

# Examiners' Report November 2008

IGCSE

## IGCSE Religious Studies (4425)

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# Paper 1: Beliefs and Values

## General Comments

It was pleasing to note a very substantial increase in the number of candidates taking IGCSE Religious Studies this November. There were many scripts of a very high standard, while the range of performance, from A\* to G grade, indicated that the paper was appropriate for the ability range of the candidates for whom it was intended, and achieved satisfactory differentiation.

## The Content of Paper 1

The questions in Paper 1 are generic ones, which can be answered from the standpoint of one, or more than one, of the six major religions, although there are four questions where candidates are asked to answer from the standpoint of only one chosen religion. Sections A-D assess AO1 (Knowledge) and AO2 (Understanding). Each section contains two three-part questions, of which candidates must answer all parts of one question. Part (a) tests AO1, and relates to definitions of key words for the particular section; part (b) also tests AO1, requiring candidates to outline or describe a religious (or non-religious) belief(s), teaching(s), or practice(s). Part (c) questions assess AO2, and require candidates to explain a religious (or non-religious) belief(s), teaching(s), or practice(s). Section E assesses AO3 (Evaluation), and consists of eight questions, of which candidates must answer two. Questions take the form of controversial statements, relating to the beliefs, teachings and practices covered in the previous sections. Candidates are asked whether they agree with the statement, and to give reasons for their opinion.

## Sections A-D

Many candidates showed extensive and thorough knowledge of the topics studied and of religious teachings. There was also further encouraging evidence that centres are ensuring that candidates study and learn the key words for part (a) questions. The number of accurate responses to these questions increased.

As in previous examinations, candidates generally performed well on Section A - D part (b) questions. Overall, candidates preferred the part (b) option which requires them to outline the teachings or attitudes of a specific religion ('Choose one religion'), and there were many answers which achieved Level 3. There was also pleasing evidence that centres have taken note of the comments in previous reports about how candidates should approach Section A - D part (c) questions. Generally, candidates in this examination showed a much greater ability to develop their explanations, instead of limiting themselves to basic explanations or giving purely descriptive responses. There were thus many more answers which achieved Levels 3 or 4. Another factor, which contributed significantly to improved performance in part (c) questions, was that, for the most part, candidates addressed the question set, and resisted the temptation (noted in previous reports) to stray from it, in order to write about religious teachings that they consider important.

## Section E

There was also a noticeable improvement in the general standard of answers to Section E questions. This was due to the fact that there were many more responses which, as well as being well supported by religious/moral argument, as they have been in previous examinations, at least referred (even if briefly) to another point of view. However, there was also a substantial increase in the number of answers which gave a balanced account of alternative points of view. Thus, a much higher proportion of answers achieved Levels 3 or 4, rather than being limited (as too many have been in previous examinations) to Level 2, because they covered only one point of view.

Centres and candidates are to be congratulated on the improvement in the general standard of answers to Section E questions, which indicates that centres have taken note of the comments in previous reports. It was also pleasing to note that each of the questions in Section E was attempted by at least five candidates, whereas in previous examinations some of the questions have not been attempted by any candidate. This suggests that candidates are now approaching the questions in this section with greater confidence, based on an improved understanding of how to answer them.

## Section A

Question 2 was far more popular than Question 1.

In **Question 1**, most candidates were able to earn at least one mark for part (a), and there were several accurate responses. There were some good responses to part (b), but some candidates who chose this question lacked even basic knowledge of predestination. Some part (c) responses described hatred and selfishness and/or their effects in the world, rather than explaining why some people believe that human beings are responsible for them.

Very many candidates who attempted **Question 2** were able to answer part (a) correctly. Responses to part (b) generally showed accurate knowledge of (mainly Christian) teachings about the nature of human beings, although some candidates simply outlined the story of the creation of human beings in Genesis. There were some very good answers to part (c), although some responses outlined religious teachings about what happens to people when they die, rather than developing an explanation.

## Section B

Question 4 was much more popular than Question 3.

The candidates who attempted **Question 3** showed generally accurate knowledge in part (a), and there were some thoughtful answers to part (b), although other responses ignored the fact that the question asked candidates to describe 'a religious conversion experience'. Candidates were able to give reasons why some people believe that there is more than one God.

**Question 4.** Most candidates gained at least one mark for part (a), and many answers to part (b) showed accurate knowledge of (mainly Christian) attitudes to abortion and achieved Level 3. Part (c) was also answered well, and there were some comprehensive and coherent explanations of why some people are atheists, although one or two candidates were uncertain of the difference between 'atheists' and 'agnostics'.

## Section C

Question 6 was far more popular than Question 5.

**Question 5.** Candidates who attempted this question gave generally accurate answers to part (a), and there were some pleasing responses to part (b), with coverage of a wide range of changes in the nature of family life. There was a tendency for part (c) answers to outline (examples of) women's (inferior) status in marriage, instead of explaining why some people believe that men and women should not have the same status within it.

The overall standard of answers to **Question 6** was high. Most candidates gave an accurate response to part (a), and there was a large number of organised outlines of (mainly Christian) attitudes to divorce, which reached Level 3. In part (c), many explanations were developed or comprehensive, achieving Levels 3 or 4.

## Section D

Question 8 was more popular than Question 7.

**Question 7.** Candidates who chose this question were generally able to gain at least one mark for part (a), and there were some pleasing answers to part (b), with relevant examples of the growth of equal rights for women, including some drawn from specific legislation. However, in part (c), explanations tended to be basic, rather than developed.

Although **Question 8** was more popular, quite a few candidates were not altogether clear about the meaning of 'justice'. There were some good responses to part (b), but some candidates outlined only one attitude, while others did not clearly address the issue of religious inclusivism. In part (c), many candidates gave developed explanations, which contained relevant examples.

## Section E

In Section E, Questions 12, 13, 15 and 16 were the most popular questions.

**Question 9.** This was not a very popular choice. Generally, candidates argued that global warming is too serious an issue to ignore, but recognised the importance of economic development.

**Question 10.** A small number of candidates attempted this question. Generally, evaluations were well supported by religious evidence and argument, and referred to an alternative point of view.

**Question 11.** This question was attempted by a few candidates. There were balanced accounts of alternative points of view, with a majority of candidates emphasising the importance of religion in giving life a purpose.

**Question 12.** This was a popular choice, and there were many well-argued responses, which were well supported by religious evidence and gave a balanced account of alternative points of view,

**Question 13.** This was also a popular choice. Generally, candidates held that religious people should not cohabit, supporting their view(s) with religious/moral evidence and referring to another point of view.

**Question 14.** This question was attempted by a small number of candidates. Again, candidates used religious/moral evidence, but some responses did not refer to another point of view.

**Question 15.** This was a popular choice. Generally, candidates argued for the benefits of a multi-ethnic society, supporting their point of view with religious/moral argument and referring to an alternative point of view.

**Question 16.** This was another popular choice. For the most part, candidates argued that religious people should be expected to help members of their other religious communities, as well as their own. However, answers tended not to refer, or to refer only briefly, to another point of view.



## Paper 2: The Religious Community

### General Comments

It was encouraging to note the substantial increase in the number of candidates opting for IGCSE Religious Studies this November. Similarly, scripts showed a knowledge and understanding of a broader range of world faiths when compared with previous entries. Many of the candidates produced answers of a very high quality although there was a wide range of performance which suggests that the paper was appropriate for the ability range of the candidates.

As in previous examinations, some scripts still show a temptation for candidates to wander from the point of a question - this may be a reflection of a few candidates failing to read each question carefully before answering. A further point which centres may wish to note is that, whilst there is no extra mark for the quality of written communication, it is difficult for lists of facts or "bullet points" to be considered a fully coherent answer.

### The Content of Paper 2

Paper 2 is required to be completed by those candidates who have chosen not to attempt coursework. As with the coursework, the questions in Paper 2 concentrate on the faith and practice of six different major world religions. Candidates are required to answer two questions and may answer on the basis of either one or two chosen religions. Each question is divided into two parts. The first part of each question aims to assess AO 1 (knowledge) and requires candidates to describe or outline an aspect of their chosen religion's teachings, belief or practice - this is worth 10 marks. The second part of each question requires candidates to demonstrate their understanding of an aspect of their chosen religion (AO 2). This second part is again worth ten marks. AO 3 (evaluation) is not assessed in Paper 2 or coursework.

#### Section 1 - Buddhism

No candidate attempted questions from this section.

#### Section 2 - Christianity

A general trend to do better in part "a" than in part "b", appears to have been reversed in this exam season's entries. This suggests a more effective understanding of the faiths referred to, although in some candidates it would suggest that a deeper knowledge of their chosen faith(s) is required if candidates are to reach the higher levels.

##### 6a

This was a popular question and in the vast majority of cases, candidates showed an impressive knowledge of the symbols associated with Christian baptism. In a few answers candidates had needlessly included explanations of the meanings of these symbols - this was not a requirement of the question - and meant that, although no marks were lost by such inclusion, time was more limited for the effective answering of other questions.

### **6b**

It was pleasing to note the generally high standard of answers to this question in an improvement on previous years all the candidates demonstrated a sound grasp of the difference between presenting knowledge and demonstrating understanding.

### **7a**

This was a less popular question and provided an example of where candidates may be tempted to wander from the point. The question only required the candidate to give an account of the authority of the Pope - one or two answers lost marks by giving too brief an account of this, whilst presenting more detailed accounts of where authority lies in other Christian denominations.

### **7b**

There was a balance of performance with regard to this task. One or two candidates had clearly understood what was required and showed impressive levels of understanding, using clear examples to illustrate their points. However, in other cases candidates had misunderstood what was required and lost marks accordingly.

### **8a**

This was the most popular question on the paper and most candidates showed an extensive and thorough knowledge of Christian teachings about love.

### **8b**

As with part a, this was a popular question and in most cases candidates answered effectively by demonstrating clear understanding. In a minority of answers, some candidates lost marks by failing to clearly identify the relevance of the Sermon on the Mount to contemporary society in particular.

### **9a**

Another popular and well answered question. In a small minority of cases candidates lost marks through excessive brevity - this may have been due to the pressures of time brought about by including unnecessary information in other answers.

### **9b**

Most candidates chose to write about St Paul in response to this task. Answers which did specify a particular Christian showed a good understanding of the question. Some answers gained no marks because they failed to write about a particular individual - choosing instead to give generalised accounts of Christian achievements. Candidates should also note that no marks were to be gained here by writing about the contribution of Jesus Christ.

### **16a & b**

All candidates who attempted this question did so successfully, showing a clear knowledge and understanding of both the daily prayers and the importance of birth ceremonies.

### **17a**

This was less popular question and, in the majority of cases candidates lost marks by failing to understand the special role of the Imam in Shi'ah Islam as opposed to the generally accepted role of imams in Sunni Islam.

### **17b**

In pleasing contrast to part a, this question was tackled successfully by all the candidates who attempted it.

**18a & b**

Two less popular questions, but where candidates had attempted to answer, a clear and well presented, knowledge and understanding was shown.

**19a**

A popular and well answered question although a few candidates wandered from the point of the question by including unnecessary information on the events which preceded and succeeded the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet.

**19b**

Again, a generally well answered question although some candidates lost marks by presenting insufficiently developed explanations.

**20a**

This was a popular and generally well answered question. However, in some cases, answers demonstrated once again the need to read the question thoroughly before answering. The task specifically referred to "Madinah" - so answers which concentrated on Mina would gain no marks.

**20b**

Most candidates who attempted this question showed a clear and thorough understanding of what was required, although, again, in a minority of cases some answers lost marks by not developing explanations sufficiently.

**26a**

Very few candidates attempted this question and in all the relevant scripts answers were let down by a lack of sufficient detail and breadth of knowledge. Where candidates are asked to "outline" certain aspects of a faith it is necessary to demonstrate a broad grasp of the topic rather than simple accounts of one or two features.

**26b**

Once again, in contrast to the answers for part a, the answers for b were successful and reflected sound understanding of rites of passage in Sikhism.

**28a**

Although this was a less popular question, it was answered effectively by all the candidates who attempted it - each showing a secure knowledge of how sewa may be put into practice.

**28b**

Answers to this question were balanced - some candidates were successful in explaining the importance of the Five Ks, whilst a roughly equal number were tempted into lengthy descriptions of the Five Ks without providing an equally lengthy explanation as to their importance.

**29a**

This was another successfully answered question with all scripts demonstrating a thorough knowledge of Sikhism

**29b**

Answers to this task were somewhat less successful than previous answers on Sikhism. Some candidates appeared to be very keen to demonstrate their impressive knowledge, and the conscientiousness with which they approached this task meant that insufficient attention was given towards explanation.

## Component 3: Coursework

### Introduction

Coursework for IGCSE Religious Studies is offered as an option for those candidates who would rather present an extended piece of writing (of around 1500 words) than complete Paper 2. As with Paper 2, coursework accounts for 20% of the final mark and assesses knowledge (AO 1) and understanding (AO 2). Evaluation (AO 3) is not assessed in coursework. The single coursework assignment is in two parts, equally weighted. The coursework task must address two out of the five aspects of The Religious Community as described in the specification. Candidates may approach these specific aspects from the point of view of one or two chosen faiths.

### General Comments on the November '08 entry

This examination season saw a pleasing and dramatic increase in those candidates opting for coursework in IGCSE Religious Studies. Similarly, it was both pleasing and helpful that all the administration required of the centres concerned was completed efficiently and punctually. The marking carried out by the centres was thorough and accurate; where differences did exist between the centre's given marks and those given by the moderator, these amounted to no more than one mark out of twenty. In a small minority cases it was felt that some annotation on the part of the centre to explain why certain marks were awarded would have been helpful but this did not amount to a serious issue. Candidates gained a wide range of marks which suggested that the tasks chosen were appropriate for the ability range of those involved.

Centres may wish to note that whilst no extra marks are given for the quality of written communication, it is difficult for lists or "bullet points" to be considered as a fully "coherent structure" (as described in the assessment grid for level 4).

Comments on Specific Faiths covered :

### Buddhism

As with previous entries, a minority of candidates chose to write about Buddhism. Where this was chosen, candidates had clearly lost marks by showing some confusion about what is meant by the "Middle Way".

### Christianity

This was a popular choice for candidates and there was some impressive work produced here. Most candidates clearly had a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of both the life of Jesus Christ and Christian teaching. Where some candidates had lost marks it was mainly due to failings in knowledge rather than understanding - specifically there was some confusion over dates and events when describing the life of Jesus. Similarly, perhaps as a result of aiming to keep to the 1500 word limit, some candidates had omitted referring to key events of Jesus' life, whilst including careful accounts of other, less significant, events.

## **Islam**

As with Christianity, this was a popular choice for candidates, and again as with Christianity, there were some impressive scripts here which gained high marks. However, some of the coursework could not be described as “comprehensive” since a few candidates had failed to be sufficiently selective in the information they chose to present, meaning that some important omissions were made.

## **Judaism**

This was a less popular choice for candidates, and, whilst some good work was produced, marks were mainly lost in response to AO 2. Here, instead of demonstrating understanding, a few candidates fell into the temptation of providing general descriptions, which although factually accurate, were irrelevant to the given task

# Statistics

## iGCSE Religious Studies (4425) Grade Boundaries

### Option 1 (paper 1 & paper 2)

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall boundary mark	84	70	56	43	34	25	16	7

**Note:** Grade Boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject depending on the demands of the question paper







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