



GENERAL COMMENTS

The results for the 2009 Religion and Society examination were consistent with previous years and showed evidence of the consistent hard work done by students and teachers to ensure students' knowledge and skills were fully developed. There were some areas of definite improvement and other areas where improvement was still required.

Many students wrote more relevant information in response to the examination questions and showed increased descriptive and factual knowledge. There was also improvement in students' ability to complete the examination in the allocated time.

However, while few questions were left unanswered and students wrote more content, lengthy responses were often general in nature and unsubstantiated by evidence or quotations. Students need to improve their ability to apply appropriate reference material to support their responses. Some students could have improved their responses by applying more precise and selective thinking, and writing a shorter, higher quality response.

Students must ensure their handwriting is legible and that they demonstrate their knowledge and understanding clearly.

Aspects of religion and core beliefs were highlighted in this exam. The eight aspects of religion stated in the study design are an essential part of the *VCE Religion and Society Study Design* and apply to all areas of study in Units 3 and 4. Responses to the examination showed that students' knowledge of the aspects was poor, and if the correct aspects were known, the ability to define them was weak. Many students did not know the function of particular aspects and were unable to demonstrate their knowledge with specific examples. Features of religion such as communication, faith, human dignity, growth, love, mystery, wonder, family, community, expression, practices and tradition are not aspects of religion as stated in the study design.

In general, greater attention needs to be given to all areas of the study design, including introductions to units and areas of study, which often set the context for the key knowledge and skills.

High-scoring responses were clearly expressed and answered questions directly. These responses were able to explain specialist terms from the tradition. For tradition-specific questions, high-scoring responses clearly identified the overall religious tradition and, if it was relevant, the particular stream of the tradition which was studied. These students supported their points with evidence from authoritative sources of the religious tradition such as sacred texts; official documents and writings of scholars; and scholarly, professional writings of acknowledged individuals or groups such as theologians, religious leaders, historians and authoritative sources of the wider society.

To earn full marks, students must state their points clearly. Full marks cannot be awarded where the meaning is simply implied.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Section A – Short answer questions

Section A dealt with contexts, concepts and terminology. Students needed to consider the study of religion and society from general perspectives, in the past and present, and within single-religion and multi-faith societies.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	11	40	32	18	1.6

There were many excellent, insightful responses to this question, which dealt with the relationship between religion and society, drawing out the potential for negative and positive relationships.

Less successful responses focused too much on explaining religion and society and, except for a single link that they interact with each other, ignored the 'relationship' focus of the question.



Some responses claimed that ‘there cannot be a society without religion’ or ‘that there cannot be a good society without religion’, but did not offer any explanation for the contention.

Assessors were looking for some of the following features in responses to this question.

- The relationship between religion and society is mutually interactive, sometimes positively and other times negatively.
- Either may attempt to dominate the other.
- They may work cooperatively for the betterment of the whole society.
- At times, and over certain issues, they may be diametrically opposed.
- Religion contributes to social cohesion.
- Religion contributes to social transformation.
- Society contributes to religious reflection, inspiration and initiative.
- Society contributes to tensions and disunity within religion.

Appropriate use of terms from the study design was rewarded.

The following is an example of a competent response. However, the relationship between religion and society needed to be clearer and the discussion of how religion is affected by society is too long.

Whilst religious traditions exist as separate institutions within society, religion is consistently influenced, challenged and compelled to respond to the continuously changing nature of society and the perceptions of various constructs. Religion may therefore alter in accordance with the needs of society or reject the challenges to which they are confronted by. Regardless of the tradition’s response to the challenges society poses religion and society exist simultaneously and will on both behalves be in some way influenced by the other.

This example of a competent response focuses on religion being affected, not developing the effect of religion on society. This is suggested in the statement about their ‘complementary relationship’.

Religion and society are both societal institutions, which provide a set of ethical and moral guidelines for members or adherents. Religion is submerged within society, and has historically been part of a complementary relationship with society. However as society progresses and religion becomes constrained by traditionalism, the relationship becomes less symbiotic and religion often finds itself dragging behind societal progress.

The following is a very competent and balanced response.

There is a dynamic relationship between religion and society as each has the power to shape the other. On one hand society develops at a pace far beyond that of religion and sometimes modern values can collide with religious principles, rendering them archaic and redundant. A society also has the power to suppress a religion in which it is located. On the other hand a religion and its moral teachings and principles can infiltrate the law of a society for example the western value system which is predicated on Judeo-Christian biblical laws.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	14	28	30	18	10	1.8

Many students did not read this question carefully enough. Less successful responses simply listed areas or types of significant life experiences, taken directly from Unit 3, Area of Study 3 in the study design. Better responses elaborated on this list by explaining that a shared characteristic of these significant life experiences was that they affected religious beliefs either positively or negatively. Other unsuccessful responses wrote about the impact of a few types of significant life experiences. Some students claimed that significant life experiences are unique and described experiences such as having a loved one give birth or die. Such significant experiences are special and particular, but not unique. It was clear that many students misunderstood the concept of uniqueness.

In responses to this question assessors were looking for characteristics such as those detailed below.

- Significant life experiences are life changing and/or transformative, perhaps involving a change in commitment.
- They affect the basic or foundational understandings of life held by a person. They deal with matters of life, death, suffering, joy, reasons and purpose for existing and continuing to live as well as how to live. As religious beliefs are primarily about the origins, meaning and purpose of existence, they will be affected by what happens to people through significant experiences in their life.



- Students had to explain that significant life experiences are so powerful that they act to shape the understandings of our belief system, therefore either strengthening or weakening our beliefs, or destroying them all together.
- Significant life experiences must be dealt with for life to maintain meaning, thus they cause an examination/reflection by individuals of their beliefs.
- They are experiences that positively or negatively affect one's understanding of life, how one understands its meaning and purpose, one's worldview, self image and sense of identity.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

A significant life experience is often a turning point in a person's life and can have an immense impact on the way they conduct themselves. While suffering and premature death can question a higher being or make adherents lose beliefs, love and joy can strengthen the adherents' commitment to a higher being. A significant life experience can magnify a belief or strengthen or weaken the belief. Through significant social and life experiences, individuals can adjust, understand and develop.

Example 2

Many significant life experiences are able to impact on the religious beliefs of people. Experiences such as joy, wonder, suffering and death all cause a change in the way people apply these beliefs to their lives through a dynamic process of reinterpretation. Characteristics of significant life experiences that impact on religious beliefs are things such as: experiences that cause doubt or new hope; experiences that cause people to think; and experiences that cause people to strengthen their beliefs. Each of these characteristics change for better or worse a person's understanding or belief within a religious tradition.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	15	18	23	23	13	8	2.3

Many successful responses made the connection between reaffirmation and reformulation or between reaffirmation and application to new circumstances, defining these terms and identifying the distinctions between them. These responses linked the terms to the concepts of continuity and the maintenance of religious beliefs. They examined the distinctions between each term and the order in which they might be applied to their common purpose. These responses also noted that the common stimulus for initiating a process of maintenance was some sort of challenge.

Unsuccessful responses applied this question to an individual rather than to religious traditions. While the terms given in the question could apply successfully to the experience of an individual studied in Area of Study 3.3, these responses were often a general description of unqualified 'change' and were emotional responses.

Some students used their topics of study in their argument. This worked well providing that a direct connection with the terminology of the question was made. Some students stated that reformulation changes the belief rather than the expression of the belief and made no distinction between core and subsequent beliefs. Other students merely shuffled the terms around repetitively and at length, without giving any definitions or making any connections.

Assessors were looking for the following information in response to this question.

- Reaffirmation is the process by which religious traditions maintain continuity in their religious beliefs.
- Reaffirming religious beliefs means restating that the belief is to be maintained. Usually this requires some considered examination and reflection upon the belief prior to acknowledging its continuance.
- Sometimes this affirmation also requires some reformulation of the belief. That is, the belief may be reworded to make the existing meaning clearer; it may be reworded to convey a different interpretation; or its ritual or symbolic expression may be changed to make the existing meaning clearer or to convey the reinterpretation.
- This method of reformulation of the expression of beliefs may also involve applying the belief to new circumstances.
- Both reformulations of the expression of beliefs and application of beliefs to new circumstances are methods of reaffirmation of religious beliefs in order to maintain their continuity.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.



Example 1

When confronted with a factor which threatens the continuity of a belief, re-evaluation is achieved through theological reflection and internal religious debate. This can result in a re-affirmation of a belief – a reiteration which strengthens its foundations. Indeed, reaffirmation can be achieved through a reformulation by applying new expressions and applications to an existing belief. This may alter the development of subsequent beliefs. Normally both reaffirmation and reformulation reinforce and verify the authenticity and credibility of a belief thereby ensuring its continuity. It is the relationship between reaffirmation and reformulation which enables adherents to maintain the religious beliefs of their tradition through its aspects.

Example 2

There is a significant connection between religious beliefs and a developmental process which may include reaffirmation, application to new circumstances and reformulation. Religious beliefs give continuity and in turn they are maintained through the physical aspects. Sometimes against the backdrop of changing circumstances religious beliefs may be subject to pressure to change. Hence within a tradition a developmental process including reaffirmation and reformulation may be considered a necessary process in order to ensure continuity in the face of pressure to change. Reformulation of a religious belief may often be recognised in innovative expressions of a belief thus signalling a strengthening and reaffirmation of the belief. A reformulation does not imply a rupture or break with a tradition but rather is meant to ensure continuity to a religious belief. To say that a religious belief has been reaffirmed is to say that it has been strengthened and preserved. The internal structure of the tradition remains the same, even when exposed to new expressions which may indicate an alternative pathway.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	4	4	6	10	15	17	18	13	12	4.9

The best responses to this question correctly named aspects of religion and gave clear, general definitions without discussing tradition-specific examples.

Many responses correctly named aspects of religion but did not define them. Although these responses showed an understanding of the aspect through a tradition-specific example, this did not answer the question adequately. Many students had no understanding of the aspects.

Students must be aware that a term cannot be defined through the use of the term itself, and that synonyms or explanatory phrases must be used.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

Symbol – A symbol is an object, a graphic or a picture that brings particular meaning to a certain religious tradition. It may help to bring better understanding of the religion to an individual. (eg. candle, holy water)

Ritual – This is a certain action, movement or task that is repeated due to one's participation in a certain religious tradition. (eg. sign of the cross)

Sacred Text and literature – These are important documents or texts which give meaning to an individual or community about their religion. They hold beliefs and stories which form a basis for a religion. (eg. Gospels)

Personal Religious Experience – This is how an individual experiences things within a religious tradition. It may help them to grow deeper in their beliefs or ways of life as result of their religion.

Example 2

Ritual – A ritual is a traditional sequence of actions performed either communally or individually. According to Schorsh they are 'acts of holiness' which serve to ritualise and reinforce core beliefs. In addition they bring spirituality into the mundanities of life.

Sacred Text – Sacred texts communicate established traditional practices and core beliefs to adherents and to future generations. They are separate from the mundanities of life. Their purpose, authorship and origin make them holy.

Ethics and codes of behaviour – Every tradition has a code of ethics and morals. These provide for a specific way in which an adherent must live their lives. They provide an avenue in which values of the tradition can be incorporated into daily life.

Symbol – A symbol represents something else either through action or through artefact. They therefore convey the meaning of a belief.



Section B – Extended response questions

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	12	35	32	19	2.6

1a.

It was essential that students connect specific details of the stimulus material to their responses. There were many excellent responses that consistently engaged the cartoon and gave specified realistic interpretations such as:

- journey of life (open door)
- leading to wonder, hope (facial expressions)
- leaves equipped to face life (confident posture)
- returned to security, though isolated and hiding from reality (re-enter and close egg; posture and expression).

Less successful responses did not directly engage with the cartoon. A narrative description of the cartoon was not sufficient. Students needed to match possible significant life experiences of the character with particular images and features within that image.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

Leunig's cartoon implies that negative life experiences can have deleterious consequences on an individual's beliefs and values. In optimistically entering the world with a smile and returning with a frown Leunig implies that the individual encountered and was challenged by a bad experience. Notably this experience emotional hardship may have been painful experiences such as death and suffering, seeking solace in the ignorance and isolation inherent in the egg. Indeed the individual may have been confronted with contradicting values or possible social/theological subjugation responding with a state of despondency. Ultimately as a happy return to the egg is absent from the cartoon, Leunig is inferring that the world is bereft of acceptance and tolerance, rather overrun with rejection.

Example 2

Frames one to six in the above cartoon depict an individual emerging from a shell seemingly curious and excited about the new world he is about to enter through the door, only to later return clearly dissatisfied by the experiences of life to reject the possibilities of the future and instead return to the isolation of the repatched shell. The melancholic expression of the individual in frame 5 suggests that they may have encountered a negative life experiences such as loss, devastation or destruction, and the consequent return to the comfort of oblivion and alienation suggests that the experiences were generally unappealing or endurable for a second time.

1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	8	11	20	23	21	11	7	3

The focus of this question was not the actual beliefs involved, but a comparison of the ways of responding to significant life experiences. There were some excellent and many very competent responses that completed this comparison well, showing insightful understanding of the studied person. This was evident in the carefully chosen parts of resource material applied to this question. Very few students discussed groups. Students needed to ensure that they identified the religious tradition.

Less successful responses were narratives of an individual's life with very little reference to the cartoon. Often these responses consisted of a sentence at the beginning and/or end of the life narrative. Very weak responses did not refer to an individual; rather they spoke of members of the tradition in general terms. Features that weakened responses included vagueness about the actual challenge, little or no theological references, vague or no historical context, and factual inaccuracies.

Quotations in a case study should come from something the individual, the group or a commentator said. If scripture is quoted, it should be because the person or group studied has referred to the text as their motivation or because the scriptural passage expresses their belief. Such use of quotations and reference material was well done by many students.



Sufficient material must be available to enable students to do a critical study of the individual or group chosen. It is not adequate to select a person or group that has only their account of their experience for Area of Study 3.3.

Examples of life experiences used successfully in responses were drawn from people such as Martin Luther, Arias, Cardinal Bernadine, Archbishop Oscar Romero, Galileo, Pope John Paul II, St Paul, Patrick Sonnier, Sr Helen Prejean, CS Lewis, Venerable Ludhrup (a Buddhist monk), Thomas Moore, John Newton, Mary Mackillop, Catherine McAuley, Esther Wachsman, Jacob Neusner, Bishop Alexis Bilindabayado, Dorothy Day, Frederick Ozanam and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

Leunig's cartoon has little parity with the significant life experience of Rabbi Bradley Shavit Arton of the Jewish tradition. Notably, both the cartoon and Arton encountered challenging experiences – as Arton was confronted with a proliferation of death in the congregation of his synagogue, which challenges his belief in an immanent G-d. Whilst the cartoon responded by seeking isolation ad contet in the egg which represents his beliefs – Arton also chooses to 'sing to G-d's enduring love and incomparable power'. Indeed Arton's re-evaluation of his beliefs in G-d being merciful were reaffirmed in his propagation that 'were it not for G-d I would have surely perished'. Meanwhile Leunig's cartoon's depressed facial expressions conveys the notion that he rejected his prior beliefs – seeking fulfilment in the ignorance inherent in his egg. Notably Arton is able to use Judaism's declaration on death as a solution. As enunciated by theologian Henry Arbraevitch 'death is a natural process which marks the inevitable to life', enabling Arton to strengthen his faith in G-d rather than repudiate it by returning to the egg. Using his beliefs to respond to the challenge of 'puzzlement and frustration' when confronted with a death, Arton harbours his challenge productively and thereby asserts his desire to re-connect and reinforce his relationship with G-d and Judaism. I contrast Leunig's cartoon responds negatively-rejecting his beliefs and neglecting his values.

Example 2

In the Anglican tradition, Rwandan Bishop Alexis Bilindalagabo endured the Rwandan genocide of 1994 which occurred as a result of the culminated ethnic tensions between the two major ethnic groups, the Hutus and the Tutsis, eventuating with the deaths of over 1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus, some of which included the Bishop's own friends and family, and left over 800000 Rwandans orphans. Bishop Alexis demonstrated a vastly different ad more optimistic response to his significant life experiences during the devastation of the genocide as a Tutsi Bishop and used his core religious beliefs both as a source of comfort and to find a sense of purpose in the midst of horror. Contrary to the defeated attitude of the individual exhibited in the cartoon having emerged from an undesirable life experience, Bishop Alexis found comfort in the belief in God as Almighty which he personally perceived through a series of miracles which he understood as god's power at work. The Bishop was hence strengthened by his beliefs and gained motive to continue despite the treacherous acts of violence and destruction occurring around him and thus did not immediately accept defeat and misery as conveyed by the individual in the cartoon. Unlike the individual depicted who responded to the obviously unpleasant life experience by retreating into seclusion, the Bishop found meaning in his experiences through the love of God as the Father which later compelled him to embrace the belief in forgiveness and become the father to the fatherless of the Rwandan orphans at the conclusion of the genocide.

1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	10	9	13	14	15	13	10	6	6	2	2	3.9

There were some very good responses to this question that noted general types of challenges experienced by a religious tradition and then developed an example of a type. Other excellent responses focused on one type of challenge but dealt with it over a number of historical times.

Too many students did not notice that the question required an evaluation of the overall response of the religious tradition to historical challenges. These students did not pay enough attention to the plural 'challenges' in the question or to the focus on the overview of the nature of challenge within a particular religion. This is the first dot point in the key knowledge of Area of Study 4.1. Rather than focusing on the nature and experience of challenge within a religious tradition, these students appeared to give a pre-prepared response. It was not necessary to treat any one example in detail. No matter how detailed, one example was not sufficient if it was not used as an example of a repeated or unique type of challenge experienced by the religious tradition over its history. In these responses, 'retreating back into the egg' was mentioned vaguely, if at all. Few students made any attempt to explain what they meant in their example by 'retreating back into the egg'.

Students gave differing interpretations of 'retreating back into the egg', seeing it as either a positive or negative response. As long as the interpretation was consistently maintained and demonstrated in the response, the variations



worked. Some students saw the positive possibilities of retreating. These students were able to see the option for re-emergence as shown in the cartoon with the open door and possible trap doors, patches on the egg that could be opened and the eggs being only patched and easy to crack again.

Examples of historical challenges that were referred to in response to this question included the Barbarian invasion 400–1000 CE, Luther, the Protestant reformation, the Roman persecutions, Darwin, evolution, Jesus, the Chinese invasion of Tibet, feminism, the *Education Act 1872* (Australian), the Irish repression (penal laws), the holocaust, Galileo, the Black Plague, industrialisation, artificial contraception and the persecution of Early Islam.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

One historical challenge faced by the Jewish tradition has been the Holocaust of 1933-1945 which resulted in the genocide of 6 million Jews. Indeed the responses adopted to this challenge were dependent on whether the Holocaust was considered a unique or non-unique event in Jewish theology and history. The notion of 'retreating to the egg' makes a reaffirmation of one's beliefs by returning to the source of life. Normally those who reiterated their beliefs in a merciful G-d and the classical response to suffering of 'Majrei Charaens' (death as a consequence of sin) returned to the egg of Judaism and G-d. For example Holocaust survivor and Rabbi Joel Treralbaers advocates the belief that the Holocaust was a consequence of the Jewish nation returning to Israel prior to the Messianic Redemption. In this view Treralbaum affirms the belief in 'Majaci Chareni' returning to the Jewish tradition for answers in the same way Leunig's cartoon returns to the egg for comfort. Contrastingly not returning to the egg infers that a rejection of beliefs has occurred as many repudiated the righteousness and compassion of G-d given the suffering inflicted on Jews during the Holocaust. Principally many avoided returning to the egg by abandoning the belief advocating the belief that the Holocaust 'totally shattered the traditional Judaic concept of a benevolent G-d' as articulated by Rabbi Richard Rubenstein. Rejecting the belief in G-d, asserting that 'G-d is dead' is tantamount to not returning to the egg – rather staying a society which constantly challenges one's beliefs.

Example 2

In the Catholic tradition the statement and actions of the individual in the cartoon are not characteristic of the tradition's response to Artificial Contraception. After the Lambeth Conference of 1930, the Pope Pius XI's encyclical 'Certi Conubii' responded to the challenge of the Anglican Communion's acceptance of the use of artificial contraception, defining marriage to be equal in stance to remaining virginal and unmarried. In 1951 the Papal Decree of pope Pius XII declared the 'rhythm method' of contraception to be acceptable for use by married Catholics who had good reason to limit the size of their family and in 1958 allowed the use of the contraceptive pill for medical reasons. After the challenge of the advent of the pill, a Pontifical Commission was established in 1963 by Pope John the XXIII which was later expanded by Pope Paul VI to study question of artificial contraception. When the confidential report which stated that artificial contraception was not intrinsically evil was leaked to the media in 1967, another response was needed from the church. The 1968's Humanae Vitae by Pope Paul VI reaffirmed traditional Catholic belief of artificial contraception and marriage condemning the use of artificial contraception to be 'shameful' and 'vicious'. The responses made by the Catholic Church to reaffirm belief in light of the challenge of artificial contraception do not portray it as 'retreating back into the egg'.

Question 2

This question offered students the opportunity to clearly demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the foundation elements of the study which underpin all areas of study in Units 3 and 4.

Students need to be aware that religions have a hierarchy of beliefs. There are core, central, foundational or source beliefs that are connected and give rise to many other beliefs. These are attendant, derived, subsequent or consequent beliefs and their derived or attendant nature does not mean they are unimportant or optional.

2ai.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	8	26	66	1.6

Students did very well on this question. In many responses the outlines of core beliefs of various religious traditions were excellently expressed and aptly supported by text references.

Less successful responses referred to a range of attendant beliefs and some minor beliefs, making it difficult for these students to successfully complete the rest of question. Many of these responses contained incorrect theology. The Jewish concept of ethical monotheism was often reduced to monotheism only, and the word 'ethical' was not addressed.

Some potentially correct core beliefs were poorly expressed or only expressed in part.



Students were expected to identify the religious tradition they were using as their example.

2a.ii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	14	28	30	27	1.7

Most students answered this question well. Generally, the link between the core belief and other beliefs developing from it was well done; however, this was dependent on the core belief outlined in Question 2ai.

Less successful responses simply named a core belief in Question 2ai. and outlined it in 2a.ii. before or instead of explaining its relationship with beliefs that stem from it. Very weak responses contained a few lines of a creed or scriptural reference. There was no real link or logical connection with the previous answer.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

2ai. The Jewish core belief of ethical monotheism involves the notion of the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent, sovereign, compassionate and caring God. It is considered the quintessential doctrine of belief in Jewish theology.

2a.ii. As ethical monotheism is a core religious belief, from it sprouts contingent or attendant beliefs that comprise the foundation of the tradition. Ethical monotheism is inextricably linked to all other core and attendant beliefs within Judaism and is responsible for establishing the uniqueness of the tradition. The religious beliefs of Divine Covenant, divine creation and Divine revelation all rely on the existence of an all powerful, omniscient, benevolent and sovereign God. The absence of the core belief of ethical monotheism would result in the loss of identity of the tradition, and the nullification of most if not all of Judaism's contingent beliefs. Thus ethical monotheism is inextricably related to other Jewish beliefs and essential to the identity of Judaism.

2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	11	3	5	7	7	8	10	9	8	8	7	4	4	3	1	3	6.3

There were some very good responses from across the religious traditions studied, dealing with the aspects of ritual, symbol, sacred text and religious experience.

Many students answered this question well; however, their responses were basic and did not use adequate vocabulary to explain the relationship of the aspect example to the belief. Students needed to explain what or how the aspect of the religion expressed the core belief in part ai.

Many students' understanding of the aspects of religion was not broad or detailed enough to enable them to adequately address this question. For example, students could have considered the wider dimensions of ritual expression such as devotions, retreats, pilgrimages or meditation. The communal nature of ritual expression was not discussed in enough detail in many student responses. It was evident that the aspect of religious experience was poorly understood, as this understanding was often limited to individual experience.

Few students applied scriptural or theological quotations to support their statements. Students are reminded that there are many texts, in book form and online, that define and explain the function of the aspects of religion both generally and in specific religious traditions. Students should ensure they explore such texts.

The following is a sound and detailed response.

Firstly one of the most significant expressions of faith in the core belief of an ethical monotheistic God is through rituals. The Shema liturgy, ritually recited three times a day is Judaism's most definitive declaration of one God, 'Hear O Israel the Lord is One, the Lord our God', reaffirming belief in his omnipotence and uniqueness. Moreover the ritual of dipping parsley into salt water during the Passover meal is affirmation of God as Divine soul creator of the world for this act symbolises that 'everything is imbued with the divine essence of God who created the entire world in his absolute unity' (Rabbi David Cooper). Secondly the aspect of symbol gives expression to God's divine qualities and the belief in his transcendence as well as his immanence. For example the symbol of the Mezuzah, a small chamber which contains portions of sacred texts exemplifying God's absolute power and divinity and stuck on every door of a Jewish home, typifies the belief in God's omnipotence and transcendent qualities of 'protector and benevolent father' (Milton Steinberg) as it highlights a Jew's faith in God to protect his house and ward off evil and destruction. Finally the Code of Behaviour as outlined in Halacha (Jewish Laws for living everyday life) expresses a Jew's belief in God in every aspect of life. The code of behaviour dictates certain requirements such as 'treating all these with respect, all these made in God's image' (Australian Rabbi Fred Morgan) and signifies man's subjugated position to the divinity and power of God by defining God's role to man's responsibility to honour the Ultimate Reality throughout the different walks of life.



The following is a complex, insightful response; however, it lacks some clarity in its explanations.

Principally core beliefs are expressed and maintained through the aspects of a tradition. The core belief for Judaism that Israel is the God given homeland of the Covenant relationship with G-d is expressed by Jews through Rituals, Symbols and social structures. When confronted with internal and external threats to this belief, Judaism responded by hosting theological reflection, which resulted in the reformulation of the belief in the land of Israel by applying new understandings and expressions to it. The ritual of smashing a glass during a wedding by the groom to symbolise the destruction of the Temple and the Jewish exile into the Diaspora reminds and affirms Jews of the belief that Israel is indeed their homeland. Additionally the symbol of the Jewish flag finalised by the 'World Zionist Organisation' in 1897 by Theodore Hertzl has come to represent the personal and political emblem that Israel is the eternal possession of the Jewish people. Moreover the Jewish exile into the Diaspora after the Temple destructions in 560 BCE and again in 70 CE gave way to new expression of the belief. Rabbis, the leaders of the Jewish communities replaced temple worship with communal prayer in Synagogues (houses of worship) expressing the belief through the social structures of Judaism. Indeed theologian Abba Eban explains that it is only through expressing the belief by living in the land of Israel that 'the Jewish nation can seek an authentic fulfilment of itself.'

Section C – Essay and report questions

Questions 1–3

Question chosen	0	1	2	3
%	1	35	32	32

The three questions in this section were chosen by approximately equal numbers of students in 2009.

Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	2	2	3	4	5	4	7	5	9	6	7	7	8	6	7	6	4	3	2	1	1	9.7

Most students who gave responses to this section wrote responses of adequate length, which was an improvement over previous years.

The most successful responses incorporated evidence and quotations appropriately, and consistently related supporting material and stimulus material to the question. However, many students were unable to address the question's focus and struggled to engage with the stimulus material. This is an area which requires substantial improvement and should be addressed during examination preparation.

Question 1

Many students answered this question competently, providing a detailed and supported analysis of a contemporary challenge to a religious tradition. However, few students discussed 'injustice to society' and 'why actions taken are beneficial to society'.

Many responses resembled prepared outcome essays and did not discuss the question adequately or acknowledge the question appropriately. The quotation given in the question was often ignored or treated superficially.

Students' ability to explain and support the vision for society of the religious tradition with references had improved. Relating the vision to the question was problematic for many students and many responses omitted this vision for society.

Most responses needed to contain more evidence of students' knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, ethical principles and teachings behind the actions of religious traditions. Further evidence of consideration of the broader social context of the responses of the religious traditions to the issues studied was also necessary. However, there was noticeable improvement in student writing in terms of evaluating the success or otherwise of the tradition's responses.

Many students seemed uncertain about the concepts of justice and injustice and there was widespread, serious misquoting.

Contemporary challenges that were used in this question included environmental issues, asylum seekers, the ordination of women, the death penalty, remarriage and divorce, homelessness, artificial birth control, homosexuality, abortion and IVF. The shortage of priests and Secularism are not social or moral issues and students struggled to demonstrate either the injustice or wrongness involved in the issue.

In topics such as abortion, gay marriage, divorce and homosexuality, the nature of the issue was assumed without being clearly identified and explained. More precise use of technological language needed to be used in discussions of various



scientific issues studied, particularly in the discussion of abortion and embryonic stem cell research. Other students delved too much into the science and technology without showing how the beliefs or ethics of the religious tradition were being challenged.

Following are the first two and the last paragraphs of an excellent essay which addresses the question with sustained argument and is supported well by appropriate evidence and quotation.

Homosexuality is not a contemporary phenomenon, however it has not always been visible given its social and historical stigmatisation. Changing societal perceptions of homosexuality are evident through the inception of same-sex marriage in the European Union. Additionally revolutionary programs broadcast by the media such as the recent 'Queer Eye For the Straight Guy' have resulted in a growing visibility of homosexuality in the public domain. Whilst the previous theological and social oppression of homosexuality resulted in injustices around the globe for Gays-the Australian Bureau of Statistics assertion that 60% Of Australians are tolerant towards homosexuality has compelled major religious traditions to act as a powerful agent in responding and ameliorating this contemporary challenge.

Judaism's ideal vision of society is derived from its beliefs relating to the sacred text of Genesis 1:29, which expresses that man was made 'in the image of G-d'. Therefore man must strive to act 'immitatio dei' to embrace the moral values embodied by Judaism's Ultimate reality. Notably the Jewish prayer 'Barech Sheamor' establishes G-d's loving, compassionate and merciful qualities which constitute the society man is expected to facilitate. Accordingly the belief in Ethical Monotheism-the notion of One G-d that is moral-creates a universal doctrine of morality and a simple single standard for all people that share belief in One G-d. The most powerful agent to bring Judaism's ideal vision of society into fruition is through adherence to the 613 commandments. By following G-d's will man will initiate the process of 'Tikkun Olan'-the transformation of the world to form a society based on morality which is bereft of injustice. Only then can the 'Messianic Redemption' arrive which idealises Judaism's vision of a utopian society...

Despite the recent rhetoric regarding a reconciliation of homosexuality and Judaism the recent massacre of gay Jews in an Israeli Youth Centre conveys the persistent hostility felt by some streams of the tradition and the change which is yet to be achieved. Yet by striving to implement its vision for a utopian society through 'Tikkun Olan' Judaism has sown the seeds of justice and tolerance...

Question 2

This was a popular question among students; however, it was often completed poorly. Many students ignored most of the question and wrote pre-prepared responses without linking the challenges to each other or the question.

It appeared that many students saw this question as an opportunity to show all they knew about both challenges. Many knowledgeable essays were presented; however, many students gave too much detail which was specific to the historical challenge and did not discuss the contemporary challenge in enough depth. Some students who balanced the detail of the two challenges did not link their material directly to the question and therefore did not answer it appropriately. Few students linked the historical and the contemporary challenges as two examples that showed the same or different ways that religious traditions are or are not 'living institutions' or considered whether they 'must embrace change'. Some students mentioned 'embracing change', but few discussed the contention. The concept of 'must' was disregarded. Very few students addressed the idea of religions being 'living institutions'.

More successful responses made connections between the historical and the contemporary challenges and carefully used material they had studied to address the question. These students defined the terms in the question's statement and then consistently referred to these terms in their discussion of the extent to which they agreed or disagreed, using examples from their study and citing supportive text references.

There was an overall lack of dates, textual references and quotations in students' responses. Other areas for improvement included the use of accurate historical detail, and the correct use of theological terms and concepts within their historical context.

When selecting a contemporary social or moral issue relevant to a particular religious tradition today, it must be one with which the tradition is actively engaged now. Some topics chosen as contemporary were too dated, and while the issue may still be pertinent to the religious tradition today, students dealt only with historical material. While there will be relevant documentation such as scripture and formal doctrinal statements, current documentation must also be used. An active debate about the issue in which the religion is currently playing a part was necessary.

The contemporary social or moral issues chosen for this study are to be the focus of objective analysis. Too much emotivism, illogical argument, bias and even apparent prejudice appeared in the treatment of these contemporary issues.



Topics that were used for this question included Luther, the Reformation, Darwin, evolution, the holocaust and the holocaust today, Galileo, the stolen generation (past and present), secularism, homosexuality, abortion, cloning, embryonic stem cell research, women's ordination, capital punishment (past and present), modernity, Pope Leo XIII, Charlemagne and Pope Gregory the Great.

The following is an example of an introduction which attempts to define the terms of the stimulus statement and establish a responding contention that is well argued with supporting evidence. This essay would have been improved by a more analytical consideration of the concept that 'religions must embrace change'.

Life is change. One cannot live without literally changing and so one's society and religion must also be flexible in order to also be living. To argue that religions are 'living institutions' is correct when applied to the Roman Catholic Christian tradition. It is an 'institution' because of its orders, structure tradition and history. But the truly important part, the 'living' part comes from its humanity. It is living because it changes, just as the humanity it is composed of changes. It must adapt to challenge and struggle just as we do to simply survive. Its core beliefs in God and Jesus Christ of course do not change but the consequent beliefs and physical consequences of them: its power, its ethical guidance has been challenged in the past and is being challenged in contemporary society. And if the Roman Catholic Tradition is to stay vital it must 'embrace the world's changes'.

In the following introduction, the idea that religions 'must embrace change' is analysed very well. In the development of the body paragraphs, the student implies, and uses examples to demonstrate, that religions are living institutions, but does not overtly engage this part of the question.

This statement is not necessarily true as any religious tradition can respond in three different ways when faced with the challenge of change. Firstly the religious tradition can simply ignore the challenge and hope it will resolve itself over time. A religious tradition can also deny the challenge and fight against it claiming it false to stand up for its belief. Lastly the religious tradition can choose to accept the challenge of change and adapt to the new ideas put forward. The religious tradition of Catholicism has responded in all three ways mentioned above when faced with both a contemporary challenge and an historical challenge. The statement that religious traditions 'must embrace change' is true to an extent with regards to the Catholic faith but it is mostly false as it is clear that a religion is not obliged to conform to change as seen in the responses of the Catholic Church.

Question 3

This question was generally well answered. There were many good essays which needed to refer to the question more frequently in order to be considered excellent. Other very competent essays were limited by a lack of supporting evidence and quotations.

The more successful responses dealt with both 'how' and 'why' continuity of beliefs is maintained, consistently and appropriately used supporting material, and developed the connection of their studied belief with the core beliefs studied in Area of Study 3.1.

Many responses discussed 'how' continuity is maintained very well but neglected to discuss the reasons for maintaining continuity generally and specifically, and the reasons for using particular ways of maintenance at certain times.

The quality of historical accuracy in responses needed improvement. Necessary historical details were often missing or, where present, confused or incorrect.

Most responses made little reference to the aspects of religion that were engaged in the processes of maintenance and the reasons for maintenance of continuity of religious beliefs.

Some responses discussed the terminology of change without relating it to any actual events within the development of a religious tradition. This was quite limiting. Students need not have used one example specifically but they did need to refer to the experience of the religious tradition they had studied. This would have required a broad and insightful knowledge of the history of the religious tradition.

Topics that were used in response to this question included Jesus the Christ-Human and Divine, Buddhist schisms, the centrality of the land of Israel, the real presence-Eucharist, forgiveness of sins, salvation and the Sabbath.

The excellent student example below dealt with two examples of core beliefs. The excerpt shown contains the first four paragraphs and covers the first example of a core belief used by this student. The response directly addresses the question in the introduction and establishes the contention of the essay. In each of the body paragraphs, the student maintains direct reference to the question, clearly stating why and how the example supports the contention. The



response shows breadth of knowledge through the use of two core beliefs and incorporates frequent quotations that actively support the point being explained. Appropriate tradition-specific theological terms are used and explained.

The ways of maintaining the continuity of the second example of the core belief of ethical monotheism was well developed. However, ethical monotheism was not explained. Although its essential nature in Judaism was claimed, the reasons for this were implied but not articulated.

A religious tradition maintains continuity of its core beliefs from one generation to another because it is core beliefs, which are central to the tradition, which give a tradition its uniqueness and from which non-core and attendant beliefs derive. Without the continuation of its core beliefs a religious tradition would rapidly assimilate into wider society and lose its particular identity, which is why it is important for these core beliefs to be preserved. This holds true for the Jewish tradition and the core beliefs of Divine Redemption and Ethical Monotheism. In order to preserve these core beliefs religious traditions must constantly reinforce them with aspects that contextualise, give expression to and accord meaning to the core beliefs and upon occasion the religious tradition may need to adapt or reformulate attendant beliefs in order to preserve the ones that are the central core of the religious tradition.

Normative, mainstream Judaism holds that in time a divinely appointed messiah will arrive and restore the world to its former, pristine Garden of Eden like state, where, as it says in the prophetic literature, 'nation will not lift up sword unto nation' and 'the lion will lie with the lamb and the child will play on the hole of the asp'. This would be a time when the laws of the Decalogue (Exod. 20) and the 7 Noachide commandments (Gen 9:1–17) would be followed by all men and all Jews would adhere to the 613 mitzvot (divine precepts) prescribed by the Torah (Pentateuch). This belief of Tikun Olam (Perfection of the World) and Tikun Adam (perfection of man) has remained integral to the followers of the Jewish tradition over the ages as it has given them a beacon of hope in the dark night of dispersion and persecution.

In order to continue this core belief of Divine Redemption and attendant belief in a Messianic age throughout the generations, it has proved necessary to adapt the belief according to the times. The classical view of a King or Priest Messiah underwent change after the destruction of the 2nd Temple in 70CE, and emerged as a messiah-Redeemer. This slight alteration gave the Jews hope for a better life and a better world, and gave them the strength to continue believing in Yahweh (the Jewish God). This belief was reinforced by the next generation with the Bat Cochba revolt (131–135CE). General Simeon Bar Cochba led a revolt against the Romans and was declared by Rabbi Akiva to be the Messiah, however he died in battle in an unredeemed world and was not of Davidic descent and is therefore no longer accepted as the messiah. However this allowed the Jews of the time to reinforce their faith in a single compassionate God who would appoint a Divine Redeemer to deliver them from harm.

Another way that religious traditions can maintain the continuity of their core religious beliefs is through the use of any or all of the eight phenomenological aspects of a religious tradition, as defined by the late theologian Dr Ninian Smart, beliefs, rituals, religious experience, symbols, myths, ethics, sacred texts and social structure. The annual eight day festival of Passover is replete with aspects that reinforce the core belief of divine redemption. In particular it reinforces this belief to the younger generations. The primary social structure of Judaism is the family and during Pesach (Passover) the elders pass down their knowledge and beliefs about their faith 'And you shall teach your children' (Hagadah-sacred text of Pesach). This is emphasised as it symbolises the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, which was completed by the second generation after the first generation had been Divinely liberated from centuries of slavery. On the nights of Passover Jewish children are taught the significance of the core religious belief of Divine Redemption, thus maintaining its continuity.