

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/01

Paper 1

General comments

There were approximately 250 international candidates for the syllabus this year, many of whom demonstrated an impressive level of knowledge and understanding. A number of candidates seemed to run out of time, failing to complete the last question; but on the other hand many candidates wrote very full answers to all the questions. Candidates should not however imagine that answering more than the required number of questions gives them any benefit, as only the marks for the number of questions satisfying the rubric can be counted.

Some weaker candidates continue to confuse details of the different religions, for instance having a Jewish wedding conducted by an Imam, or having Mohammed (pbuh) being born on the 25th of December.

Answers for **part (b)** questions which are presented as disconnected sentences or 'bullet points' are, by their nature, less likely than those written in continuous prose to meet the Level 4 requirement to give 'clear explanations' or demonstrate a 'thorough understanding'.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This question was usually well done. However a significant number of candidates chose to read the question as asking for a special day such as Christmas or Holy Week itself. Those candidates tended to score no or very few marks for the rest of the question as well, since they were unable to talk about the importance of Sunday to Christians. Some, of these candidates gained marks for the (b) question by making very general comments which could be applied to Sunday as well as other special days in the Christian calendar. Most candidates, however, did score very highly on this question.

Question 2

Again this question was generally answered well with only a few weaker candidates confusing the number of times a Muslim must pray each day and the things they do **during** prayer. A significant number concentrated on the washing before prayer which meant that while they achieved some marks they could not gain the full mark for this part of the question. Many gave wide and detailed descriptions of why prayer is important to Muslims.

Question 3

Most knew the answer to the question of where the Torah is kept though again a significant number did not and gave a list of where the Qur'an might be kept. Again most knew 2 or 3 ways that respect was shown for the Torah. Again most were able to give a good account of the many ways which the Torah is important for Jews; both in a liturgical and a historical sense.

Section B

Question 4

- (a) This question was a popular option which most candidates responded well to. Some confused Lenten practices with Easter celebrations and a number of weaker candidates could say little more than that people give and eat chocolate eggs and bunnies at Easter. Some focused more on Good Friday than Easter itself which made their responses to **part (b)** more limited.
- (b) Those who focused on Good Friday found themselves with little to say beyond remembering the sacrifice that Jesus made for mankind at this time of the year. Without some recognition of the resurrection it was difficult for candidates to access the higher marks. Those who did understand the fullness of the Easter story were able to give a good account of the importance of the hope given through the resurrection in the lives of Christians today.

Question 5

- (a) Candidates were mostly able to give a good account of the number of ways the Qur'an can be influential in the daily lives of Muslims. Some talked about its importance in prayer, building on their answers to **Question 2**; other talked about how an Imam might use the Qur'an and others discussed the advice which is available to Muslims about how they should live their lives which can be found in this book. Helping them to become closer to Allah was a popular response.
- (b) Better responses to this question built on good answers to **part (a)**, with particular emphasis on the search for guidance through the Qur'an and the opportunity to become closer to Allah. A significant number built their discussions around the importance of the words of Allah being given to Mohammed (pbuh) through the Angel Jibril.

Question 6

- (a) This was a popular question where candidates were generally able to give two or three places which might be visited on pilgrimage. The weaker candidates were able to suggest the Western Wall in Jerusalem and explain its origin. Many candidates also talked about Masada and Yad Vashem, giving a good account of why Jews would travel to these places.
- (b) Good answers gave a full explanation of historical and personal reasons which might make Jews go on pilgrimage to these places. For example some explored the memorial aspects of Yad Vashem and the reasons why remembering the events of the holocaust are still important today.

Section C

Question 7

- (a) Some candidates produced excellent responses to this question demonstrating a sound grasp of the reasons for divisions within Judaism and Christianity. They were able to give thorough accounts of the differences between Orthodox and Liberal Jews and showed a good grasp of historical issues found in the reformation and the Great Schism. Some however misunderstood the question and explained, instead, why Judaism was different from Christianity.
- (b) Those who understood **part (a)** were able to give a good account of the reasons the division within different World Religions had come about. Those who had misread **part (a)**, as mentioned above, struggled to gain any marks for this section.

Question 8

- (a) A major misunderstanding for this question was that Ramadan was a response to a question about why special food might be eaten by Muslims. It looked as if many candidates had revised Ramadan and were determined to make their knowledge fit the question. It was hard for these candidates to gain many marks. Good accounts were given though of Jewish special foods with most candidates using Passover as the basis of their responses.

- (b)** Again better responses were given for the Jewish side of this question where they were able to make good use of their knowledge of the symbolic nature and meaning of the foods eaten during Passover.

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Paper 0490/02

Paper 2

General Comments

There were approximately 250 international candidates for the syllabus this year, many of whom demonstrated an impressive level of knowledge and understanding. However there continued to be a small number of candidates who seem to have undertaken no preparation for the academic requirements of the syllabus and who knew nothing beyond their own religion. Inevitably such candidates will not receive many marks. Some other candidates found it quite difficult to express themselves in English, but it was usually possible to discern what they were trying to say and reward them for what they knew and understood. A surprising number of candidates wrote consistently about 'Christains' and 'Christainity'.

In a few cases candidates wrote, at great length, answers which they had prepared for questions which were not in the event asked. Other candidates found difficulty in identifying the fundamental topic of the questions and the appropriate approach to them; the clue to this is often found in the stimulus. So for **Question 1 (a)** candidates could have avoided writing exclusively about parties, gifts and new clothes at Christmas by noting that the stimulus read 'Festivals remind people of what God has done for them.'

In answers to **part (b)** questions, a number of candidates wrote bullet-point or numbered-section answers. This disjointed approach gives no evidence of development of thought through an answer or, most crucially, the 'thorough understanding' required for the top level as described in the marking scheme.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

People who describe themselves as Christians do more at Christmas than have parties and give presents. **Part (a)** was looking for information about the sort of services they might attend in church, as well as celebrations at home with the family; and which went beyond the simple description of going to church and singing songs.

How and why Jews celebrate Chanukah was very little known. As a 'minor festival' listed in the syllabus it should have been covered by candidates in their preparation.

Question 2

Candidates should be aware that although not every Christian denomination practises infant baptism, it certainly counts as one of the most important 'religious ceremonies used to welcome a new baby into the community' and should have been described in the answer. The description needs to go into detail of what is done; merely stating 'the baby is baptized' is insufficient. The best answers gave detailed descriptions of the various practices of different denominations, and were aware of the fundamental importance of baptizing the baby with water 'in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit'.

Descriptions of Muslim ceremonies were usually full and accurate. Welcoming a new baby does not extend to the Bismillah ceremony four years later, though it was appropriate to mention this in **part (b)**.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to give full and accurate descriptions of the ceremonies and customs associated with funerals and burial practices of the two religions. There was a tendency to repeat some of this material in answers to **part (b)**, which were not quite so well done: the focus needed to be on the wider importance of funerals for everyone in the religious community, not just for those most closely concerned or indeed just the person who had died.

Question 4

Candidates were perhaps expecting a question about the religious objects to be found in a church and synagogue to have been asked in a different way. Here the requirement was quite clearly for **two items** each building might have which **help worship** – again, the clue was in the stimulus. These did not, therefore, include music, articles of clothing, or the sacraments at the Eucharist. There was also no extra benefit from mentioning more than two for each religion.

Part (b) answers were often thoughtful and wide-ranging, and only the weakest candidates said no more than that the buildings were important because they were used for worship.

Synagogues do not have altars and animals are not sacrificed in them.

Question 5

The obvious, and almost universal, answer for Muslim pilgrimage was Makkah, for the Hajj, and this was often done well and in considerable detail – it was quite legitimate for answers (for both religions) to expand on the description of the place to a description of what pilgrims usually did there. For **part (a)**, however, any explanation of *why* they go was not appropriate. Candidates found the Christian part more difficult to answer successfully, and if they chose Bethlehem or Nazareth they understandably found there was very little they could describe. It obviously makes sense in such circumstances to choose a place which has considerably more to describe, and some of the most successful answers were about pilgrimage to Jerusalem or Lourdes.

Again, **part (b)** answers were often thoughtful and wide-ranging.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/04

Alternative to Coursework

General Comments.

The candidates covered the whole ability range for an IGCSE examination. The best candidates used the sources accurately and imaginatively to produce answers of an excellent standard. Candidates gaining average marks produced generally accurate answers on **Questions 1, 2 and 3** but often failed to understand or interpret the meaning of all the sources in **Question 4**, often writing too little. They were also too repetitive in using the material from the sources in making arguments in **Question 5**. The weakest candidates often still wrote at length in their answers but quoted or copied exactly the information given in the sources. It was, however, pleasing to note that all candidates made a positive attempt and gave of their best irrespective of their ability.

It is to be commended that virtually all candidates attempted all the questions and that the majority of answers were written in good essay style and made good use of the sources provided.

Comments on Specific Questions.

Question 1

Generally well answered. The majority of candidates were able to appreciate the freedoms associated with the rights and paraphrased the sentiments well. Stronger candidates were able to explain and develop the 'manifesting' idea whilst weaker ones copied or rearranged the final phrase. Some candidates went on to illustrate the various ideas contained in the source with specific reference to individual religions and practices.

Question 2

Virtually all candidates were able to gain creditable marks with an individual analysis of each source. The best answers showed knowledge of the Trinity (Source A), Monotheism (Source B) and punishment in the 'life to come' (Source C). Some answers however, became over zealous and sanctioned actions not contained in the various religious doctrines and teachings i.e. death to transgressors. More able candidates were able to assimilate information from all three sources and show similarities and differences between the three.

Weaker candidates quoted or re-arranged the text with little understanding of the ideas contained within the sources. Stronger answers developed the ideas contained within the passages with often specific reference to events and actions.

Question 3

This question was generally well answered. Only a few candidates failed to identify two opposing views in Source D. Most were able to summarise the Christian view in Source E, however, some weaker candidates quoted the words from the passage and without use of their own vocabulary, failed to show how this view (Source E) might be incompatible with those in Source D e.g. that contrasting points of view are being shown and they cannot all be right.

Question 4

This question required understanding and interpretation of the relationship between religions in the four sources and the general pattern was that candidates wrote separately about each source. There were some excellent, mature answers which addressed both the written and picture sources with equal weight and so produced perceptive, well-balanced answers. Some candidates, however, spent a great deal of time and

effort on the written sources but offered only a few lines on the picture sources and so their efforts were uneven and this affected their overall performance on the paper.

The weakest candidates quoted verbatim from the written sources with only minor changes into their own words and many also just quoted captions from the pictures. This question carries a heavy weighting of marks and an even performance, showing understanding of the vocabulary used in the written passages and the ability to expand on the meaning of the pictures within the terms of the question, is essential to a good performance.

Question 5

Overall, there was a satisfactory level of performance on this question with some excellent and some very good answers. The best answers offered evidence and argument both for and against the statement, based on knowledge and understanding gained from the sources. Most of these reached a balanced conclusion and some expanded on their answers to offer their own opinions. The majority, however, offered only a one sided opinion, and although this was often well supported by reasons and argument from the sources, their answers lacked the balance needed to gain the highest level of marks.

All candidates were able to express an opinion and offer some argument and generally, for weaker candidates, the attempts were better than **Question 4**.