, symbols and words. Most candidates knew that Sacrament of the Sick could be received at home, in hospital or in Church and most knew that it was no longer only last rites. Many candidates focused more on location and conditions for the sacrament than the content of the sacrament.
- (b) As a result of a poor knowledge of the sacrament, there was a great deal of waffle in response to this question. Many could see that it might lessen the fear of death or give courage to face illness. Some considered the possibility of healing.
- (c) As candidates had just answered on the Sacrament of the Sick they tended to particularise their evaluation on just that sacrament rather than sacraments in general. Some weaker responses did not know what sacraments were and discussed commandments or charity work.

2395 Paper 5 - Hinduism

General Comments

In general, candidates were well prepared for the exam and there is some evidence of excellent teaching. Many produced outstanding and detailed answers and the full range of marks was accessed throughout the paper. All questions were attempted with fairly even distribution with no one question proving to be particularly popular or unpopular. 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 responses.

Section (a) questions were generally well answered 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. Question 1(b) and 2(b) in particular caused problems. Candidates who came from a Hindu background often fared better on these questions although they occasionally tended to adopt a confessional approach.

Section (c) questions continued to provide a challenge to candidates 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 spending too much time on the part (c) questions relative to the number of marks available. This year, some only attempted the part (c) questions omitting (a) and (b) altogether. 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.

Most candidates had time to finish the paper although a few did not attempt all the questions. There were few rubric errors, although some did not attempt question 1, which limited the marks they could achieve. Some left question 1 until last, which was credited, but as WC is assessed on question 1 they may have disadvantaged themselves as this may have been rushed.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Most answered this question fairly well and a variety of approaches from different Hindu traditions were seen and credited. Some struggled to give specific answers on this festival and instead gave general answers relating to festivals or, indeed, examples of puja that might be carried out as part of a festival. These answers tended to be credited at level two or three as appropriate. Almost all managed to give a valid answer to this question. Some candidates related the celebration of the festival to where they lived, this was appropriate and was credited.
- (b) Answers here were often quite vague and general and referred to having fun as a family and meeting new people. The better answers were, however, often very good indeed and

often examined fairly complex issues such as the role of women in Hindu society and the psychological importance of celebrating the victory of good over evil. Some spoke of the temporary suspension of the caste system and the effect this might have on a community. The majority of responses achieved at level three; but the best answers to this question were very good indeed!

- (c) Some responses missed the point of this question and limited themselves to a discussion of gender equality within Hinduism. This was not entirely irrelevant to the question and was credited however it did not score above level three as it did not directly address the question. Some answers to this question were, however, outstanding, entering into discussions of the Trimurti and the goddesses' role as Shakti. Many talked about the deities as aspects of Brahman rendering issues of gender meaningless and some suggested that goddesses might be more important to women than gods. Generally a very lively debate arose out of this question and many responses gained full marks.

Question 2

- (a) This was a popular question and it was answered well by the majority of candidates who attempted it. Most answers were detailed and accurate. Some were a little confused or gave a description of samskaras in general. A few progressed as far as the sacred thread ceremony which was not required or credited. Generally, this question was well answered.
- (b) Candidates found this more difficult than part (a) and many gave quite general answers about bringing the family together. There were, however, some excellent answers about family dharma and how the samskaras might remind people of their role within it. Some also mentioned the transmission of tradition and religious knowledge down the generations through samskaras and some gave a discussion of varnashramadharma and the ways in which observing the samskaras could uphold it. This question therefore achieved a good level of differentiation between the more and less able candidates.
- (c) Most answered this question well with a high proportion of candidates achieving full marks. Most were able to give a balanced and well reasoned argument with a variety of arguments being offered to support both points of view. Where students failed to achieve full marks it tended to be because they had failed to include a specific reference to Hindu thought or belief in their answer.

Question 3

- (a) Again, this was a popular choice and the majority of candidates did well. Mention was made of the concepts of samsara, karma, dharma and moksha, although the latter was not always well understood and was sometimes described as a "Hindu heaven". The idea of karma was generally well explained and the idea that a large amount of karma must be amassed in order to achieve moksha, although not strictly relevant, was credited at this level as this is the simplified version that is often taught even in Hindu circles. Some answers began well but appeared to run out of things to say and instead described a funeral service which was credited only in so far as it made reference to beliefs about life after death.
- (b) Most were able to give a good account of varnashramadharma, but many did not go beyond this to offer a direct answer to the question. This was credited at level two if no reference at all was made to afterlife beliefs. Many said that following varnashramadharma would bring you closer to moksha. As in part (a), although this is not strictly true according to many forms of Hindu belief, it was nevertheless credited at this level. Others talked about the importance of following varnashramadharma for gaining a good rebirth or the general importance of upholding dharma. This was less well answered than part (a), with many responses finding it problematic, there were still a number of outstanding answers.

- (c) Many responses struggled with this question but managed to do quite well nonetheless. Most managed to address the question directly rather than just arguing about the importance of one or the other in isolation. Most achieved level three and many achieved level four, with arguments about moksha as the main point of Hindu life contrasted with arguments about how moksha is impossible without rebirth or is an unrealistic goal in this lifetime for most Hindus.

Question 4

- (a) This was not a popular question with comparatively few candidates attempting it. It was generally well answered although there was some confusion with Ganesha. Most candidates were able to give a good description of Hanuman and his role as a joker, but also a loyal friend and devotee. The better answers also discussed his strength and determination.
- (b) Again, confusion with Ganesha caused confusion for a minority of candidates here. Those who answered accurately generally did well, making reference to Hanuman's strength and loyalty. They spoke of him as a role model for friends and an inspiration not to give up in seemingly hopeless circumstances. Few mentioned Hanuman's role as an ideal devotee and a role model to worshippers of a personal God.
- (c) This was well answered with obvious arguments in favour being countered with the point that deities sometimes appear to do things that could be considered immoral and that the same standards should not be applied to gods and men. Some also mentioned that it might be unreasonable to expect humans to follow the example of the deities and that human role models such as Gandhi might be more appropriate. A high proportion of candidates scored full marks on this question.

2396 Paper 6 - Islam

General Comments

For all three assessment criteria, scripts were marked according to levels of response and the questions seem to have provided opportunities for candidates of a wide range of ability to demonstrate their skills. There were some excellent responses but also a number of extremely weak ones including some where there was confusion between Islam and other faiths. Each individual question is structured in three parts and is intended to guide the candidate through the whole topic. Many candidates are coping better with the AO3 parts which examine evaluative skills. More discussions tended to be based on accurate information and candidates mostly remembered to consider other views and to refer to Islam. Candidates need to be advised that 'other views' do not have to be the total opposite of the stimulus quotation.

Once again, examiners have made the plea that candidates identify the two questions on the grid on the front of the answer booklet and number the questions or the parts of the question inside. The number of the examination needs to be on the cover sheet the correct candidate number should be used. Examiners also had difficulties because some registers were not complete. A number of examiners commented on the fact that many centres had issued large booklets despite the fact that most candidates needed less than four sides of paper. There were very few rubric infringements this year but candidates need to be reminded that three marks are available for Written Communication which includes legibility.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Candidates seemed to find question one somewhat difficult but it did provide differentiation. The specification refers to the use of artefacts in private worship, particularly beads and prayer mats but also to artefacts in general in the introduction to the section and in connection with the mosque. Therefore, any prayers and any relevant artefacts were acceptable e.g. the Qur'an, minarets, clocks, compasses, shoe racks, washing facilities and the mihrab in the qiblah wall etc. Some candidates interpreted 'artefact' as something old which is handed down. The stimulus photograph led many candidates to begin with beads and to include the Qur'an.

Describing how the subhah were used was not always done well, some said they were worn round the neck. Some went on to add statues of Muhammad ﷺ to their 'special objects' handed down. Good responses accurately described the use of a range of specific artefacts in the context of prayer or preparations for prayer but did not have to be comprehensive for full marks.

- (b) Candidates usually described the preparations in order to address the reasons why Muslims ritually wash, why they cover their head or wear particular dress, remove shoes, use prayer mats and face Makkah etc. Some spent too much time on wuzu and neglected the other preparations. Some credit was given for general preparations for entering a mosque to pray.

There are three conditions laid down by Muhammad ﷺ concerning prayer (clean place, five times, face Makkah) and many candidates were mindful of this in their explanations of the meaning and importance of the preparations. 'Meaning and importance' elicited 'to show respect' and 'to get closer to Allah' as common refrains in the responses. Credit was also given for following the regular practice of Muhammad ﷺ.

There were a few excellent responses which tended to include the importance of making niyyah (intention) and of the need for purity in the presence of Allah.

- (c) There were some excellent responses. Many candidates began by asserting that it is important to help the poor. A surprising number went on to say, as some sort of counter-argument, that it was the fault of the poor and they deserved their misfortune. Others decided that the motive is what counts in any act of charity. Some got so carried away with the theme that they forgot to mention Islam. Many, however, pointed out that giving was so important it was one of the Five Pillars and then wrote all they knew about zakah. Others went on to consider the question of the 'most important' practice. Some continued on about the importance of prayer from earlier in the question and argued that prayer was a more 'religious' practice. Others argued that submission to Allah is the purpose of Islam and this is best shown in shahadah. Some simply wrote their pre-prepared essay about the Five Pillars and those who remembered to address 'most important' usually did quite well.

Question 2

- (a) This was the least popular question but those who chose it seemed to have done so because they knew about Hajj and most gained good marks for knowledge in this part. Pilgrimage is not dealt with in detail on the short course. The Hajj is on the specification as one of the Five Pillars. Nevertheless, some began from putting on Ihram right through to the last tawaf of Ka'bah. They included what happens at Makkah.
- (b) This question was not as well answered as the first part. A number of responses confused Id-ul-Adha with Id-ul-Fitr but gained some credit for explanations about tradition, identity, involvement, sharing, etc. which are common to all festivals. Some responses explained that Id ul-Adha is known as the greater Id and that it is the worldwide celebration of those who completed Hajj. Some explained that it is important in terms of Ummah in that it reinforces solidarity and is another opportunity to share food or money with the poor. The best responses also provided the important links with the past, not only that Muhammad ﷺ did the pilgrimage and that, during Id-ul-Adha, Muslims remember the farewell sermon but also the connection with Ibrahim.

Only the best answers explained that Id-ul-Adha commemorates Ibrahim rejecting Satan's temptation not to sacrifice Ishmail. Animals (goats, sheep, cows or camels) are sacrificed to remember Allah was testing obedience and willingness to submit to Allah's will and the eventual sacrifice of a sheep instead of Ishmail. Some wrote well about the importance of being willing to sacrifice things that are important to you.

- (c) Many candidates made a case for festivals rather than weekly religious services by repeating some of the points made about Salat-ul-Jumu'ah and Id-ul-Adha but they were free to incorporate other Muslim festivals and many did so. There was some discussion for whom festivals might be more important, the individual, the family, the community or for Ummah –and for the women who do not go on Friday to the mosque! Once again there was a tendency to write superficial reasons. Some equated festivals with 'fun'. Others simply supported the opinion that all parts of Islam are equally significant and, therefore, none are more important than another.

Question 3

- (a) This question was poorly done on both long and short courses. Some simply took the opportunity to recount the life of Muhammad ﷺ without referring to the teaching. They tended to start from the Night of Power - Laylat-ul-Qadr. Some credit was given for background information and for implicit knowledge about the teaching in comments about the situation in Makkah (idolatry etc.) and the reaction to Muhammad ﷺ. Good responses did demonstrate knowledge of the actual content of the monotheistic message with which

Muhammad ﷺ challenged his contemporaries and its implications – that believers should live in submission to Allah etc.

- (b) Candidates went through the life of Muhammad ﷺ again from when he was orphaned, though his time with Abu Talib, marriage to Khadijah and to later wives in Madinah.

Good responses tried to address the question by selecting characteristics which Muslims might copy, such as trustworthiness, his behaviour to other people, such as respect for women, orphans and the poor, as well as his brilliant leadership. Few mentioned his spiritual qualities. Some explained that the Sunnah is the example of Muhammad ﷺ, his sayings and actions, recorded in collections of Hadith; though this was not essential for full marks because the Sunnah and Hadith are not specified in the short course.

- (c) Discussions on the whole tended to concentrate on the temptations of the modern world. Candidates gave practical examples usually involving violence, sex, gambling and drugs. Some decided that nothing is ever 'impossible' but that it would be difficult, particularly in our modern world. Some used what they had written about Muhammad ﷺ to say that being trustworthy and truthful are as important now as they were then and equally possible for believers. Some made the same case for all decent people not just believers. Other candidates agreed with the statement on the grounds that nobody could be as special as Muhammad ﷺ but some added that the whole point is that you have to try to follow his example.

Question 4

- (a) Some responses took 'life after death' to mean reincarnation. It became clear that others thought the proper word for the rising of the bodies is 'reincarnation' rather than resurrection. As usual, examiners gave the benefit of the doubt.

Both day of Judgement and life after death were expected to be addressed for full marks but not necessarily in equal proportions. Many candidates knew that, for Muslims, dying is a stage in life not the end because the permanent life is akhirah. Some responses started with an account of funeral rites but they did not always remember that they were supposed to be demonstrating knowledge about beliefs. Others, however, told how Muslims believe that, at death, two angels of justice, Munkar and Nakir, visit the person, record their good and bad deeds and ask questions. Until the Day of Judgement, Azra'il (examiners were warned that transliteration might cause the name to be written in various spellings) the angel of death takes the dead to barzakh. Most candidates managed to talk of this 'waiting room'. Some gave graphic descriptions of what is believed will happen on the day of Judgement as described in the Qur'an with the dead rising bodily from their graves. Some candidates warned that it will be too late for people to repent. The truth will be so obvious that there will be no opportunity to choose to believe with one's own freewill in Allah. On the day of Judgement the good will be rewarded by Paradise (al-Jannah) and the rest will suffer the fires of hell (Jahannam). Candidates gave a variety of descriptions of life in both places.

- (b) Any accurate customs were accepted e.g. things like sweets which are more cultural than religious. Credit was given for explanations of the beliefs associated with the ceremonies or the religious beliefs, which might be explicit or implicit, about rites of passage as a whole and of birth ceremonies in particular.

Good responses, as expected, included Muslim beliefs reflected in or associated with most of the following practices: after the child is washed, there is the call to prayer in the right ear, command to worship in the left ear. The child is named; the head is shaved and the equivalent weight of hair in money is given to the poor. Males are circumcised. Goats or sheep are sacrificed. The best responses related circumcision and sacrifice to beliefs based on the story of Ibrahim and Ishmail.

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- (c) Some candidates developed points made earlier in the structured question about the meaning of rites of passage to support the importance of the family unit. Many scripts read like sociological essays. They were full of 'blood is thicker than water', 'your parents looked after you when you were young therefore ...etc.' and various interpretations of 'charity begins at home'.

Other candidates focussed on community activities e.g. worship in the mosque, pilgrimage, festivals, fasts etc. to illustrate the solidarity and importance of the local community or/and the worldwide Ummah.

Good discussions tended to regard the family unit as the basis of Ummah and tried to produce a balanced view of the inter-related importance of both family and community in Islam.

2397 Paper 7 - Judaism

General Comments

There remains a noticeable difference in performance between candidates for this paper and those who sit the full course (2307). There may, of course, be many explanations for this. Generally, however, candidates and their teachers are to be congratulated for their efforts. Part (b) questions are one area where there is a very obvious disparity. The optional questions were equally popular, although specific centres tended to gravitate towards certain combinations. There still remain a significant number who are making rubric errors. The use of time also seems to vary considerably. As has been observed elsewhere, candidates do not always make use of the differences between Orthodox and Progressive Jews, especially in evaluation questions. Such comparisons can be very helpful, but stereotyped observations are obviously not.

Comment on Individual Questions

The photograph of the outside of the synagogue seemed to assist students with this question. Most were able to list the key features of the synagogue. There was some apparent confusion with the mosque and church for a small number. The ark, bimah and ner tamid were often identified and accurately described. The best responses described features of the synagogue outside the worship area.

Question 1

- (b) There was sometimes a tendency for candidates to repeat information already referred to in part a. The best responses tended to be structured according to the different names – place of assembly, study and prayer. The role of the rabbi was credited at this point. It is important to note the examiners do not cross credit marks between questions. Points have to be made in response to the appropriate question.
- (c) As ever, many candidates have been coached into basing their evaluation responses on a set structure. It cannot be denied that this is generally effective in achieving higher level, assuming that the subject knowledge is in place. This question was interpreted in a variety of different ways. Some candidates interpreted it as a discussion as to whether Jewish men and women should worship together. Better answers referred to the minyan, though some were inclined to only equate worship with prayer.

Question 2

- (a) Although not disregarded entirely, this was perhaps the least popular optional question. Most responses, which correctly identified the festival, were able to provide competent descriptions of the origins and construction of the sukkah. The best went on to provide an account of the lulav, though many did not do so. The weakest responses tended to suffer from confusion with either Shabbat or Passover which obviously severely restricted the number of marks awarded.
- (b) This question was sometimes poorly answered, there was a limited understanding of the context and traditions. Some responses were formulaic and may have applied to any question. There was sometimes repetition with the previous question. The best responses explained the idea of empathy with one's ancestors. They were clearly aware of the original story and the themes of pilgrimage and harvest.
- (c) Even if the previous two questions were quite poorly answered, this tended to be better. The most common pitfall was to omit any reference to Judaism or the Jewish people.

Answers often disputed the quotation, citing the joy of Sukkot in support. Some balanced this with reference to the more sombre nature of festivals like Yom Kippur. Candidates often made appropriate references to their own experiences in their answers.

Question 3

- (a) This was the most popular optional question this year. Better responses gave detailed and well-ordered accounts of the ceremony, supplemented by relevant information about the preparations and subsequent celebrations. Most were able to describe the chuppah, ketubah and the breaking of the glass. Weaker answers were often confused with the Christian wedding ceremony. When, and where, the ceremony takes place might have been included more.
- (b) Some responses were primarily about the wedding ceremony, rather than about the institution of marriage. Examiners credited this approach but it did lead to significant repetition from the first question. Good answers explained how marriage and raising children is essential for the continuation of the people and religion. Others rooted their responses in the Torah and G-d's intention for humanity. Weaker responses tended to have few specific references to Judaism but were rather more generic.
- (c) This question seemed to enable candidates to present a balanced discussion with clear arguments in support of, and in opposition to, the stated idea. Most disagreed with restricting which Jews might be married in a synagogue, though many felt that it might involve some degree of hypocrisy. In general, most responses were at least valid, though some mistakenly discussed whether non-Jews should be allowed to marry in a synagogue.

Question 4

- (a) Examiners found this reasonably popular question to be well answered. There was some confusion with the role of the Christian priest, but most recognised that the rabbi was primarily a teacher of the law. Some emphasised that the role was distinct from that of a priest. Many went on to describe the more pastoral aspects of his/her role and how he might lead worship. Some mentioned the training and qualifications involved and the different attitudes of Progressive and Orthodox Jews towards the ordination of women.
- (b) The main weakness in responses was that they often ignored the reference to 'daily prayer' in the question and wrote about prayer in general. Valid explanations of the importance of ritual dress were credited. Some responses might have been about any religion, not specifically Judaism. Relevant information about the importance of prayer for petition, confession, praise and so on was sometimes supplemented by explanations of specific prayers, especially the Shema.
- (c) There was – understandably perhaps – significant overlap with the previous question. Even so, candidates seemed to find the topic to be accessible and had little difficulty in constructing arguments to support and oppose the proposition. Most seemed to disagree that prayer might be a waste of time and felt compelled to share their own experiences. Others gave examples of the times when the prayers of the Jewish community had apparently been ignored by G-d.

2398 Paper 8 - Sikhism

General Comments

Candidates entered for 2398 were, again, mainly well prepared. There was confusion between Guru Nanak Dev Ji and the Guru Granth Sahib Ji though. The majority of candidates used specialist terminology accurately and confidently.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates demonstrated that they knew the important events that take place in this festival. Although this is not one of the major Sikh festivals, it is clearly in the specification.
- (b) Generally competently answered – candidates were able to explain a variety of relevant reasons and could relate this to the overall importance.
- (c) Candidates could present argued points of view for and against the statement. Many responses presented two viewpoints that agreed with each other for different reasons. A few did not refer to Sikhism, which meant that they were unable to access the highest level.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates who attempted this question completed full and accurate answers. It is clear that they had been thoroughly prepared for the section on Rites of Passage and were able to include the main points. There were a few general answers, which lacked specific detail, thus limiting their access to higher levels. A few, generally weaker, responses confused this with Amrit Sanskar.
- (b) The majority of candidates were able to explain that this is an important ceremony for some Sikhs and were able to give reasons why it might be more important for some than others. A number of responses tried to explain this but found that they could not follow their points through to any conclusion and this limited access to higher levels. Weaker answers did confuse this with naming.
- (c) This proved to be the most difficult of all the (c) parts on the examination paper. Some responses confused ceremonies with festivals, whilst others wrote about both as an answer. These were generally unable to access the full range of marks.

Question 3

- (a) Many candidates could give a detailed account of the life of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Often too much detail was included, as the question asked specifically for an account of the starting of the faith. Some failed to read the question thoroughly, and instead answered what they thought they had read. A number of responses erroneously included the founding of the Khalsa in this answer.
- (b) This question was answered well by nearly all who attempted it. Candidates included a wide range of examples and reasons in their answers, including reference to specific Gurus, the Gurus in general and the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Overall candidates were successful in balancing how and why in their answers. Clearly the majority were well

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prepared for this and could put together a number of different facts and concepts successfully.

- (c) Some responses struggled with the concept in this evaluation question. However, many were able to argue convincingly from one side or another and in many cases, could see both sides had possible merit. This question elicited some of the best, most thoughtful answers.

Question 4

- (a) This question elicited quite weak responses, some of which had annotated diagrams included. There was some confusion between a khanda and a kirpan. There were some highly detailed and accurate answers from many candidates.
- (b) Many responses confused prashad with amrit. Many who were successful in part (a) found this question hard, however, there were some excellent, accurate and detailed answers.
- (c) Most candidates disagreed with this statement and were able to argue effectively as to why symbols might help in the understanding of faith. Some candidates suggested that Sikhs did not need symbols as they already knew about their beliefs, but suggested that they might be helpful to those outside of the faith who wished to understand more about it. A few suggested that symbols might get in the way of belief.

2399 Paper 9 - Jewish Studies

There were no candidates for this paper.

2400 Paper 10 - Jewish Texts

There were not enough candidates entered for this paper to write a report.

2301 Paper 1 – Christianity through a study of either Luke or Mark

General Comments.

There was plenty of evidence that candidates had been well prepared for this examination. The performance covered the whole ability range of GCSE.

Many candidates displayed a sound grounding in the theology and terminology of the parts of the New Testament studied, however, some others lacked the necessary depth and appreciation of the subject and these answers were repetitive and woolly.

Pleasingly, there were some excellent, detailed answers to part (a) textual questions accompanied by mature and perceptive responses in parts (b) and (c). It was also obvious that some candidates did not have sure knowledge of the prescribed text and so limited their achievement even though their attempts to answer parts (b) and (c) met with moderate success.

There was a slight improvement on previous years in the answering of part (b) questions where it was noticeable that some candidates attempted to keep their answer focused on the question and use evidence and examples from the text and their application in Christianity rather than make woolly statements about 'doing good', 'being good' etc.

Comments on Individual Questions.

Section A. Luke

Question 1

- (a) This proved to be an accessible question. A large majority of candidates answered it correctly quoting accurately both Jesus and the devil, from the text. Overall, a very pleasing performance.
- (b) The best answers linked their understanding of the story of Jesus' temptations with Christian behaviour and belief in terms of discipline/loyalty to belief, self-sacrifice and avoiding corruption. Some weaker answers ignored the phrase 'following their beliefs' and wrote only about avoiding more banal temptations such as eating chocolate or watching too much T.V.
- (c) Most candidates attempted to give a balanced view. Most successfully gave evidence of the strength of temptations particular to society today. However, there was a general lack of perception about the time of Jesus with most guessing that people might have been tempted to do wrong acts just to survive.

There were, however, some excellent answers, which argued, with examples, that the temptation to sin is integral to human nature and there has always been the need to use religious belief to resist it. Some of these were very interesting and insightful.

Question 2

- (a) Generally, very well answered.

- (b) There were some excellent answers which referred to events and miracles in the gospel and developed from them examples of suitable compassionate responses to the sick today, including both conventional and spiritual healing from Christians who respond to the vocation of medicine or voluntary work and also those who support the sick through prayer, worship and pilgrimage. In some weaker answers compassion for the sick did not extend beyond 'loving your neighbour', 'we should help them' or 'follow Jesus' example.
- (c) Many candidates perceived 'religious people' to refer to those who practise a religion by going to worship etc. or those who were over-zealous e.g. the Pharisees etc. and put them in a different category to simply 'those who had faith'. So there were many answers that examined miracles happening to those who had faith, as in the gospel stories, as opposed to, (or, as well as) the obviously religious who attended church or pilgrimages. Nevertheless, there were some excellent answers about the universality of God's love.

Question 3

- (a) This was a popular question and answers were mostly excellent or very good. The complete parable was often retold in accurate detail. Many candidates appeared to enjoy engaging with the story.
- (b) Some very good answers, clearly showing understanding of the explanations and teachings in a number of parables as well as the one in (a). However, some weaker responses appeared vague as to the focus of the question and merely wrote out one or two parables. Some who had performed well in part (a) were less confident of their understanding in this question.
- (c) Some answers were only one-sided arguments about whether parables succeeded as a way of teaching about Christianity and whilst some very good arguments were made they did not develop any alternative view on other ways of teaching.

Question 4

- (a) This question was mainly chosen by those who knew the incident well and the importance of including the ending of the story. Those who did less well knew only partial details or confused the story with other Resurrection accounts. However, many were able to recount the gist of the story and showed some appreciation of the breaking of the bread symbolism.
- (b) Some excellent and very good answers with the best answers referring to Jesus' triumph over death and explaining how the symbolism of Easter shows celebration of the Resurrection.

The evidence from this and previous questions on this topic is that Jesus' 'sacrifice for sins' and the Resurrection are inextricably linked in the minds of some candidates and some lost focus on the Resurrection to write only about the Crucifixion and death of Jesus in a limited way. Some ideas about a promise of life in Heaven with God/Jesus were simplistic and often misguided as to Christian belief

A noticeable trend with some answers was to ignore any reference to Easter at all. Others should have been advised that there is little credit to be gained for chocolate bunnies and eggs etc.

- (c) The difficulties some candidates perceived with (b) were also continued here. Many arguments against the statement were superficial and without understanding of the whole gospel as a record of God's purpose.

However, generally, there were many good, well balanced answers that did show understanding of the importance of the Resurrection to the Christian faith and the significance of other parts of the gospel in contributing to it's conclusion.

Question 5

- (a) This was the least popular choice but extremely well answered by the majority who chose it. Candidates showed maturity and confidence in their knowledge of this event.
- (b) Some excellent answers.
- (c) Again, mostly well answered, candidates giving balanced views including the importance of the Resurrection and Ascension, the Last Supper or Jesus' teaching as valid evidence of the beginning of Christianity.

In some of the weaker answers to question 5 there was perhaps evidence that the ideas in this part of the syllabus had not been quite as well covered as those in Mark's gospel.

Section B Mark.

Question 6

- (a) On the whole this was well answered. Details of the trial and the sentencing including the appearance before the Jewish crowd were all recorded in detail. However, there were also some confused and garbled accounts but even amongst these points of accuracy stood out, mainly about the Barabbas incident and Pilate's attempt to free Jesus.
- (b) Generally, well answered, mostly with wider references and information than just the trial in (a). There was evidence that candidates understood the implications for Christians of the need for courage in hostile situations throughout the world and in day to day living in a mainly secular society. Some candidates used the example of the courage of specific Christians to good advantage. Weaker answers were vague and repetitive and some were very brief, which because this was the compulsory question, limited achievement.
- (c) The responses to this question were very varied but there was evidence that candidates were, in most cases, aware of the death of Jesus as being the beginning of a process of redemption symbolised by the tearing of the Temple veil or other symbolism in the Crucifixion account. Most also attempted to argue valid alternative views.

Question 7

- (a) Some excellent answers and some very poor guesses. Some candidates described the Stilling of the Storm or Lake Tiberias.
- (b) On the whole, this was a challenging question, which was well answered. The better responses used understanding of the Storm and the disciples' apparent lack of faith as a metaphor for times of distress, persecution or doubt and Jesus' actions as reassurance for Christians. Others gave a more literal interpretation or a more vague one but managed to make some valid points.
- (c) Some well-argued and thoughtful answers.

Question 8

- (a) A common error was to write at length about the Parable of the Sower, accompanied by one or other of the parables mentioned in the question. Some candidates just described

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the Parable of the Sower with varying degrees of accuracy. There were some accurate descriptions of both these short parables, which gained full marks.

- (b) See the comments on 3(b), which also take into account the performance on this question.
- (c) See the comments on 3(c), which have also taken into account the performance on this question.

Question 9

- (a) Well-answered on the whole. Even the slightly weaker answers contained some accurate details.
- (b) Many candidates confined their answer to general points about caring, compassion and helping the sick with varying degrees of clarity. Very few tackled the 'evil spirits' issue but those who did often made a very good attempt to compare beliefs about sin (or possession) and sickness in Jesus' time with attitudes to mental illness or overcoming evil today.
- (c) See the comments on 2(c), which have also taken into account the performance on this question.

Question 10

- (a) This was the least popular question. However, there were some very good and good answers. Some responses appeared to have difficulty disentangling this account from the other resurrection stories.
- (b) See comments on 4 (b), which have also taken into, account the performance on this question.
- (c) Answers were generally good and well balanced. Candidates made reference to a variety of valid alternatives such as Jesus' teachings, The Last Supper, Crucifixion. Fewer candidates than expected made reference to this account being in the disputed longer ending of Mark and that this might affect its credibility as an important part of the gospel.

2302/01 Paper 2A – Christian Perspectives on Personal, Social and World Issues

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. As mentioned in previous years, time management appeared to be a problem for some who failed to complete their final question. This often appeared to be the result of candidates offering extensive responses to section (c) parts of the questions which clearly took up a disproportionate amount of time compared to the mark allocation of 5 marks. Some of these responses despite their length did not achieve the full 5 marks as they did not contain reference to Christianity. The tendency for some candidates to offer what appeared to be prepared responses, rather than attempt to answer the question as stated was evident. Examiners commented that the wording of the (b) part of some of the questions appeared to unsettle some candidates. The wording of these questions was intended to direct candidates towards demonstrating 'in depth' understanding of the topics by asking them to explain underlying rationale for Christian views rather than just stating them.

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. Overall, achievement tended to be higher in the (a) and (c) parts of the questions. Good responses in the (a) sections offered detail, specifically Christian teaching appropriate to the topic of the question, drawn from the specification for this paper or from other appropriate sources. Answers which 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. This was particularly evident in responses to question 1(a), where bland generalisations with little reference to Christianity were frequent responses. 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. A substantial number of responses 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. Others failed to give supporting reasons for their view or the views of others and so limited the level of achievement.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates in response to this question focused on appropriate texts, including those in the specification. The best responses noted that modern Christian teaching emphasised the equality of the marital relationship in contrast to previous generations. Some responses were sidetracked by the equality issue and focused on it to the detriment of the answer. Others wrote about the roles of family members as if Christians were stuck in a 'time warp' where the Father dominates the family and women are subservient. Examiners noted that some candidates fell into describing family types rather than roles and limited their responses accordingly.
- (b) As mentioned in the general comments, the question was intended to direct candidates away from offering a statement of views and towards explaining why Christians hold these views. The best responses referred to the apparent contradiction in Jesus' teaching as leading to different interpretations of the significance of the marriage. These responses often referred to the sacramental view of marriage as well as to the idea of forgiveness and

differences in attitude between the New Testament and the Old Testament. Examiners noted that a significant number of responses confused annulment with divorce, referring to it incorrectly as the way out for Roman Catholics for whom divorce is impossible.

- (c) Some candidates focused entirely on the issue of forgiveness and ignored the relationship context of the stimulus. Other candidates referred to different kinds of relationships as well as marital or family ones, including the relationship of the believer and God. Biblical support for forgiving was offered by many candidates (70 times 7) but this was often qualified by the assertion that some things can't be forgiven, such as adultery in a marriage.

Question 2

- (a) A majority of candidates were able to substantiate the view that Christians would promote equality, by reference to the idea of all people created in the image of God, or to Paul's statement about 'neither Jew nor Greek'. Some responses pointed to the questionable significance of the latter text to support equality for all as it can be read as only referring to Christians. The parable of the Good Samaritan figured in many responses with sound justification as did the teaching and actions of Christians who have worked to embed equality in society, such as M L King or T Huddleston. A significant proportion of candidates balanced their account with reference to the perceived inequality in the Roman Catholic Church in refusing to admit women to the priesthood.
- (b) This question was intended to elicit responses which showed how the differing reactions of Christians to prejudice are based on the teachings and underlying principles of the faith. Many responses failed to address this in any depth, the candidates preferring to give an account of what Christians might do rather than suggesting why as well. Other candidates gave a full account of Christian teaching about prejudice, often repeating what they had offered in (a), without reference to what Christians might do or how they might react. A significant number of candidates attempted to do what the question asked, and in the process demonstrated a mature understating of the link between beliefs and actions.
- (c) For many candidates the stimulus was considered to be a truism as people like M L King had shown that this could be done so everyone else can do the same. Some candidates found it hard to see any other point of view, however the majority went on to consider that for most people avoiding discrimination was struggle and that the demands could be too great.

Question 3

- (a) This question elicited a wide range of responses. For some candidates the question was about war which was an acceptable interpretation. However these responses often failed to address the topic as effectively as it could have done, evading any reference to N protest or non violence. Candidates who stuck more closely to the question referred to Jesus teaching and also to his apparent violent response to the money changers in the temple. Few seemed knowledgeable about the rationale of non-violent protest as practised by M L King or of the reasons a Christian might have for supporting Liberation Theology.
- (b) The topic of Holy War is not clearly identified in the specification as they only appear in the exemplar texts in the war section. Whilst one might reasonably expect Holy War to be covered in any delivery of the topic of War as one of the texts refers to it, a small number of centres expressed concern. In order to ensure no candidates were disadvantaged, the mark scheme was applied in such a way that candidates who response to the question by reference to war generally or to the Just War could be given appropriate credit. There were in fact many excellent responses based on the idea of Holy War, as well and many other excellent responses which focused on the concept of Just war. As with the other part (b)

questions, the aim had been to enable candidates to show how faith could affect a believers attitudes and actions. Apart from the tendency to assume that all Christians are pacifists, many responses made appropriate connections between Christian teaching and actions.

- (c) Responses to this stimulus were generally good. A few high level responses were capped at Level 3/4marks because there was no reference to Christianity. Many candidates referred to the level of destruction of life and property which could not be justified although they accepted that a war like the Second World War could be the lesser of two evils.

Question 4

- (a) A considerable number of responses took the view that as some methods of contraception caused the death of a foetus the question was really about abortion and the issues surrounding it. Whilst this sort of response could be given credit, they did not fully address the topic in the question. Others seemed to confuse contraception with conception and wrote about fertility treatment and Christian attitudes to it. Responses which did approach the question appropriately referred to the contrasting views of Christians who saw the prevention of life being created as being against the teaching of the (RC) church and of the command to go forth and multiply with the views of Christians who saw contraception as giving couples the chance to plan a family size that they could cope with. The possibility that contraception might promote promiscuity was discussed by a number of candidates as was the danger to a woman's health of prolonged use of chemical methods.
- (b) As referred to above, examiners were looking for the capacity of the responses to link underlying principles and beliefs to attitudes and actions. Hence, responses which just rehearsed various positions held by Christians without any explanation of why they held those views could not achieve the highest level of response.
- (c) The best responses to this stimulus referred to the inevitability of the involvement of religion in a discussion about birth or death, because religion concerns itself with meaning and purpose in this life and beyond. As an alternative many candidates offered the view that in the end birth and death are just things that happen as part of nature and in some cases are affected by medical processes, but religion is an irrelevance to them.

Question 5

- (a) The majority of candidates were able to offer Biblical or church teaching in support of the view that Christians had a responsibility to help disadvantaged people. The parables of the Sheep and the Goats and Lazarus and Dives figured in many responses, as did the parable for all occasions - the Good Samaritan. Some candidates interpreted disadvantage narrowly as disabled and their response were inhibited accordingly. Many candidates drew upon ideas of equality expressed in a response to Question 2. Where these were applied appropriately to this question, suitable credit could be given.
- (b) As with the other (b) sections, some candidates struggled to do more than to give a statement of views of Christians. Candidates who explained why Christians might hold a particular view by reference to underlying teaching fared much better. The majority of candidates performed well and linked Christian ideas about stewardship with the doctrine of creation and the responsibility for the world placed upon mankind by God according to the Old Testament.
- (c) The majority of candidates responded with the retort that all that this would achieve would be to increase the number of poor people. As an alternative, many candidates saw the possession of riches as responsibility which needed to be taken seriously by Christians who should set an example in showing how wealth could be used wisely.

2302/02 Paper 2A – Christian (Roman Catholic) Perspectives on Personal, Social and World Issues

General Comments

The overall performance on this paper was quite good. There were many well constructed answers with good use of technical vocabulary. There were problems with some of the vocabulary in the questions – especially pacifism and artificial contraception which caused a loss of marks. There seemed to be a marked improvement in use of biblical passages to back up ideas and encyclicals are beginning to be included in answers. Questions 1(a), 3(b) and 4(b) attracted a lot of repetition. There were relatively few very poor papers, however few gained full marks.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates gave imaginative and intelligent responses to this question. The best responses were able to offer particularly comprehensive accounts of teaching on human rights either by offering examples of rights and then the scripture that backed them up or by offering a range of scripture passages and then suggesting the rights that flowed from them. This question tended to be well supported by biblical teaching and teaching of the Church in the Catechism of the Catholic Church or Encyclicals such as *Pacem in Terris* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. There were occasional references to Liberation Theology. Weaker responses still managed some biblical basis for human rights coming from 'love your neighbour' and 'treat others as you would like to be treated' and being created in the image of God.
- (b) Again better answers drew from a range of biblical passages e.g. 'Turn the other cheek', 'Blessed are the peacemakers', 'Those who live by the sword' or used the examples from life and teaching of Jesus. Some quoted the dismissal from Mass. Some responses were unsure of the meaning of the word 'pacifism'; this led to some gaining no credit.
- (c) Candidates seemed determined to put the Just War Theory into their answer and this was usually offered as war cannot be 'holy' but can be just followed by a list of conditions for the Just War. Some considered the concept of Holy War in the Old Testament and Crusades or Jihad. Very few considered central issues around Holy War e.g. whether we can know that God demands war or who can decide what is right. Most candidates found it easy to offer two points of view on the general holiness/fairness of war and their own opinion and gained good marks.

Question 2

- (a) Better responses looked at the role of love, care, respect, acceptance and forgiveness in families as well as the parental role of being the first educators in the faith. Many answers were marked by very old-fashioned views of roles of men and women in a family being ascribed to the Church. Some argued that there were more equal roles based on Galatians. Again there were secure bible quotes from many, particularly discussion of the commandment to 'Honour your father and your mother' and its counter instruction for fathers not to 'provoke' their children (Col 3:20-21). Many considered the role of family as 'Domestic Church' and the duty of bringing children up in the faith. Some discussed the responsibility to the extended family (1Tim 5:8).

- (b) Candidates seemed to be well prepared for this answer. Most could express teaching on divorce clearly, linking it to vows and were especially confident about teaching on annulment, giving good relevant grounds for it. Some wrongly thought divorce was allowed in some cases such as adultery. Some responses had little on one aspect of the question and some concentrated solely on divorce or annulment and so could not gain full marks.
- (c) The word 'kinder' tended to be ignored and answers were about whether divorce should be allowed by the Catholic Church or not. Some better responses, while acknowledging the indissoluble nature of Roman Catholic marriage, were aware that divorce is needed before tribunals will consider annulment. A few felt it kinder to allow husbands and wives to leave abusive, adulterous or unhappy relationships. Most were able to offer sufficient relevant arguments for a good mark.

Question 3

- (a) When the work of Cafod was particularly well known most candidates easily ran through examples of short term aid and long term aid abroad, education and campaigns such as 'Live Simply' in this country and fund-raising and gained good marks. Some offered an alternative Aid agency equally successfully. A few weaker responses wrote generally about charitable work.
- (b) Again candidates drew from a range of biblical passages. Weaker answers repeated 'love your neighbour' and 'treat others as you would like to be treated' while better answers looked to Parables such as 'The Sheep and the Goats', 'Dives and Lazarus' or the example of Jesus and his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount on almsgiving and Beatitudes. Many saw a link between how we treat the poor and reward in heaven. A few considered Agape.
- (c) Most candidates found it easy to offer two well argued points of view and to justify their own opinion; generally concluding that both prayer and looking after the poor were equally important and gained good marks. A few used St James' admonition for faith and action.

Question 4

- (a) Again answers were generally competent if the life of Martin Luther King was known in detail. These answers were even better when they considered his Christian motivation. Weaker answers had a small amount of relevant information e.g. only the Bus Boycott or the 'I have a dream' speech. Some facts about his work were reported in outline only making the answers simplistic and essential information was missing or wrong. Some chose others such as Trevor Huddleston to good effect or picked those who were either non-Christian or not mainly concerned in the field of prejudice and discrimination and so struggled to gain more than a few marks.
- (b) Weaker answers repeated 'love your neighbour' and 'treat others as you would like to be treated', used in question 1 and 3 already, with little comment. Better responses told the Parable of the Good Samaritan and fruitfully discussed its meaning for the question.
- (c) Some saw a link between the well known Christian's example or that of Jesus and the ability to do something about discrimination. Many saw problems arising from background and culture. Very few considered positive discrimination. Most candidates found it easy to offer two points of view and their own opinion

Question 5

- (a) In approaching this question many candidates demonstrated that they were well prepared and knew Catholic teaching on artificial contraception and natural family planning. The Church's attitude to abortifacients such as the morning after pill led into the next question. Better responses discussed the unitive and procreative aspects of sex within marriage and saw that contraception could damage both. Weaker responses likened contraception to killing and little else. Some candidates made good use of teaching in *Humanae Vitae* and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- (b) This question was well done in general and candidates offered a range of bible passages in support of life beginning at conception, abortion being murder and so breaking the 5th Commandment, Double Effect and the sanctity of life. Some still erroneously think that the Church does allow abortion in some difficult cases such as rape or if the mother's life is in danger rather than the catechism teaching that it is 'intrinsically evil in all cases'.
- (c) Many responses incorrectly assumed that 'artificial contraception' was something to do with fertility treatment (possibly mixing up contraception with conception) and so their arguments could not gain any marks. When vocabulary was known comprehensive accounts of the arguments on both sides of the question were given.

2303 Paper 3 - Buddhism

General Comments

This paper once again achieved a good level of differentiation among candidates with some performing extremely well; having subject knowledge and evaluative skills well beyond the demands of GCSE. Others responses showed little subject knowledge and gave general and vague answers or used a small body of knowledge repeatedly whether it was relevant to the question or not.

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. There however does seem to be a noticeable improvement from previous sessions.

Section (c) questions continue to provide a challenge, 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 still seem to think that “everyone is entitled to their own opinion” is an argument that can 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.

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

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to give a creditable answer to this question and some gave an impressive amount of detail describing stupas from a variety of Buddhist traditions as well as the symbolism portrayed by them. The weaker responses used the stimulus well to provide a basic answer to the question. Some candidates gave very general answers that would be applicable to any place of worship rather than a stupa in particular; or described the practice of puja. These were credited at level one or two.
- (b) Answers to this question were generally good. Candidates considered obvious ideas such as encouragement; meeting with other Buddhists etc; but also many gave particular answers about merit, drawing inspiration from the life of the Buddha and meditation. While stupas are not necessarily monasteries some credit was given to those who suggested that visiting a stupa might allow them to gain wisdom and teaching from the Sangha. There are, however, still a number who talk about Buddhists “pleasing” the Buddha or God by going on pilgrimage to a stupa and this was disappointing.

- (c) This was well answered by the vast majority of candidates. Almost all were able to give valid arguments in support of both points of view. Many spoke of home worship and shrines, the difficulty of visiting a stupa, particularly for those who did not live in Buddhist countries; and the problems that might be caused by attachment or craving for pilgrimage. Against this many argued that stupas, while not necessary, might be helpful in encouraging and teaching the Buddhist. A large proportion of candidates gained full marks on this question.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates took a variety of approaches to this question. Some described the “average day” in a monastery and gave a “blow by blow” account of how bhikkhus and bhikkhunis use their time. Others gave a description of the extra precepts and how following these might affect the life style of a monk or nun. Candidates who adopted either of these approaches tended to do well. Some gave general answers about meditation and worship or adopted a very “simple” lifestyle and these were credited at level two or three. It was encouraging to see that the vast majority of candidates did know what was meant by the terms bhikkhu and bhikkhuni, with only very few suggesting that they were enlightened beings or “older” Buddhists.
- (b) This was well answered with almost all who attempted this question achieving reasonably well. Common answers were concerned with encouragement, teaching, providing services such as rites of passage or banking, and reciting the scriptures. Some described the reciprocal relationship with lay Buddhists supporting the Sangha through donations of food and help and in return receiving kamma or merit.
- (c) Again this was generally answered well with most candidates understanding what was required by the question. Answers were generally balanced and well reasoned and a reasonable number of candidates achieved full marks. A few contrasted Buddhists to non-Buddhists and, given that the Sangha can refer to all Buddhists, this was credited when appropriate. There were some very well reasoned pieces of critical thought on this question.

Question 3

- (a) This was not a popular question and the few that did attempt it clearly struggled. Most gave vague and general answers about festivals in general or puja in temples and some were guessing. Many viewed the Rain Retreats as a “holiday” and there were many general references to meditation. Candidates did not, generally, achieve well on this question. Having said this, there were a number of excellent answers.
- (b) Again, answers tended to be vague and general with most responses not achieving beyond level one or two. Many referred to gained kamma or time spent in meditation but did not go beyond this. Once again, however, there were a small number of outstanding answers which displayed excellent subject knowledge and the ability to relate it to the demands of the question. Some mentioned practical considerations and talked about the comparative importance of the Rain Retreats in different countries; particularly those which do not experience a monsoon.
- (c) Most managed a good, balanced discussion of the question although many were not aware that Buddhism could be argued to have a different approach to this issue than many other religions. Better answers discussed the issues of attachment to the world that could arise from festivals and how they might be irrelevant to the search for enlightenment. Others talked in general terms of kamma and encouragement, with better responses mentioning that festival days are an opportunity to listen to the Dhamma being recited and expounded.

Question 4

- (a) Responses to this question were disappointing. The various discrete forms of meditation are required under the specification and questions on particular kinds of meditation have been asked in the past. Metta bhavana is one of the more accessible kinds of meditation required and yet very few responses managed to give more than a very general description of meditation (relaxing and clearing the mind using candles, incense and so on). Some gave a fair description of samatha meditation, but few made specific mention of the concepts of compassion or loving kindness. Having said that, those responses which did have the appropriate subject knowledge were excellent answers, frequently achieving top marks.
- (b) Performance on this question was guided by how well part (a) had been approached. Those who knew what metta bhavana meditation was scored very highly and were able to speak about compassion in the world and about the change of attitude that can lead to enlightenment. Others tended to give very general answers about becoming calm and relaxed. Some gave very detailed answers that would have been better suited to a question on vipassana meditation.
- (c) This question was well answered by the majority of candidates. Many talked about what exactly was meant by “attachment” and pointed out that for the majority of Buddhists there is no requirement to abandon family life. Some pointed out that Buddhists do, as a matter of fact, care about others giving specific examples or merely claiming that Buddhists are “nice people”. Candidates found it harder to find arguments to support the statement but talked about how craving could lead to dukkha and that attachments could therefore become unhealthy. The majority of candidates who attempted this question achieved level three or four.

Question 5

- (a) This was by far the most popular question with well over half of the candidates attempting it. It was generally well answered with most able to list the precepts and write a little about each one. The injunction against “sexual misconduct” was widely misunderstood as a requirement for celibacy, and some thought that there was a requirement for Buddhists to avoid alcohol completely but otherwise the Precepts were generally expounded well. Many candidates gave both positive and negative forms of the Precepts and most understood that they were “guidelines” rather than “rules” or commandments. Some managed only three or four of the precepts or got them a little confused and these answers were credited at level two or three as appropriate.
- (b) Answers to this were generally competent or good. Many described the temptations of modern living or peer pressure which might make it difficult to follow the Precepts. Some described the problems of following the Precepts in a non-Buddhist country although here there tended to be a lack of understanding of the precepts and a tendency to see them as inflexible laws which prohibited Buddhists from having a “normal” social life. Many students here achieved at level three, although again, there were a number of outstanding answers.
- (c) Some limited their response to a debate on whether or not there is rebirth and failed to address the main point of the question which was about ethical behaviour. These responses tended to achieve at level two or three. Others showed a high level of critical ability giving excellent well balanced and well argued responses. Some mentioned the idea of “goodness” as an end in its own right regardless of outcome.

2304/01 Paper 4A - Christianity

General Comment

Candidates generally performed well. If anything, section (a) for the majority of questions was the least well answered. Responses to 1(a) were generalised answers. Having said that, some of them were good Level 4s. (b) answers continue to improve slowly with a more obvious understanding of the importance of the topic to the believer than in the past. Section (c) seems to be answered better than in the past, too.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) The main problem was that the question was not answered. The question asked what Christians might "do" at a place of pilgrimage but many explained instead why a Christian might go on a pilgrimage. While there appears to be some knowledge of places of pilgrimage, few could write in detail about specific places. Lourdes was the most popular one with Rome second (probably due to the stimulus). There was also a lot of time wasted writing about the history of the place(s) of pilgrimage.
- (b) In most cases this section was answered better than (a). There seemed to be a good understanding of how a Christian's faith might be strengthened by going on pilgrimage though quite a few answers drifted away from Christianity into Islam. Many included in (b) what should have been in (a).
- (c) Generally well answered. Again, some drifted off into Islamic thought at times but, on the whole, candidates did well.

Question 2

- (a) There was a wide range of responses to this question therefore it did achieve its purpose. Too many responses had Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday in the answer and too many waffled on about Lent in general. However, a satisfying number did respond well with good knowledge of Holy Week. Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday were the best answered days and Good Friday and Holy Saturday the least well answered. Some responses spent too much time talking about what actually happened to Jesus rather than what Christians do now.
- (b) Quite a range of answers but, on the whole, well answered with quite a lot of "specialist" words used, e.g. redemption.
- (c) Gratifying to see that so many more candidates now know what Pentecost is. Generally well done.

Question 3

- (a) For many responses there was too much done and not enough said. However, many did answer well referring to either infant baptism or believers' baptism or both. There was some confusion between baptism, Christening, believers' baptism and confirmation. It would have been nice to have seen more detail of said and done in many cases as it was clear that the description given was based more on something seen on TV rather than that which had been studied in the lessons.

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- (b) Generally well answered though some responses were a bit too concerned with "non-religious" matters, e.g. looking after, feeding etc. rather than spiritual care.
- (c) Generally well answered with some interesting discussion about belief and practice versus baptism as an indication of faith.

Question 4

- (a) Once again, not enough "said" included in the answers. It was not a particularly popular question and those who answered it did not really include sufficient breadth or depth. It was quite clear that many who answered had no personal experience of Eucharist nor had even seen one on the TV! Some responses got caught up in the Transubstantiation v Consubstantiation debate and thus wasted valuable time. The odd one or two confused Eucharist for Ecumenism.
- (b) Generally well done with some supporting biblical passages.
- (c) Not very well answered.

Question 5

- (a) There were few good answers for this question. Once again, much based on what may have been seen on TV or at a secular funeral. Very little "said" other than "ashes to ashes, dust to dust". Hardly any mention of resurrection. Main "said" was the eulogy but only by indirect reference.
- (b) Often better answered than (a) though some responses referred more to the funeral service itself than Christian belief. It would have been nice to have seen more specific Christian belief in the answers as many were quite vague about being with God and/or Jesus.
- (c) Generally this was quite well answered, which was pleasing.

Whereas in the past (a) questions often gave the best marks, now (b) seems to be catching up. It appears that there is less knowledge but more understanding. However, over all, each question gave the opportunity for a wide range of answers. Time was used well. Some candidates wrote pages upon pages but very few failed to finish. There were very few rubric errors.

2304/02 Paper 4B - Christianity (Roman Catholic)

General Comments

Candidates were generally aware of what was required of them, but frequently failed to develop their answers.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

- (a) This question was generally well answered. Candidates easily selected things said and done during a wedding service or nuptial mass. Better responses gave fuller accounts including examples of appropriate subject matter of hymns, readings and homily as well as the more obvious exchange of vows and rings. Some erroneously thought that the couple were allowed to make up their own vows but it was pleasing that few wasted their time on irrelevancies such as the etiquette or customs of marriage. It was necessary to give examples of what was said and what was done for top levels and most candidates remembered to do both parts of the question.
- (b) Many candidates listed the Intention of marriage as reflected in the vows along with 'openness to have children' and offered examples of this in practice in marriages. Candidates thought that the teachings about marriage found in the ceremony offered both relief to the problems faced by the couples and a cause of them. Many were quick to discuss the negative effects, thinking that couples would be bored by staying with just one partner or that fun would be over. Many saw the strain of staying with a spouse who developed health or financial problems. Others, more positively, saw the memory of the day and the support of God and the Church as a real help when problems developed. Candidates had to be careful to answer the question rather than to stray into an answer on divorce.
- (c) This question evoked a range of responses. There were arguments ranged on both sides of the debate. Candidates were able to sum up the advantages of a child born to married parents who had a committed relationship but did not wish those unable to afford a wedding or those who do not share the ideals of marriage to be precluded from having a family. There had to be a religious response in the arguments to gain full marks and many did not refer specifically to Christianity at all, although the Catholic view that valid marriage is the only way to have children was implicitly understood in most answers.

Question 2

- (a) Those who took lines of the prayer and extrapolated the teaching about Mary's role did well e.g. 'Full of grace' led to discussion of the Annunciation and her Immaculate Conception as signs of being chosen by God to be mother of His Son from the beginning of time. Others struggled to bring the Hail Mary to mind in test conditions and there were many mistakes - 'blessed aren't thou' being quite common and some lapsed into the Lord's Prayer which made for strange answers. Better responses were able to offer good technical vocabulary and main teachings about Mary.
- (b) Many candidates struggled to answer part (b) practically. Many weaker answers saw her coping with her 'teenage pregnancy' or example of perpetual virginity as a role model for young Catholic girls. Stronger answers looked towards her obedience to God and response to her vocation as something to emulate. There were some examples of those

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who had done this - e.g. Mother Teresa. Some saw there would be an improved prayer life and reliance on God even in times of apparent adversity. Most concluded that the world would be a better place if young Catholics would try to model themselves on Our Lady.

- (c) Candidates easily saw different points of view. While most thought the exceptional circumstances of her call too difficult to replicate in their own lives - they would never be required to bear the Son of God and were not without sin, they saw aspects that were more achievable and that even an effort to aspire to be like Mary would be a good thing.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates needed to offer similarities and differences for the higher levels and most chose a good range of examples from among these. Similarities were well known on the whole. Differences were more varied. Better responses considered cross versus crucifix; transubstantiation; liturgy. Others looked at decoration of Churches; statues, attitude to Mary, saints and priesthood. Some were confused and thought Protestants were 'atheist'. Very few saw that Protestant Christianity included variety in itself. Some wrote about the Orthodox church which could not be credited.
- (b) While most candidates were able to offer some relevant response to part (a), part (b) separated out those who knew what Ecumenism was and those who did not. Some offered Taize as an example but needed to show what it expressed as the importance of ecumenism to Catholics rather than its history for higher levels. Many stumbled onto a view that Catholics were not very interested in ecumenism beyond a way of bringing others back. Very few commented on Papal encyclicals or the call of Jesus 'that they all may be one'.
- (c) Again, candidates could see ways in which Ecumenism could both weaken and strengthen beliefs and so were able to offer different points of view; and produce fully rounded conclusions.

Question 4

- (a) There is still a surprising amount of confusion among candidates about which days fall into Holy Week. Weakest answers went from Palm Sunday to Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. There was little sense of the Triduum, especially little mention of the Easter Vigil. Some weaker answers gave no sense of the week but wrote about Lent (or occasionally Advent) in general. There was little depth and detail. Many offered some information of the main days of Holy week but rarely a full description of services or confident account of Jesus' activities. The Good Friday Service was particularly poorly described.
- (b) There had to be some explanation of the Christian Sunday for higher levels, not just the Jewish Sabbath and so better responses commented on the Resurrection rather than God resting on the seventh day. Some made good use of the 3rd Commandment.
- (c) Candidates easily saw a discussion of the importance between Easter and Christmas and argued on both sides before coming to conclusions either way. The best responses supported their opinions with arguments which indicated a good understanding of the nature of these feasts.

Question 5

- (a) This question attracted many variable answers. Very few responses described the sacrament in any depth or detail. For example anointing was rarely mentioned. When there was knowledge about the service there was a clear description of signs, symbols and

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words. Most candidates knew that Sacrament of the Sick could be received at home, in hospital or in Church and most knew that it was no longer only last rites. Many candidates focused more on location and conditions for the sacrament than the content of the sacrament.

- (b) As a result of a poor knowledge of the sacrament, there was a great deal of waffle in response to this question. Many could see that it might lessen the fear of death or give courage to face illness. Some considered the possibility of healing.
- (c) As candidates had just answered on the Sacrament of the Sick many now only considered the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of that sacrament rather than sacraments on the whole. Others could discuss the difference between Catholics who seek out Marriage, Baptism for their babies, First Holy Communion and Confirmation and those, both Catholic and non-Catholic who do not see the relevance of the Church. Some weaker responses did not know what sacraments were and discussed general Catholic Social Teaching or commandments.

2305 Paper 5 - Hinduism

General Comments

In general candidates were well prepared for the exam and there is some evidence of excellent teaching. Many produced outstanding and detailed answers and the full range of marks was accessed throughout the paper. All questions were attempted with fairly even distribution with no one question proving to be particularly popular or unpopular. 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.

Section (a) questions were generally well answered 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 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. Question 1(b) and 2(b) in particular caused problems. Candidates who came from a Hindu background often fared better on these questions although they occasionally tended to adopt a confessional approach.

Section (c) questions continued to provide a challenge 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. This year, some only attempted the part (c) questions omitting (a) and (b) altogether. 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.

Most candidates had time to finish the paper although a few did not attempt all the questions. There were few rubric errors, although some students did not attempt question 1, which limited the marks they could achieve. Some left question 1 until last which was credited, but as WC is assessed on question 1 they may have disadvantaged themselves as this may have been rushed.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Most answered this question fairly well and a variety of approaches from different Hindu traditions were seen and credited. Some struggled to give specific answers on this festival and instead gave general answers relating to festivals or, indeed, examples of puja that might be carried out as part of a festival. These answers tended to be credited at level two or three as appropriate. Almost all candidates managed to give at least a valid answer to this question. Some gave answers relating to the celebration of the festival in their own town which was appropriate and was credited. These candidates generally did well on this question.

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- (b) Answers here were often quite vague and general and referred to having fun as a family and meeting new people. The better answers were, however, often very good indeed and often examined fairly complex issues such as the role of women in Hindu society and the psychological importance of celebrating the victory of good over evil. Some spoke of the temporary suspension of the caste system and the effect this might have on a community. The majority of responses achieved at level three; but the best answers to this question were very good indeed!
- (c) Some responses missed the point of this question and limited themselves to a discussion of gender equality within Hinduism. This was not entirely irrelevant to the question and was credited however it did not score above level three as it did not directly address the question. Some answers to this question were, however, outstanding, entering into discussions of the Trimurti and the goddesses' role as Shakti. Many talked about the deities as aspects of Brahman rendering issues of gender meaningless and some suggested that goddesses might be more important to women than gods. Generally a very lively debate arose out of this question and many responses scored full marks.

Question 2

- (a) This was a popular question and it was answered well by the majority of candidates who attempted it. Most answers were detailed and accurate. Some were a little confused or gave a description of samskaras in general. A few progressed as far as the sacred thread ceremony which was not required or credited. Generally, this question was well answered.
- (b) Candidates found this more difficult than part (a) and many gave quite general answers about bringing the family together. There were, however, some excellent answers about family dharma and how the samskaras might remind people of their role within it. Some also mentioned the transmission of tradition and religious knowledge down the generations though samskaras and some gave a discussion of varnashramadharma and the ways in which observing the samskaras could uphold it. This question therefore achieved a good level of differentiation.
- (c) Most answered this question well with a high proportion of responses achieving full marks. Most were able to give a balanced and well reasoned argument with a variety of arguments being offered to support both points of view. Where full marks were not achieved it tended to be because responses failed to include a specific reference to Hindu thought or belief in their answer.

Question 3

- (a) Again, this was a popular choice and the majority of candidates did well. Mention was made of the concepts of samsara, karma, dharma and moksha, although the latter was not always well understood and was sometimes described as a "Hindu heaven". The idea of karma was generally well explained and the idea that a large amount of karma must be amassed in order to achieve moksha, although not strictly relevant, was credited at this level as this is the simplified version that is often taught...even in Hindu circles. Some candidates began well but appeared to run out of things to say and instead described a funeral service which was credited only in so far as it made reference to beliefs about life after death.
- (b) Most were able to give a good account of varnashramadharma, but many did not go beyond this to offer a direct answer to the question. This was credited at level two if no reference at all was made to afterlife beliefs. Many said that following varnashramadharma would bring you closer to moksha. As in part (a), although this is not strictly true according to many forms of Hindu belief, it was nevertheless credited at this level. Others talked about the importance of following varnashramadharma for gaining a good rebirth or the

general importance of upholding dharma. This was less well answered than part (a), with many finding it problematic, there were still a number of outstanding answers.

- (c) Many responses clearly struggled with this question but managed to do quite well nonetheless. Most managed to address the question directly rather than just arguing about the importance of one or the other in isolation. Most achieved level three and many achieved level four, with arguments about moksha as the main point of Hindu life contrasted with arguments about how moksha is impossible without rebirth or is an unrealistic goal in this lifetime for most Hindus.

Question 4

- (a) There was a wide variety of approaches to this question from a description of the events of the Ramayana to the status of Rama as an avatar of Vishnu or as an ideal model of king, brother, son, husband, and enemy. Some were sidetracked into a description of Vishnu with little mention of Rama and these candidates rarely scored above level three. The same is true of those who merely described the celebration of Divali. The majority of candidates who attempted this, however, did well
- (b) This was well answered by the vast majority of candidates who attempted it with most speaking of the importance of Rama and the other characters in the Ramayana as role models. Mention of the importance of the Ramayana as a “hand book” of dharma was also made, as was the inspirational value of the story as a reminder never to give up in difficult circumstances. Most candidates achieved well on this question.
- (c) This was well answered with obvious arguments in favour being countered with the point that deities sometimes appear to do things that could be considered immoral and that the same standards should not be applied to gods and men. Some also mentioned that it might be unreasonable to expect humans to follow the example of the deities and that human role models such as Gandhi might be more appropriate. A high proportion of candidates scored full marks on this question.

Question 5

- (a) This question achieved a good level of differentiation, although it was one of the less popular questions. Those who did well often gave outstanding answers. Some described the contents of the Gita, usually with a good level of accuracy, while others went beyond this and spoke of the teachings in the Gita on bhakti, dharma, and karma. The best answers were truly outstanding. Some responses confused the Gita with the Ramayana, which was unfortunate.
- (b) There were, again, some very good answers to this question involving bhakti; personal or family preference; Shaivite, Vaisnava or Shakti traditions; gratitude for boons granted or the appropriateness of a particular deity to a particular need. Some spoke of the gaining of karma through puja. Where responses did not achieve well it was usually because they described how, rather than why a Hindu might show devotion to a deity.
- (c) Many responses did extremely well here, contrasting smṛti with śruti scripture or discussing the comparative availability and accessibility of different texts. Others struggled a little with this and gave very general answers about everyone being entitled to their own opinion. The full range of marks were accessed on this question.

2306 Paper 6 - Islam

General Comments

The full range of ability was represented again this year. On the whole, the questions were accessible and differentiated well. Many candidates seemed to enjoy the challenge to demonstrate their skills and there were some who achieved full marks.

Many candidates addressed the AO1 questions well, in clear and crisp English, demonstrating breadth and depth of knowledge, often with good usage of specific Islamic terminology. Examiners commented that there seemed to be more cases this year where the candidates of a whole centre who chose the same question tended to write the same factual inaccuracies. For example, one whole centre had the impression that Muslims believe in reincarnation.

A number of examiners commented that the main general weakness this year was in the approach to the AO2 questions. 'Describe, analyse and explain the relevance and application of religion(s)' requires understanding on the part of the candidates of the meaning, importance and significance to believers of the material studied. Many candidates seemed to be trying, irrespective of the assessment objective, to adapt prepared answers on the topics rather than addressing the actual question and often demonstrated a level of understanding of Islam which was neither accurate nor mature enough for a GCSE response.

Many candidates, however, are coping better with the AO3 questions which examine evaluative skills, though some spend too much time writing pages for part (c) at the expense of parts (a) and (b). Not all candidates remembered to consider other views and to refer to Islam. Candidates need to be advised that 'other views' do not have to be the total opposite of the stimulus quotation.

On the whole, there was not much evidence of candidates running out of time and much to suggest they were using their time effectively.

The most popular optional question was question 4 and the least popular was question 3.

Examiners requested that centres remind the candidates to fill in the cover sheet of the examination answer booklet with details such as the candidate number and to indicate which questions have been attempted. There were a few rubric infringements this year but candidates need to be reminded that four marks are available for Written Communication which includes legibility.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) All parts of this compulsory question provided differentiation because it targeted the three assessment objectives. It was accessible but more challenging than some in the past and than other questions on this paper. This first part required selection rather than 'write all you know'. Credit was given for description of any sensible feature e.g. clocks, mats and shoe racks etc. which helps Muslims pray in purpose built mosques or in other types of mosques, such as those in converted houses. Good responses included essential significant features such as washing facilities and the mihrab in the qiblah wall. The stimulus helped some select the minaret but seems to have launched others into their prepared essay on the 'features of a mosque'. Some gave good descriptions of the items but others felt they had to 'explain why' the features helped so examiners allowed for 'description by function' if ordinary description of the features was somewhat lacking.

- (b) There are three conditions laid down by Muhammad ﷺ concerning prayer (clean place, five times, face Makkah) and good responses were mindful of this in their explanations of the meaning and importance of the preparations. Meaning and importance tended to overlap. Candidates usually described the preparations in order to address the significance and importance or to explain meaning and symbolism as to why Muslims ritually wash, why they cover their head or wear particular dress, remove shoes, use prayer mat and face Makkah etc. Some spent too much time on wuzu. Some credit was given for general preparations for entering a mosque to pray. Credit was also given for following the regular practice of Muhammad ﷺ. Good responses tended to include the importance of making niyyah (intention) and general theological concepts about purity in the presence of Allah rather than simply about showing respect.
- (c) The responses ranged from the excellent through the mediocre to the rather bizarre. Most candidates began by asserting that it is important to help the poor. Some tried to balance the value of both faith and works as religious practices. Others decided that the motive is what counts and you could give a million pounds and it might matter to the poor person but you would be no better off if you had the wrong intention like to get your name in the paper. Some got so carried away with the theme that they forgot to mention Islam. Many, however, pointed out that giving was so important it was one of the Five Pillars and then wrote all they knew about zakah. Others went on to consider the question of the 'most important' practice. Some candidates continued on about the importance of prayer from earlier in the question and argued that prayer was a more 'religious' practice than giving to the poor because anybody can give to the poor. Others argued that submission to Allah is the purpose of Islam and this is best shown in shahadah. Some then simply got on with their pre-prepared essay about the most important of the Five Pillars.

Question 2

- (a) Some descriptions were accounts of salah without any distinctive features about Salat-ul-Jumu'ah prayers on Friday at noon but with creditable details of e.g. standing, bowing and prostrating when performing salah. There were some excellent responses which began by stating that Muslims gather in obedience to the Qur'an (62:9-10) for Zuhr prayers as well as giving detailed descriptions that included the Imam preaching the khutbah in the language of the community, the two rak'ah fard instead of four and some account of the community discussion afterwards. Most candidates pointed out that Salat-ul-Jumu'ah involves compulsory attendance for males but not for females who are expected to perform the noon prayer at home. Good responses made a point of explaining that Friday is not a day of rest and that normal work and business carry on as usual before and after the time of prayer.
- (b) A number of candidates confused Id-ul-Adha with Id-ul-Fitr but gained some credit for explanations about tradition, identity, involvement, sharing, etc. which are common to all festivals. Good responses explained that Id ul-Adha is known as the greater Id and that it is the worldwide celebration of those who completed Hajj. It is important in terms of Ummah in that it reinforces solidarity and is another opportunity to share food or money with the poor. The best responses also provided the important links with the past, not only that Muhammad ﷺ did the pilgrimage and that, during Id-ul-Adha, Muslims remember the farewell sermon but also the connection with Ibrahim. Id-ul-Adha commemorates Ibrahim rejecting Satan's temptation not to sacrifice Ishmail. Animals (goats, sheep, cows or camels) are sacrificed to remember Allah was testing obedience and willingness to submit to Allah's will and the eventual sacrifice of a sheep instead of Ishmail. Some candidates wrote very well about the importance of being willing to sacrifice things that are important to you.
- (c) Many candidates made a case for festivals rather than weekly religious services by repeating some of the points made about Salat-ul-Jumu'ah and Id-ul-Adha but they were

free to incorporate other Muslim festivals and many did so. There was some discussion for whom festivals might be more important, the individual, the family, the community or for Ummah – and for the women who do not go on Friday to the mosque! Once again there was a tendency to write superficial reasons like ‘fun’. Others simply supported the opinion that all parts of Islam are equally significant and, therefore, none are more important than another.

Question 3

- (a) This question was poorly done. Some simply took the opportunity to recount the life of Muhammad ﷺ without referring to the teaching. They tended to start from the Night of Power - Laylat-ul-Qadr - in 610 CE (or 611) on Mount Hirah in Ramadan and being called by Gibrail (Jibril) (Gabriel) to ‘recite’. Though the specification states ‘teaching’ in the singular, some credit was given for background information and for implicit knowledge about the teaching in comments by the candidates about the situation in Makkah (idolatry etc.) and the reaction to Muhammad ﷺ. Good responses did demonstrate knowledge of the actual content of the monotheistic message with which Muhammad ﷺ challenged his contemporaries, basically the declaration: ‘there is no god but Allah...’ and its implications – that believers should live in submission to Allah etc.
- (b) Candidates were expected somewhere in their responses to refer to both the Qur’an and the Sunnah, which are together in the specification for the long course. They were not expected, however, necessarily to refer to them in equal proportions. Good responses demonstrated understanding of the status of the Qur’an as paramount and that, to Muslims, it is the revelation of the actual Arabic words of Allah. Some even explained that all previous messages became corrupted and that since the time of Muhammad ﷺ the whole Ummah has continued to recite the same Arabic words of the final message. Some knew that the Sunnah is the example of Muhammad ﷺ, his sayings and actions, recorded in collections of Hadith. Though ahadith are a secondary source of authority, their importance for Muslims is enormous. The most commonly explained fact was that Muhammad ﷺ added the details of the movements for prayer and this shows that, though the Qur’an is predominant, both sources are complementary and important for Muslim life and worship. A few excellent responses went on to explain that the Qur’an and Sunnah are the bases for Shari’ah law but that was not essential for full marks at this level.
- (c) There were some interesting answers here. Candidates were free to consider any sacred literature in their discussions as long as they remembered to refer to Islam in their response. Good responses tended to focus on the issue of the authority of sacred literature. Received revelations carry divine authority. Some candidates took a different approach. They argued that an example like the sunnah of the prophet is easier to follow and that books can lose something in the translation. On the other hand, it is desirable not to translate a book that is the actual words of Allah. Good answers tried to balance the views in considering ‘the best way’ and usually included a caveat about the dangers of literalism or making a book into a god.

Question 4

- (a) Both day of Judgement and life after death were expected to be addressed for full marks but not necessarily in equal proportions. Many candidates knew that, for Muslims, dying is a stage in life not the end because the permanent life is akhirah. It seemed logical to some to start with an account of funeral rites but they did not always remember that they were supposed to be demonstrating knowledge about beliefs. Others, however, told how Muslims believe that, at death, two angels of justice, Munkar and Nakir, visit the person, record their good and bad deeds and ask questions. Until the Day of Judgement, Azra’il (examiners were warned that transliteration might cause the name to be written in various spellings) the angel of death takes the dead to barzakh. Most candidates managed to talk

of this 'waiting room'. Some gave graphic descriptions of what is believed will happen on the day of Judgement as described in the Qur'an with the dead rising bodily from their graves. Some candidates warned that it will be too late for people to repent. The truth will be so obvious that there will be no opportunity to choose to believe with one's own freewill in Allah. On the day of Judgement the good will be rewarded by Paradise (al-Jannah) and the rest will suffer the fires of hell (Jahannam). Candidates gave a variety of descriptions of life in both places. Some candidates took 'life after death' to mean reincarnation. It became clear that others thought the proper word for the rising of the bodies is 'reincarnation' rather than resurrection. As usual, examiners gave the benefit of the doubt.

- (a) Any accurate customs were accepted e.g. things like sweets which are more cultural than religious. Credit was given for explanations of the beliefs associated with the ceremonies or the religious beliefs, which might be explicit or implicit, about rites of passage as a whole and of birth ceremonies in particular. Good responses, as expected, included Muslim beliefs reflected in or associated with most of the following practices: after the child is washed, there is the call to prayer in the right ear, command to worship in the left ear. The child is named; the head is shaved and the equivalent weight of hair in money is given to the poor. Males are circumcised. Goats or sheep are sacrificed. The best responses related circumcision and sacrifice to beliefs based on the story of Ibrahim and Ishmail.
- (b) Some candidates developed points made earlier in the structured question about the meaning of rites of passage to support the importance of the family unit. Many scripts were full of 'blood is thicker than water', 'your parents looked after you when you were young therefore ...etc.' and various interpretations of 'charity begins at home'. Other candidates focussed on community activities e.g. worship in the mosque, pilgrimage, festivals, fasts etc. to illustrate the solidarity and importance of the local community or/and the worldwide Ummah. Good discussions tended to regard the family unit as the basis of Ummah and tried to produce a balanced view of the inter-related importance of both family and community in Islam.

Question 5

- (a) Candidates began by defining Jihad on the lines of. 'striving' or 'trying one's utmost' to defend the faith and to gain Allah's favour by living in submission and obedience to the will of Allah. Some weaker responses restricted the definition to physical battles. Many candidates distinguished between 'Greater' and 'Lesser' Jihad and all sensible divisions and sub-divisions were given credit. Candidates knew that Muhammad ﷺ was not a pacifist and fought battles 'in the cause of Allah'. and good responses made it clear what rules apply before, during and after warfare according to the Qur'an. Good answers tended to find the opportunity to explain that the word 'Islam' derives from the word for 'peace'.
- (b) Most candidates chose to write about practices in Muslim and non- Muslim countries but any sensible interpretation of the question was acceptable. A wide variety of practices were used e.g. women's dress, calls to prayer, capital punishment in Shari'ah law, slaughtering animals for festivals, burying Muslims etc. There were some excellent responses about the different practices of Sunni and Shi'ah Muslims. Some candidates explained Shi'ah practices such as. prayer times, forehead on block of mud from Karbala, mourning 'Ali at Ramadan, ziyara pilgrimages etc. One or two weaker responses, however, seemed to think that the practising Muslims were novices who were thinking of joining Islam.
- (c) Some candidates agreed with the stimulus. They argued from the nature of God and the command to be caretakers of creation, that believers in God should be pacifist and never fight anybody. To discuss with reference to Islam means that for good discussions candidates needed to be aware that Muhammad ﷺ was not a pacifist. Good responses explained that Islam does not encourage aggression but sometimes the Ummah has to

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unite to protect the religion and defend those who are being oppressed or treated unjustly. Many candidates gave good summaries of the rules according to the Qur'an which apply before declaring war, during the conflict, and after hostilities have ceased. The best responses attempted to present a balanced discussion and showed awareness that Islam is derived from two roots, one meaning 'submission' and the other 'peace'.

2307 Paper 7 - Judaism

General Comments

Candidates have maintained an impressive level of performance in this paper. Once again this reflects both the commitment of the candidates and the expertise of their teachers. The optional questions were generally tackled with equal regularity, with the very noticeable exception of question 5 on the Talmud. It is increasingly the case that candidates are well coached with regard to timing which is evident from the amount written on each question. Fewer candidates than last year spent time making detailed – yet largely unnecessary – plans before attempting each section. Written Communication is generally of a high standard and is rewarded accordingly. It should be noted, however, that it is not advisable for candidates to answer questions in bullet point format, unless they are rushing to complete their final question. One tendency that has been highlighted before is the consistent contrasting of progressive and orthodox practices in evaluation questions. Whilst this maybe of value from time to time, it can also lead to inaccurate and stereotypical observations. Generally, candidates were able to make effective use of set approaches to answering the evaluation questions. There were only a very few rubric errors made in this paper.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) The stimulus photograph seemed to be of benefit to candidates, perhaps leading more than normal to make observations about certain external features of the synagogue. References to the origins of the synagogue generally fell outside the scope of the mark scheme, but were rewarded when possible. Most candidates identified and described the major features such as the ark, ner tamid and bimah. Hebrew terminology was often used. Good distinctions were made between progressive and orthodox, and a range of other features appeared in the better responses. The best often identified features that reflected the role of the synagogue, other than a place of worship.
- (b) Candidates differentiated well between the different parts of this question. The best responses were often structured on the different names for the synagogue – place of prayer, meeting or study. Reference was often made to the role of the synagogue in festivals, Shabbat, rites of passage and so on. Some went on to explain how the synagogue acts as a community centre, and referred to the pastoral role of the rabbi. Less Weaker responses were inclined to confuse the synagogue with the church.
- (c) This evaluation question elicited some interesting responses with candidates interpreting it in different ways, all equally valid. The majority – as expected – focussed on the merits of individual and collective worship. Others discussed whether the different genders should be separated. A few took a more ecumenical approach to the question. The only pitfall tended to be when candidates did not sufficiently develop their responses, a tendency that was apparent in other evaluation questions as well. For the highest marks, it is necessary for candidates do more than simply state an argument – it also needs to be unpacked.

Question 2

- (a) This question, dealing with Sukkot, was a reasonably popular option for candidates. A small minority was inclined to confuse the festival with either Shabbat or Passover. In general, however, the origins of the festival in the forty years of wandering were well known. Others were able to identify the links with harvest traditions. Regulations for the construction of the sukkah were often described, as was the use of the shelter for the

duration of the festival. Not all candidates went on to describe the use of the four species, which was certainly necessary for the highest level. There was some confusion between the lulav and etrog.

- (b) The best responses highlighted the joy created by empathising with ancestors. Connections were sometimes made with the other Pilgrim Festivals and credit was given for reference to the exodus from Egypt as another source of happiness. Some candidates focussed on the impact on the children involved in constructing the sukkah. Others went on to discuss the importance of the harvest theme and how Jews might see the rain and resulting produce as sign of G-d's blessing. Ideas of harmony and hospitality were also credited, as was the positive impact of the festivities on the community.
- (c) Most candidates had no trouble in developing two distinct and opposing arguments on this quotation. Obviously Sukkot was a prime example of a joyful festival, but many were able to also identify more sorrowful or serious times in the Jewish year, such as Yom Kippur. There was recognition of the significance of the events being recalled, or the major themes that the different festivals might be addressing, in determining the overriding tone of the festivities.

Question 3

- (a) This was a very popular optional question. Very few candidates referred explicitly to what is said at a wedding, although many alluded to the blessings. Credit was given for describing the build up to the wedding and the celebrations that follow. Most were familiar with the ketubah, chuppah, ring and so on. The best responses mentioned the locations and most popular days for the ceremony before going on to describe the main aspects of the service. There was some confusion with marriage in other world faiths, especially Christianity.
- (b) Many candidates identified the benefits of marriage to the Jewish community, especially in terms of producing another generation and passing on tradition. Far fewer identified the origins of marriage in the Torah or the level expectation that Jews will marry and have children. Interestingly, some candidates only referred to the ceremony, rather than the institution, and whilst this was credited, it proved harder to reach the higher levels. Some better responses explained how perpetuating traditions has been given extra importance since the Holocaust.
- (c) Most candidates were able to construct arguments for both sides of this debate. They generally argued that the synagogue should be open to all Jews, whilst acknowledging that the partly religious nature of the service might make it appear to be hypercritical. Some candidates ignored the reference to 'religious Jews' and discussed whether gentiles should be allowed to marry in a synagogue. Others focussed on whether religious Jews should marry outside rather than in the synagogue. That said, most responses were competent at minimum.

Question 4

- (a) This was another popular optional question with the cohort. The descriptions of the role of the rabbi were nearly always valid and often better. Account was taken of the importance of the rabbi in worship on Shabbat, as well as in specific rituals and festivals. In particular, candidates described his role in preparing boys for the celebration of their Bar Mitzvah. There was some confusion with the roles of the cantor and scribe. In addition, some descriptions seemed to owe more to a Christian priest than a rabbi. Some of the best responses even took account of the development of the role and necessary qualifications.

- (b) This question had a tendency to elicit quite general responses. Some might have referred to a number of different faiths and others to prayer in general. Good use was sometimes made of the importance of ritual dress and some candidates connected the origins of the prayer times in Temple worship. General explanations of the importance of prayer, in praising G-d, confession, supplication and so on, were common. Some specific prayers – the Shema in particular – were referred to. Better answers took account of the impact on ‘the community’, not just the individual Jew, as indicated in the question.
- (c) In the main, candidates dealt well with this question. If there was an obvious weakness, it was that very detailed and well-structured responses as to the merits of prayer sometimes omitted any reference to Judaism. Many discussed their own experiences and beliefs in their responses. Unsurprisingly, the non-existence of G-d and his seeming reluctance to act in times of great distress were often proposed in support of the quotation. Generally candidates rejected the idea that prayer might be a pointless exercise.

Question 5

- (a) As observed earlier in this report, very few candidates chose to answer this optional question. Those that did often produced excellent attempts to deal with complex subject matter. At the other extreme, however, there was significant confusion between the Torah and the Talmud. Candidates who read through all the parts of the question before answering might have avoided this costly error. The better responses took account of the link between the written and oral Torah, the chain of tradition and the compilation of the Mishneh by Rabbi Judah.
- (b) The better responses tended to explain how the divine origin of the Talmud elevates it in the eyes of the community. Account was taken of the different perspectives of Orthodox and Progressive Jews. Credit was given for explaining how Halachah is an ongoing process that may help the Jewish community to solve modern ethical dilemmas. Some candidates explained how the oral tradition might add to clarity to some passages in the Torah. Once again, it should be emphasised that responses tended to be polarised in terms of quality.
- (c) It was at this point in the question that those candidates who had confused the Torah and the Talmud, realised their mistake. Other candidates argued that the Torah could stand alone, with out reference to the Talmud, or that the divine origins of the Talmud made it very important. Using an example like Kashrut, in order to show the connection between the two might have helped some candidates.

2308 Paper 8 - Sikhism

General Comments

Answers on the whole demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject. The majority of candidates were able to answer to at least a reasonable standard and many were able to gain Level 3 or beyond. However there was evidence that some candidates were not well prepared and did not have the knowledge to answer accurately or in depth.

Very few candidates misused time, most completing the paper, and there was only a tiny percentage that infringed the rubric.

Candidates seemed better prepared to differentiate between part (a) questions and part (b) questions, and were able to demonstrate that they could reflect on more than one point of view in part (c) questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates demonstrated that they knew the important events that take place in this festival. However, some were clearly unprepared and were unable to relate accurate information. Although this is not one of the major Sikh festivals, it deserves to be included and is clearly in the specification.
- (b) Generally competently answered – candidates were able to explain a variety of relevant reasons and could relate this to the overall importance.
- (c) Candidates could present argued points of view for and against the statement. Many candidates showed that they could present two viewpoints that agreed with each other for different reasons. A few in failed to include reference to the target religion, which meant that they were unable to access the highest level.

Question 2

- (a) Many candidates were able to describe the different aspects of sewa, with valid examples, clearly and in detail. All those who attempted this question were able to give at least an overview of sewa.
- (b) Answers reflected a negative and positive effect on the life of a Sikh. Most were thoughtful, demonstrating that the candidates had learnt from their study of the faith and were able to relate belief to practice. There were a few rather general answers but these were in the minority and even so they managed to access Level 2.
- (c) This evaluative question again showed that most candidates were able to apply philosophical thinking to their answers. Some took the line that everyone should help others, whilst other showed that specific teaching encouraged faith adherents to help as a part of their religious obligations. Generally candidates demonstrated a wide variety of opinions often backed up with clear reasoning.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates who attempted this question completed full and accurate answers. 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 few responses were general answers, which lacked

specific detail, thus limiting their access to higher levels. A few confused this with Amrit Sanskar.

- (b) The majority of candidates were able to explain that this is an important ceremony for some Sikhs and were able to give reasons why it might be more important for some than others. A number of responses tried to explain this but found that they could not follow their points through to any conclusion and this limited access to higher levels. Weaker responses did confuse this with naming in some cases.
- (c) This proved to be the most difficult of all the (c) parts on the examination paper. Some responses confused ceremonies with festivals, whilst others wrote about both as an answer. These were generally unable to access the full range of marks.

Question 4

- (a) Many candidates could give a detailed account of the life of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Often far too much detail was included, as the question asked specifically for an account of the starting of the faith. A number of responses erroneously included the founding of the Khalsa in this answer.
- (b) This question was answered well by nearly all who attempted it. Candidates included a wide range of examples and reasons in their answers, including reference to specific Gurus, the Gurus in general and the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Overall candidates were successful in balancing how and why in their answers. Clearly the majority were well prepared for this and could put together a number of different facts and concepts successfully.
- (c) Some candidates struggled with the concept in this evaluation question. However, many were able to argue convincingly from one side or another and in many cases, could see both sides had possible merit. This question elicited some of the best, most thoughtful answers.

Question 5

- (a) This question elicited quite weak responses, some of which had annotated diagrams included. There was some confusion between a khanda and a kirpan. There were some highly detailed and accurate answers.
- (b) Too many responses confused prashad with amrit. Many who were successful in part (a) found this question hard, however, there were some excellent, accurate and detailed answers.
- (c) Most candidates disagreed with this statement and were able to argue effectively as to why symbols might help in the understanding of faith. Some candidates suggested that Sikhs did not need symbols as they already knew about their beliefs, but suggested that they might be helpful to those outside of the faith who wished to understand more about it. A few suggested that symbols might get in the way of belief.

2309 Paper 9 - Religion, the Media and Entertainment

Overall performance of the candidates:

Candidates did well if they were able to address the full focus of the question and could use specific Media examples to support their responses. Some candidates added religious quotes but did not show how these quotes supported their statements or related to the specifics of the question. Some responses gave erroneous accreditation, i.e. "Jesus said..." when in fact it was Paul, etc. Some candidates tended to give more social/citizenship views rather than religious content. It was felt that some were struggling, at times, to answer from two religions, when one would have sufficed. There were some good Buddhism and Hinduism responses.

Individual Questions:

Question 1

There were a lot of misquotations of Timothy which omitted "the love of money...". The "camel and eye of a needle" quote was used frequently but often there was no real understanding of what Jesus meant when he used this quote; often the response would then refer to Jesus telling the young man to sell all he had at a much later stage in the question rather than using the camel quote to then follow on. Stewardship was referred to along with urbanization, and some responses referred to the mis-use of money including some television evangelists. Some candidates answering from the Islam perspective were able to show a good understanding of the purpose of Zakat rather than erroneously referring to it as "charity" and other candidates used the Festivals and the cutting of the baby's hair as ways of raising money.

Question 2

Responses which were unable to use specific examples struggled here. Many referred to films or to the Danish cartoons which upset the Muslim community. Religious books, specifically the sacred writings such as the Qur'an and the Bible were used as good examples whilst the Da Vinci Code, The God Delusion and The Satanic Verses were used as offensive material. Some candidates stated the books written about evolution would cause upset. Some candidates writing from an Islamic and Christian perspective stated that perhaps Muslims would be more offended by books against their religion than a Christian would.

Question 3

The candidates approached this question in different ways: some believed it was wrong to discriminate against people's lifestyles and that it was an invasion of privacy whilst others used religious teachings to condemn a life of violence, greed, abuse of the body through alcohol and eating disorders, and lying. Some responses did not refer to the sources but instead talked of how the Media encouraged envy and dissolute lifestyles through its portrayal in adverts, magazines, soap operas and films. The Beckhams, Amy Whitehouse, and Peter Andre and Jordan were often used as specific examples. Some answers wandered off the point and began discussing why war was right or wrong. Often the responses just focused on the sources and used them to convey social responses rather than religious ones. Many candidates quoted Proverbs 18:8 'There's nothing so delicious as the taste of gossip!'

Question 4

Some candidates used this question to discuss evangelism and focused on the “why” whilst others did well by explaining various uses of the Media. Some were unable to fully understand the question and spoke of “education” in general (i.e. the 3 R’s). Some candidates used the soap operas as a medium for portraying religious values: i.e. Dot assisting Ethel’s suicide and a Muslim girl in a nightclub. Some candidates approached the question by showing positive and negative ways.

Question 5

Sometimes the responses only addressed a certain part of the question – usually the first part ‘caring for material things’ and thus missed out on the full import. Some responses did not understand the term “material things”. Some candidates stated that caring for objects such as family heirlooms or something they have worked hard to get was not wrong as long as it did not interfere with their worship. Other candidates referred back to question 1. The Bible was referred to as a material possession and other religious images were mentioned as having a spiritual significance. Candidates answering from an Islamic perspective referred to Muhammad destroying the idols of Mecca.

Overall it was felt that this was an appropriate paper allowing differentiation. Most candidates were able to write full, and often detailed answers in the time allowed.

2310 Coursework

General Comments

Work for this component continues to be of a very high standard. There was a continuing decrease in the numbers entering this component which appears to be explained by an increase in the numbers sitting the alternative Media paper 2309 and also a significant number of centres moving to Specification B 1931.

Centres are reminded that there will be no coursework options in the new GCSE RS specifications.

The standard of marking and administration by centres was generally very good, however, the Centre Authentication statements still caused problems for some. There were a number of centres where contact proved difficult and it would seem that teachers are under ever-increasing demands on their time.

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 poorly prepared work in any way. Candidates should be encouraged to acknowledge downloaded material so that there can be no suggestion of intentional plagiarism.

Again, the continued 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 again 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.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course)
 Religious Studies (World Religions) 1030
 June 2008 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
2391	Raw	43	38	33	28	24	20	16	13	10	0
	UMS	43	34	30	26	22	18	14	10	6	0
2392/01	Raw	43	37	32	27	23	19	15	11	7	0
	UMS	43	34	30	26	22	18	14	10	6	0
2392/02	Raw	43	38	33	28	24	20	16	13	10	0
	UMS	43	34	30	26	22	18	14	10	6	0
2393	Raw	43	38	34	30	26	21	17	13	9	0
	UMS	43	34	30	26	22	18	14	10	6	0
2394/01	Raw	43	37	33	29	26	21	17	13	9	0
	UMS	43	34	30	26	22	18	14	10	6	0
2394/02	Raw	43	39	34	29	25	20	16	12	8	0
	UMS	43	34	30	26	22	18	14	10	6	0
2395	Raw	43	39	34	29	24	19	15	11	7	0
	UMS	43	34	30	26	22	18	14	10	6	0
2396	Raw	43	40	35	30	25	21	17	13	9	0
	UMS	43	34	30	26	22	18	14	10	6	0
2397	Raw	43	40	35	30	26	22	18	14	10	0
	UMS	43	34	30	26	22	18	14	10	6	0
2398	Raw	43	38	33	28	23	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 (ie 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 Cands
1030	4.7	14.9	31.2	49.6	66.6	80.0	89.8	96.3	100.0	15353

15,353 candidates were entered for aggregation this series

**General Certificate of Secondary Education
Religious Studies (World Religions) 1930
June 2008 Examination Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
2301	Raw	64	60	52	44	36	29	22	16	10	0
	UMS	64	56	50	44	38	32	26	20	14	0
2302/01	Raw	64	53	47	41	35	29	23	17	11	0
	UMS	64	56	50	44	38	32	26	20	14	0
2302/02	Raw	64	58	51	44	37	31	25	19	13	0
	UMS	64	56	50	44	38	32	26	20	14	0
2303	Raw	64	59	53	47	42	34	26	19	12	0
	UMS	64	56	50	44	38	32	26	20	14	0
2304/01	Raw	64	57	52	47	42	35	29	23	17	0
	UMS	64	56	50	44	38	32	26	20	14	0
2304/02	Raw	64	58	51	44	37	30	24	18	12	0
	UMS	64	56	50	44	38	32	26	20	14	0
2305	Raw	64	61	53	45	37	30	23	17	11	0
	UMS	64	56	50	44	38	32	26	20	14	0
2306	Raw	64	60	53	46	40	33	26	19	12	0
	UMS	64	56	50	44	38	32	26	20	14	0
2307	Raw	64	61	55	49	43	35	27	20	13	0
	UMS	64	56	50	44	38	32	26	20	14	0
2308	Raw	64	59	52	45	38	30	22	15	8	0
	UMS	64	56	50	44	38	32	26	20	14	0
2309	Raw	43	39	35	31	27	23	19	15	11	0
	UMS	32	28	25	22	19	16	13	10	7	0
2310	Raw	64	63	55	46	38	30	22	15	8	
	UMS	32	28	25	22	19	16	13	10	7	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie 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	9.4	26.1	47.2	67.7	83.0	91.8	96.5	98.6	100.0	19812

19,812 candidates were entered for aggregation this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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