

Studies of Religion

2010 ASSESSMENT REPORT

Society and Environment Learning Area



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

STUDIES OF RELIGION

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Fifty-seven students undertook Studies of Religion this year.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 1: EXAMINATION

There were many well-developed and mature answers in both sections. It was clear that the majority of students were well prepared, and they were able to argue for their point of view in response to the question. It was also obvious that some students had prepared answers for both Part 1 and Part 2, and were determined to incorporate these prepared answers no matter what the question might be. There were a number of short answers, lacking in depth and detail, in the essay section. Given that students had about one hour for each answer, it was difficult to accept a written response which was little more than a page. It is not possible to provide evidence of high levels of knowledge, and write a well-structured discussion in such a limited number of words.

Part 1: Sources Analysis Questions

In this section, Sources Analysis (Question 1) was the most popular choice, which could be explained by the current media attention to the sainthood of Mary MacKillop. In response to this question, which focussed on sacred persons, there were some excellent answers that analysed all the sources and brought in knowledge of theorists in a relevant way. Some students struggled with the third sub-question (c) on the role of sacred persons, and they seemed to be discussing only what they could derive from the sources. In the final sub-question (d), the word 'profane' was, at times, misunderstood (as in 'profane speech'). There seems to be a need for more class debate on the nature of the 'sacred' and 'profane', in their accepted terminology, as they relate to definitions of religion. There also seems to be a need for students to have a deeper understanding of relevant theorists, and to practice applying their theories to issues, rather than simply stating each of the theorists' positions.

The alternative Sources Analysis (Question 2) on religious experience attracted fewer responses from students. Some students were confused by the second sub-question (b) about the contrast between public roadside memorials and the seemingly private nature of religious expression in Australia. Answers to the last sub-question (d) were generally disappointing. Few students took the opportunity to discuss the multi-faith aspects of Australian society.

Part 2: Essay Questions

Topic A: Indigenous Australians

Only Questions 3 and 4 attracted a significant number of answers. In both of these, some students drew on material from scholars, guest speakers and field trips to enhance their understanding of, and response to, the question. The more successful

responses included discussion of the Dreaming as a living tradition as it relates to actual Indigenous communities. However, there were too many responses that simply re-told Dreaming Stories without attempting to apply the Dreaming story to the question.

Topic B: Peoples of the Pacific

There were no responses to these questions.

Topic C: Hinduism

There were no responses to these questions.

Topic D: Buddhism

This was a popular topic. While answers to Question 15 were generally of a high standard, some students had difficulty in linking the concepts of *dharma* and *sangha* with the Buddha's enlightenment. Most students answered question 16, and all seemed to have good knowledge of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. However, many students then struggled to apply this knowledge to a contemporary Buddhist context. Disappointingly, there were very few examples of actual lived situations.

Topic E: Judaism

There were few responses to this topic, but all were of good quality. The most popular was Question 21 in which students demonstrated a good knowledge of Jewish practice.

Topic F: Christianity

While there were only rare instances of a personal bias in the answers to the questions in this topic (although some students still do not understand that Roman Catholicism is a Christian tradition, and not a separate religion in its own right), there were many superficial responses, and much evidence of pre-prepared essays that did not answer the actual questions.

Question 24 was popular, but there were too many unsuccessful answers (possibly pre-prepared) that re-told biblical stories with little attempt to show their relevance to the question.

Question 25 attracted much lengthier responses due, in some instances, to students choosing to discuss all the elements of Christian practice. Naturally this led to some lack of depth, and did not really answer the question. The most successful responses were able to compare and contrast two Christian traditions in depth and detail.

Question 26 was generally well answered, with students usually choosing to discuss the reign of Constantine, the Great Schism, or the Reformation.

Topic G: Islam

Question 29 was the only question that attracted a large response, and it was generally well done. Students knew the Islamic practices and many were able to apply the 'Five Pillars' to everyday Muslim life. Some students gave interesting examples of the application of Sharia Law in Muslim communities.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 2: INDIVIDUAL STUDY

As in previous years some individual studies lacked evidence of primary data, and others did not provide evidence to match all the criteria for judging performance in this component. Some individual studies appeared to be more like a project than an investigation, and, where this was the case, there was little or no evidence of analysis by the student.

Students are reminded that relying heavily on the internet for information can easily lead to plagiarism. In general, students are to be commended for their improved referencing.

There were some students who chose very broad topics for investigation. Teachers and students would be advised to spend some time initially narrowing the focus of their topic to a manageable hypothesis or guiding question. The best hypotheses or guiding questions focused on a specific feature of religion in which the student was interested (such as a particular style of religious art, a form of youth ministry), or on a current socio-religious issue (such as the shortage of Catholic priests, the vow of celibacy for unmarried single people, or the work of Christian Missionaries in a particular overseas site).

Generally speaking, the moderators commended the standard of the school assessment of the individual studies presented.

Chief Assessor
Studies of Religion