

Religious Studies A (World Religion(s))

General Certificate of Education **J620**

General Certificate of Education (Short Course) **J120**

OCR Report to Centres

June 2012

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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

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B569: Buddhism 1 (Beliefs, Special Days, Divisions and Interpretations)

General Comments

The paper provided good differentiation between the candidates and produced a full range of marks. There were very few rubric errors where candidates attempted all three questions. Section C was the least popular unit but those candidates who attempted it, generally performed very well.

Most candidates did not spend long on parts a), b) and c) therefore allowing themselves sufficient time for parts d) and e). However, there is still a minority of candidates writing far more than is required to gain the marks, particularly in part c) and so are limiting the time they have available for the rest of the paper.

The part d) questions allowed the candidates to demonstrate very well their skills of understanding, application and analysis and tested a spread of abilities, achieving a good level of differentiation. Where candidates do not achieve the top level it is often because their responses are descriptive and fail to acknowledge the command word 'explain' in the question. This means that they have not demonstrated the skills required by the Level descriptors.

Answering part e) questions well requires the candidates to identify the issue and enter into a discussion with, and between the views expressed, ensuring there are justified arguments presented for the opinions expressed. Where responses contained very little personal response, with little supported evidence the response rarely went into Level 4. It is encouraging to see a greater proportion of Level 4 responses with some truly outstanding responses which demonstrate a large amount of religious knowledge, as well as fully justified personal responses and genuine evaluation. There is evidence that candidates understand the criteria and can respond to them.

The depth of knowledge about Buddhism displayed by some candidates was extremely impressive with the highest level responses performing well above the level expected at GCSE.
Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** Almost all candidates were able to answer this question correctly.
- 1b** The vast majority of candidates answered this correctly. Where candidates did not gain both available marks it was usually because they had said the same thing twice in different words, demonstrating the need for clarity and accuracy in part b) answers.
- 1c** Almost all candidates answered this question correctly.
- 1d** There were some outstanding answers demonstrating excellent use of Buddhist philosophy and terminology. Where responses did not attain at least Level 2 it was because candidates did not show knowledge of what the Three Refuges were. Some responses were limited to Level 2 because they did not mention all three of the Refuges.
- 1e** Many candidates appeared to enjoy answering this question and used a variety of ideas from inside and outside Buddhism in order to answer it. There was a particularly high number of Level 4 responses to this question with a critical analysis of various viewpoints and a detailed and justified personal response. Many responses demonstrated a real understanding of the Buddhist idea of detachment, recognising that it is more to do with a state of mind than with what you own.

- 2a** Almost all candidates answered this question correctly
- 2b** Almost all candidates were able to answer this question correctly. Those responses which did not, tended to give two examples of pilgrimage sites instead.
- 2c** Almost all candidates answered this question correctly; those who did not tended to talk about the 'birth, life and death' of the Buddha, gaining 2 marks.
- 2d** The majority of candidates did well with this question. Where responses failed to move beyond Level 2 it was usually because candidates described what happened at Bodh Gaya rather than moving beyond this, to explain its importance for Buddhists as required by the question. This question achieved a good level of differentiation.
- 2e** Most responses achieved at least Level 3 in answer to this question and there were some outstanding responses. Where responses failed to move beyond Level 3, it was often because candidates had listed arguments agreeing and disagreeing with the statement, without entering into a real discussion, and/or because their personal response was limited and did not successfully justify what had been said.
- 3a** Almost all candidates answered this question correctly.
- 3b** Most candidates answered correctly. Where responses failed to gain both marks it was usually because candidates chose examples from two different schools of Buddhism.
- 3c** This was generally answered well, however, some responses offered the same thing differently worded, two or three times.
- 3d** Some very good responses were seen. Many candidates, however, were clearly not sure what an 'arhat' was and gave very vague and generalised responses about members of the monastic sangha in Theravada Buddhism.
- 3e** There was evidence in the responses which showed a high level of evaluation of the variety of divisions within Buddhism and offered defined and detailed responses adding specialist terminology and good arguments.

B570: Buddhism 2 (Worship, Community and Family, Sacred Writings)

General Comments

The paper provided good differentiation between the candidates and produced a full range of marks. There were very few rubric errors where candidates attempted all three questions. Section C was the least popular Section but those who attempted it generally performed very well.

Most candidates did not spend long on parts a), b) and c) therefore allowing themselves sufficient time for parts d) and e). However, there is still a minority of candidates writing far more than is required to gain the marks, particularly in part c) and so are limiting the time they have available for the rest of the paper.

The part d) questions allowed for demonstration of the skills of understanding, application and analysis and tested a spread of abilities, achieving a good level of differentiation. Where the top level is not achieved it is often because the responses are descriptive and fail to acknowledge the command word 'explain' in the question. This means that candidates have not demonstrated the skills of understanding and analysis.

Answering part e) questions well requires the candidates to identify the issue and enter into a discussion with and between the views expressed, ensuring there are justified arguments presented for the opinions expressed. Where little personal view was expressed, with little supported evidence for the view, the response rarely went into Level 4. The highest level responses are performing well above the level expected at GCSE. There were very few 'weak' scripts.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** Most candidates answered this question correctly.
- 1b** Many candidates listed artefacts used in puja rather than symbols; however, those who went on to explain the symbolism behind these artefacts gained the marks.
- 1c** Most candidates experienced no difficulty in gaining the three marks available.
- 1d** Many candidates focused on the importance of puja 'in the home' and so focused on convenience and the lack of need to go to a place of worship. This was fine as far as it went, but often led to a failure to discuss the importance of puja itself. Where responses failed to achieve Level 3, this was usually the reason.
- 1e** Responses were generally better informed about the nature and value of meditation than of puja, leading to some unbalanced answers. There were, however, some truly outstanding responses to this question showing a very high level of knowledge, understanding and evaluation.
- 2a** Most candidates answered this question correctly. However, some seemed unsure on this area of the specification.
- 2b** Almost all candidates were able to answer this question correctly.

- 2c** Almost all candidates were able to answer this question correctly. Where responses did not gain all three marks it was usually because candidates did not clearly distinguish three separate reasons but paraphrased the same one more than once.
- 2d** Many candidates ignored 'the use of' and focused on attitudes to wealth and money, mostly negatively. A few understood that detachment from money does not necessarily mean not having or using it. Some explained positive uses of money and there were some excellent responses.
- 2e** Most candidates achieved at least Level 3 in this question and there were some outstanding responses. Where responses failed to move beyond Level 3 it was often because candidates had listed arguments agreeing and disagreeing with the statement without entering into a real discussion and/or because their personal response was very limited and did not successfully justify what they had said. Some saw the Buddhist teachings on employment as negative 'fixed' rules. The strongest responses saw employment as an opportunity to practise and develop Buddhist qualities. Some responses were unable to discuss specific teachings and gave very vague and generalised responses about Buddhists and work.
- 3a** Almost all candidates answered this question correctly.
- 3b** Almost all candidates answered this question correctly.
- 3c** Almost all candidates answered this question correctly.
- 3d** There were some excellent answers. Many responses discussed eloquently the differences between Theravada and Mahayana and the historical origins of this separation, but did not go on to gain the highest marks because they failed to link this to the scriptures.
- 3e** There were some outstanding answers showing a real ability to evaluate and to form informed judgements. Where these responses did not gain the higher levels, it was often because candidates gave generalised answers which were not closely linked to Buddhist scriptures or teaching.

B571: Christianity 1 (Beliefs, Special Days, Divisions and Interpretations)

General Comments

Overall, the response to this paper was pleasing. Candidates were well prepared for the questions. There appears to have been a variety of resources used by schools and it is gratifying to see the responses showing subject knowledge in remarkable depth and breadth.

Questions 1 and 2 were the most popular with a minority attempting Question 3. However, for those who answered Question 3, the standard was comparable to Questions 1 and 2.

Questions which tested knowledge were generally answered well, as were part d) questions. However, few responses achieved the higher levels in part e) questions, mainly because few candidates offered a fully developed personal response.

There were very few rubric errors with only a very small number of candidates answering all three questions. This undoubtedly led to a lower mark for those candidates who did answer all three as they had insufficient time to answer each question fully.

The vast majority of candidates managed their time well and there was little evidence of anyone not finishing the paper.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly.
- 1b** Generally answered correctly, although there were some who confused the Ten Commandments with the two great commandments and consequently did not achieve any marks.
- 1c** The majority of candidates answered this question well. Many could show they knew what the Holy Spirit is, the events of Pentecost and the Christian beliefs about the Holy Spirit in the world today. Higher scoring responses also linked the Holy Spirit to Confirmation, the Annunciation and the baptism of Jesus. Some discussed the gifts of the spirit.
- 1d** A large number of responses achieved a satisfactory or good level, referring to the teachings of Jesus about forgiveness, Jesus' personal demonstration of forgiveness and the importance of forgiveness in the life of a Christian. Lower scoring responses simply described what Christians believe about forgiveness.
- 1e** Many candidates were able to explore the relationship between forgiving and being forgiven in their answers. Though some answers did not refer to Christianity extensively, most were able to understand the fundamental importance to Christians of forgiveness both for the person who is forgiving another, and for the person who is being forgiven. Many used examples from the teaching and the life of Jesus to support their answers and many referred to the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles Creed. There was the general understanding that a person cannot hope to be forgiven if they do not, in turn, forgive others.

- 2a** There proved to be a great number of creditable answers for this question and many responses showed that they understood the meaning of the term. However, a significant number offered a purely secular answer which did not convey the true meaning of the word in Christian terms.
- 2b** This question, along with 2d) illustrated a continuing confusion over Lent, Holy Week and Easter. A disappointingly low number answered both parts of this question correctly. A number of responses to part ii were incorrect. A small number of candidates confused Lent with Advent.
- 2c** The majority of candidates failed to achieve full marks here because they did not address the question asked. For those responses which did address the question, most understood the importance of Ash Wednesday both as a time of repentance and as a start of the Lenten period.
- 2d** Candidates who achieved full marks for this question did so because they could discuss fully the importance of Lent for Christians. This was in contrast to a significant number of weak or satisfactory answers which simply listed the days of Holy Week and what Jesus did on each. Too many candidates spent a lot of time discussing Easter Sunday and Jesus' resurrection in this question; this could not be credited as Easter Sunday is not in Holy Week.
- 2e** The majority of candidates contented themselves with comparing Easter to other Christian festivals – in particular Christmas – and offered little other discussion or evaluation. Good responses considered the events of Easter Sunday and their theological significance and whether these events were key to the Christian faith. Disappointingly, many of the personal responses were simply a summary of answers already given and did not offer any further development.
- 3a** The majority of candidates answered this question correctly.
- 3b** Most candidates gave two good reasons.
- 3c** Generally a well answered question. Most candidates concentrated on Taize, fewer on Iona.
- 3d** This question was answered well by the majority. Whilst some concentrated on aspects of worship, other responses referred to differences in belief and lifestyle and some to the role, expectations and gender of the clergy.
- 3e** The majority of candidates evaluated the statement well. There were some very good discussions including the current differences between denominations and whether or not these could ever be resolved sufficiently well to make ecumenism truly possible. As with previous part e) questions, some candidates failed to achieve higher levels as they did not offer a personal response or only a very brief one.

B572: Christianity 2 (Worship, Community and Family, Sacred Writings)

General Comments

This was a popular paper and the questions differentiated well.

The majority of candidates were well prepared for the questions which were answered with great depth and breadth.

Questions 1 and 2 were the most popular with few candidates attempting Question 3.

Questions which tested knowledge were generally answered well, as were part d) questions.

There were very few rubric errors with only a very small number of candidates answering all three questions. This undoubtedly led to a lower mark for those candidates who did answer all three as they had insufficient time to answer each question fully.

The vast majority of candidates managed their time well and there was little evidence of anyone not finishing the paper.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly.
- 1b** This question was well answered.
- 1c** Although many candidates answered this question well and understood how some Christians use the Stations of the Cross, a disappointing number had no idea what they were and wrote a simple answer about how the cross was used by Christians. Those who did answer the question well were able to give examples of the stations and talk about the associated prayers and how they are performed. Some even mentioned the original Stations of the Cross in Jerusalem.
- 1d** A large number of candidates answered this question to a satisfactory or good level. Very, very few did not know what the Eucharist is. Answers which achieved the higher marks were able to discuss the concepts of Christ's sacrifice and atonement.
- 1e** Pleasingly, the majority of responses explored the relationship between the Church and the community, considering what the Church can do for all people, not just practising Christians. Some candidates also considered the meaning of 'heart of the community', in both the physical and spiritual sense. A significant number of responses concentrated on the idea that it would be an affront to members of other faiths and atheists if the Church was the heart of the community.
- 2a** Generally answered well with most candidates concentrating on the eulogy, and burial/cremation.
- 2b** The majority achieved both marks available.
- 2c** This question was not particularly well answered. Most candidates did say that the funeral is an opportunity to say goodbye to the deceased or that it is a way of offering support to the mourners.

- 2d** Whilst many candidates were content to discuss only the issue of allowing the child to decide for itself when it is old enough if it wants to be a Christian, those candidates who achieved the higher levels were able to discuss Biblical precedent and/or consider the concept of original sin and how it might relate to infant baptism.
- 2e** Candidates who achieved the higher levels were those who were able to talk about why Christians would or should proclaim what they believe and the possible repercussions for those who lived in a society which was not favourable to Christianity. Also, many of the good answers looked at how Christians can declare what they believe, not only orally, but also through actions and deeds, for example, confirmation or giving to charity.
- 3a** The vast majority of candidates who answered this question did so correctly; favoured answers were Genesis and Psalms.
- 3b** Some candidates misread the question and gave books of the New Testament.
- 3c** This question was less well answered. Most responses stated that it was important because it contained the life and teachings of Jesus but then failed to move on from there. There was evidence of a few misconceptions about the New Testament; for example, it was a newer version of the Old Testament or, that it was written so much later than the Old Testament that it was more up to date and relevant to Christians today.
- 3d** The majority of responses offered were satisfactory or weak, showing a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Apocrypha. Most candidates knew the word meant 'hidden' but beyond that, the majority could not really explain why it is found only in some Bibles.
- 3e** This was well answered. Most responses were able to look at reasons why the Bible is still relevant and relate some Biblical teachings to modern life.

B573: Christianity (Roman Catholic) 1 (Beliefs, Special Days, Divisions and Interpretations)

General Comments

Many candidates achieved well and were able to show good knowledge and understanding of Roman Catholic key words, teaching and practice. Candidates had been well prepared for the examination and there were very few rubric errors.

Most candidates answered Questions 1 and 2 and did so well.

It is worth noting that whilst candidates should give one or two ideas for their one or two marks when answering part a) and b) questions, they can gain three marks in part c) questions for the development of one idea, as well as making three separate points. Some candidates made good use of this whilst others wrote far more than was needed.

On the whole, the part d) questions were well answered. However, there was a tendency for some candidates to tell a descriptive story rather than addressing the question as set. This is most obvious where the question asks 'explain why'. Most candidates described or explained, but too few actually 'explained why'.

The vast majority of candidates used a clear structure to their essays in part e) giving a view for and against together with their own view. However, the Levels of Response Descriptors only ask for a 'range of views' and some candidates have taken this to mean a range of different views which may all agree/disagree, but for different reasons. This is equally valid. The candidates who attracted higher marks made good use of evidence to support the views they were putting forward. In each of the 4 levels, candidates are judged on the extent to which they support their views. This support can come from a specific view, quotes or paraphrasing, technical terminology or reference to specific teachings.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** Most candidates had an accurate answer for this question.
- 1b** Almost all candidates were able to refer correctly to two Commandments. The most common were 'Thou shalt not kill/ steal/commit adultery'. Some candidates wrongly offered the Two Great Commandments.
- 1c** Sermon on the Mount was well known by many candidates, who confidently offered a range of ideas including up to three Beatitudes, teaching on divorce, revenge and prayer. Some weaker candidates were unable to give three examples and some gave examples from the 10 Commandments. Some of which are repeated by Jesus (and then developed) and these responses gained credit.
- 1d** 'The Golden Rule' was explored by many candidates. Generally there was a good range of other relevant teachings mentioned too. Some good candidates talked about praying in private and not showing when you were fasting and applied that to a person's conduct in society today.
Weaker answers were vaguely argued without/with little specific reference to the Sermon. On occasion, candidates referred to 'an eye for an eye' rather than Jesus' actual teaching on revenge.

- 1e** Many candidates agreed. They had many reasons, such as the new issues which were unknown in Jesus' time. Others used examples of particular teaching to argue that following them is practical and would improve society. Many gave a secular or atheist argument as the other point of view. Candidates' own views were on the whole well supported.
- 2a** Many candidates knew the answer. However, some wrongly answered 40 days.
- 2b** Most candidates knew that the Holy Spirit had shown as tongues/flames of fire above the apostles' heads. Fewer mentioned the second way as wind. Incorrectly, many had 'dove' as one of their answers.
- 2c** Most candidates knew the story of Pentecost and were able to amplify what happened to the apostles sufficiently for full marks. Some candidates showed a very good understanding of the story and could repeat it verbatim.
- 2d** The responses which attracted the highest marks for this question were the ones which explained why, rather than just explaining. Many responses went into the importance of going to church without linking it to Feast days. These responses could not achieve a higher level.
- 2e** Many responses used creedal statements to good effect. Most candidates argued that the Sign of the Cross/Glory Be showed his continued importance. Others thought that one hears little about the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church today and more about God and Jesus. Some responses showed excellent subject knowledge using terms such as paraclete to demonstrate the importance of the Holy Spirit. Limited mention was made of Biblical references to the Holy Spirit i.e. Matthew 12:32. Several candidates supported this view with the Quaker view of the Holy Spirit which showed a wider understanding of Christianity thus giving an interesting and unexpected response.
- 3a** Most candidates knew that this is the Pope, although some said Jesus. Some answered (Pope) Benedict XVI.
- 3b** Taize, Iona and Corrymeela were known. Some weaker answers were not ecumenical communities e.g. different denominations. On occasion, candidates offered a local initiative.
- 3c** There was basic knowledge of Taize, Iona and Corrymeela. It was mostly accurate. Better candidates focused on their ecumenical work. Some mentioned the historical background to Taize to show the work it has done, which gained credit. Some mentioned local examples which also gained credit.
- 3d** Candidates took 'why' as either a historical account or the reasons for the split. Either approach was acceptable. There were some excellent answers. On the historical side, good knowledge and understanding of the influence of Luther, Calvin, and Henry VIII. On the religious side, good knowledge and understanding of the differences such as 'sola scriptura', consubstantiation rather than transubstantiation, objection to malpractices/selling indulgences. Some weaker responses focused solely on the story of Henry VIII which, although relevant, often did not give enough attention to the 'why' part of the question.
- 3e** Many candidates were unaware of advances caused by the ecumenical communities. However almost all agreed with the statement and saw the difficulties of uniting disparate groups. Some talked about the progress made at Corrymeela and some even mentioned that the Church of England and Reformed Churches had recently become reconciled but the Roman Catholic Church had not. Other responses focused on the way communities

such as Iona had brought people together from different denominations to fight a specific cause/address a local issue.

B574: Christianity (Roman Catholic) 2 (Worship, Community and Family, Sacred Writings)

General Comments

Candidates were well prepared for the examination with the vast majority answering two questions fully and very few rubric errors. Candidates, on the whole, displayed good subject knowledge and could articulate their ideas well.

Many candidates responded well to the questions and were able to show good knowledge and understanding of Roman Catholic key words, teaching and practice, as well as displaying a good understanding of the scriptural basis of these beliefs, teachings and practices.

Most candidates answered Questions 1 and 3.

It is worth noting that whilst candidates should give one or two ideas for their one or two marks when answering part a) and b) questions, they can gain three marks in part c) for the development of one idea, as well as making three separate points. Some candidates made good use of this, whilst others wrote far more than was needed.

On the whole, the part d) questions were well answered. However, there was a tendency for some candidates to tell a descriptive story rather than addressing the question as set. This is most obvious where the question asks candidates to 'explain why'. Most described or explained but too few actually 'explained why'. Candidates are missing out on 2-3 marks because of this.

The vast majority of candidates used a clear structure to their essays in part e) giving a view for and against together with their own view. However, the Levels of Response Descriptors only ask for a 'range of views' and some candidates have taken this to mean a range of different views which may all agree/disagree but for different reasons. This is equally valid. The responses which attracted higher marks made good use of evidence to support the views they were putting forward. In each of the 4 levels candidates are judged on the extent to which they support their views. This support can come from a specific view, quotes or paraphrasing, technical terminology or reference to specific teachings.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** Many candidates knew what a tabernacle was but struggled to define it simply. Some answers missed the key idea that the tabernacle contained the blessed host and some said it was a cupboard where bread and wine is stored but this could be a cupboard in the Sacristy. Weaker candidates clearly had no idea what a tabernacle was.
- 1b** Many candidates gave two examples, usually water or candle. On occasions, candidates gave an answer which is not a symbol e.g. font or Godparents. Better candidates gave technical terms such as oil of catechumens. It was very rare for candidates to think of giving a symbolic action.
- 1c** Many candidates answered Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be which are not 'kinds' of prayer and only gained 1 mark in total. Others offered a range of types of prayer including petitionary, meditation, thanksgiving (Grace before or after meals). Some mentioned singing and body prayer which also gained credit.
- 1d** There was general discussion of support of others, being proud enough to celebrate mass publically or being a witness to others with varying success. Others quoted Jesus,

'Where two or three are gathered...' and 'Keep holy the Sabbath day' as reasons for the importance of public worship. Some candidates failed to explain 'why' and just explained what public worship was and exemplified this.

- 1e** Many candidates argued for and against. Occasionally, candidates thought of others who can lead worship such as Deacons. The main conclusion was that priests are needed for worship as they are trained and have knowledge and understanding to impart. In particular, they are needed to consecrate the bread and wine. A few considered times and places when priests have not been able to lead worship. Some introduced a counter argument using the Sermon on the Mount's instruction to pray in private as a reason why priests are not needed.
- 2a** Most candidates correctly named one of the Initiation Rites.
- 2b** This question referred to the specific process known as the 'Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults' or RCIA. Many responses were able to use correct technical terms such as rite of election. Others thought about the service at the Easter Vigil: baptism, confirmation or first Holy Communion. Some mentioned confession.
- 2c** The development of this answer was often weak. Many candidates showed little understanding of the role of the sponsor and their answer was repetitive. Some candidates guessed based on the idea of a sponsor.
- 2d** A range of Christian biblical teaching was applied to good effect. Very few candidates made reference to Catholic Social teaching. Lots of candidates used the parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31) as a basis for their response. Weaker answers rarely discussed more than 'Treat others as you would like to be treated.'
- 2e** Some responses seemed confused and discussed the importance of learning charity through being kind in the home leading to being charitable outside the home, and these attitudes are instilled by parents. This achieved some marks. Better responses discussed the nature of poverty. Candidates used Cafod and missionaries as a practical example. Some countered with the view that charity in the home is the most important or that charity should be given to others first and the home last.
- 3a** Most candidates understood this term. On occasion, the response was too vague to credit, especially if candidates tried to give examples of Books of the New Testament and wrongly included Genesis etc. Some weaker answers confused Old and New Testament.
- 3b** Most candidates were able to offer two relevant ideas. Some did not seem to see the word 'private' and gave responses which were more appropriate for public worship.
- 3c** Most candidates were able to give three types of literature from the Old Testament. Others only offered one or two correct examples. Some gave examples from the New Testament or Books of the Old Testament.
- 3d** Most knew why the Old Testament is important, citing Genesis accounts of Creation, the Decalogue or prophecies of Jesus. Some looked at its practical use. Provided that they developed their ideas, candidates achieved higher levels. Some considered its use in liturgy to good effect. On occasion, candidates wrongly referred to Jesus' teachings in the Old Testament. Some responses referred to the fact that Jesus was aware of these scriptures which had influenced him. Some responses included the role Psalms play in the liturgy and highlighted the importance of this.
- 3e** Candidates who tackled this question had limited specific examples of ways the Bible can be seen to contradict itself. Many gave confused examples which did not help them

to answer the question. Others used examples such as war and divorce or the nature of God. Some better responses showed how teachings were developed over time and also made good use of the Sermon on the Mount.

B575: Hinduism 1 (Beliefs, Special Days, Divisions and Interpretations)

General Comments

The paper provided good differentiation between the candidates and produced a full range of marks. There were very few rubric errors where candidates attempted all three questions. Section C was the least popular topic, but those candidates who attempted it generally performed very well.

Most candidates did not spend long on parts a), b) and c) therefore allowing themselves sufficient time for parts d) and e). There are still some candidates, however, who are writing far more than is required to gain the marks, particularly in part c) and so are limiting the time they have available for the rest of the paper.

The part d) questions allowed the candidates to demonstrate their skills of understanding, application and analysis and tested a spread of abilities, achieving a good level of differentiation. Where candidates did not achieve the top level it was often because their responses were descriptive and failed to acknowledge the command word 'explain' in the question. This means that they had not demonstrated the skills of understanding and analysis.

Answering part e) well requires the candidates to identify the issue and enter into a discussion with and between the views expressed, ensuring there are justified arguments presented for the opinions expressed. Where candidates wrote very little for their personal views, with little supported evidence for their view, their response rarely attained Level 4. It is encouraging to see some truly outstanding responses which demonstrate a large amount of religious knowledge as well as fully justified personal responses and genuine evaluation, weighing up the strengths and weaknesses of each point they have considered.

The depth of knowledge about Hinduism displayed by some candidates was extremely impressive, performing well above the level expected at GCSE.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** The majority of candidates was able to answer this question correctly. In order to receive the mark, responses had to demonstrate an understanding that an avatar is an incarnated, earthly being.
- 1b** The vast majority answered this correctly. Those who did not, tended to name Rama and Sita, thus gaining one mark. A small minority simply named two deities of the Trimurti.
- 1c** Most candidates gained all three marks. The majority talked about Rama. Where responses failed to gain all three marks it was usually because the candidates talked about Rama and Krishna rather than choosing just one as the question required them to do.
- 1d** This question achieved a good level of differentiation. The highest level responses covered a variety of material including following the example of an avatar, attending certain festivals or visiting certain pilgrimage sites, having confidence in Vishnu and choosing an Ishvara. Weaker responses tended to be vague and could have been referring to any deity, not necessarily an avatar.

- 1e** Higher level responses brought in a range of issues from within Hinduism such as varnashramadharma, the examples of the deities, and different definitions of 'perfect'. Surprisingly few candidates related the issue to the idea of avatars and whether or not they had led perfect lives and, if so, whether this was a realistic role model. There were, however, some outstanding responses and the majority of candidates achieved at least a Level 3.
- 2a** Most candidates were able to answer this question correctly.
- 2b** Almost all candidates were able to answer this question correctly.
- 2c** Almost all candidates were able to answer this question correctly. Where responses did not gain all three marks it was usually because candidates did not clearly distinguish three actions. For example, 'washing' and 'bathing' in the river gained only one mark.
- 2d** The majority of candidates did well with this question. Responses took a variety of approaches such as the origins of the river, the deities associated with it, the holy sites along its banks and the benefits that could be gained there, all of which were appropriate. Lower level responses tended to be descriptive, listing things that happened or could be done at the river without explaining the importance of these things to Hindus as the question required.
- 2e** Most candidates achieved at least Level 3 in this question and there were some outstanding responses. Where responses failed to move beyond Level 3 it was often because candidates listed arguments agreeing and disagreeing with the statement without entering into a real discussion, and/or because the personal response was very limited and did not successfully justify what had been said.
- 3a** Almost all candidates answered this question correctly.
- 3b** Almost all candidates answered this question correctly.
- 3c** A few candidates were unable to answer this question. Almost all other candidates gained all three marks.
- 3d** Most candidates who attempted this question performed well. The majority of responses attained Level 3.
- 3e** There were some outstanding responses to this question, with the candidates highlighting the historical and cultural differences within Hinduism as well as the major divisions. Most candidates were also able to suggest 'core' elements which united the religion.

B576: Hinduism 2 (Worship, Community and Family, Sacred Writings)

General Comments

The paper provided good differentiation between the candidates and produced a full range of marks. There were very few rubric errors where candidates attempted all three questions. Section C was the least popular section but those candidates who attempted it generally performed well.

Most candidates did not spend long on parts a), b) and c) therefore allowing themselves sufficient time for parts d) and e). There are still a minority of candidates, however, writing far more than is required to gain the marks, particularly in part c) and so are limiting the time they have available for the rest of the paper.

The part d) questions allowed the candidates to demonstrate their skills of understanding, application and analysis and tested a spread of abilities, achieving a good level of differentiation. Where candidates did not achieve the top level it was often because their responses were descriptive and failed to acknowledge the command word 'explain' in the question. This means that candidates had not demonstrated the skills of understanding and analysis.

Answering part e) questions well requires the candidates to identify the issue and enter into a discussion with and between the views expressed, ensuring there are justified arguments presented for the opinions expressed. Where candidates wrote very little for their personal views, with little supported evidence for their view, their response rarely attained Level 4. It is encouraging to see a greater proportion of Level 4 responses than in previous years with some truly outstanding responses which demonstrate a large amount of religious knowledge as well as fully justified personal responses and genuine evaluation, weighing up the strengths and weaknesses of each point they have considered.

The depth of knowledge about Hinduism displayed by some candidates was extremely impressive, performing well above the level expected at GCSE.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** The majority of candidates was able to answer this question correctly. Most offered 'mandir' although the small minority who stated 'the home' as a Hindu place of worship also gained the mark.
- 1b** The vast majority answered this correctly.
- 1c** Most candidates gained all three marks.
- 1d** This question achieved a good level of differentiation. The best answers covered a variety of material including bringing the community together, to participate in elaborate puja led by a priest, to read/recite/discuss scriptures and to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding. Weaker responses tended to be descriptive, describing what happened in a place of worship rather than explaining its importance to Hindus as the question required.
- 1e** This question was well answered. Where responses failed to move beyond Level 3 it was often because candidates had listed arguments agreeing and disagreeing with the

statement without entering into a real discussion, and/or because the personal response was very limited and did not successfully justify what had been said.

- 2a** Almost all candidates were able to answer this question correctly.
- 2b** Almost all candidates were able to answer this question correctly.
- 2c** Almost all candidates were able to answer this question correctly. Where a response did not gain all three marks it was usually because candidates did not clearly distinguish three actions but reworded a single response two or three times.
- 2d** Most candidates reached at least Level 2 in this question. Most were able to describe beliefs about karma and life after death. Where responses failed to move on to Level 3 it was usually because candidates failed to explain the links between the two. There were some excellent answers to this question.
- 2e** Where responses failed to move beyond Level 3 it was often because candidates had listed arguments agreeing and disagreeing with the statement without entering into a real discussion, and/or because the personal response was very limited and did not successfully justify what they had said. Some answers were one sided, explaining the importance of family life but unable to offer robust arguments against, instead, merely suggesting that some people have bad relationships with their family.
- 3a** Almost all candidates answered this question correctly with very few confusing sruti with smrti.
- 3b** Almost all candidates answered this question correctly.
- 3c** Most candidates who attempted this question gained all three available marks with the best responses referring directly to a particular smrti scripture or story. A few did confuse smrti with sruti on this question.
- 3d** This question was well answered with most candidates achieving at Level 3. Most wrote about attitudes towards dharma and/or warfare contained in the Gita and how these might affect the way a Hindu lives.
- 3e** There were some outstanding responses to this question, with candidates showing a detailed knowledge of the different scriptures and discussing the importance of each. Many commented that the sruti texts were important as they came directly from the divine and contained the 'core' beliefs in Brahman and samsara, but were not widely accessible which was why there was a need for other texts as well. Some compared Hinduism to religions with a single text, but this tended not to be done well as little justification was offered as to why this was better.

B577: Islam 1 (Beliefs, Special Days, Divisions and Interpretations)

General Comments

There were very few rubric errors on the paper this year.

Many candidates did not clearly label the additional sheets with the numbers for the questions they were continuing. Also, very few gave any indication that they were continuing their answers on an additional sheet. The lines allocated are an indication as to how much writing is needed for an appropriate response particularly in parts a) to d). However, a number of candidates still wrote far more than was needed to gain full marks.

All candidates were able to respond to the part e) , though with varying degrees of success. Some were answered well with insight and understanding of the relevant issues. However, often the responses were rather confused and sometimes formulaic. Most candidates answered parts a) to c) fairly accurately across all questions though many candidates seemed to misunderstand/misread 1d), 1e) and 3e), which tended to lead to answers which were often vague and general rather than specific and focused.

Some candidates have been clearly taught the correct and appropriate terminology for this subject and used it well, but a number of candidates seem to be lacking in this knowledge.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 1b** This question was not answered particularly well, although a number of candidates were able to give both date and place.
- 1c** There was a very mixed response to this question. A few candidates answered with 'pilgrimage'. Many seemed to know the idea of migration. Some responses seemed to confuse it with 'hijab'
- 1d** On the whole this was not well answered as many candidates seemed to have misread it and spoke about Muhammad rather than the message.
- 1e** Many responses seemed to have ignored 'compassionate' or saw it as compassionate followers. Others gave good explanation of jihad but did not always relate it to the question.
- 2a** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 2b** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 2c** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 2d** Candidates answered this question well.
- 2e** A significant number of candidates was able to have a discussion based on the content of a(some) festival(s). However, a surprising number of candidates just discussed 'festivals' and not their purpose/significance to Islam and therefore their importance. This was the best answered of all the part e) questions.

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- 3a** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 3b** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 3c** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 3d** On the whole, candidates responded well and produced some good answers often linked to social/community pressures.
- 3e** Many candidates compared the two ways in which Sunnis and Shi'ahs followed the Five Pillars but were then not able to take the discussion any further.

B578: Islam 2 (Worship, Community and Family, Sacred Writings)

General Comments

A significant number of candidates attempted all 3 questions. This is not in the best interest of candidates as it means they spend significantly less time on each question which often leads to lower marks being achieved.

A number of candidates used continuation sheets but some are still not clearly labelling these correctly whilst a number of candidates gave little or no indication that they were continuing their answers on an additional sheet. The lines allocated in the answer booklet are an indication as to how much writing is expected for an appropriate response particularly in parts a) to d). However, a number of candidates still write far more than is needed to gain full marks.

Many candidates seemed to have problems with part d) questions, it would seem, from misreading the question. This tended to lead to answers which were sometimes vague and general rather than specific and focused.

All candidates were able to respond to part e), though with varying degrees of success. Some questions were answered well with insight and understanding of the relevant issues. However, many candidates were still using the old 'I agree/disagree' formula. Formulaic answers such as this rarely achieved the higher levels. It is not enough to simply develop two points of view.

Some candidates produced outstanding responses to the part e) questions, although many merely stated different viewpoints without giving arguments or reasons in support of them. Part e) questions require discussion and an analytical engagement with the question in order to access the higher levels. Candidates are also required to give, and justify, a personal viewpoint. Many candidates gave 'alternative views' from one, or sometimes two other religions.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 1b** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 1c** Most candidates gained 2/3 marks, although some did confuse Mihrab with Mithrab/Mimbar/Minaret.
- 1d** Candidates found this question challenging. Answers were often full of knowledge but lacking in understanding. Many answers were in the form of lists.
- 1e** Many responses failed to achieve Level 4, as candidates did not focus on the key words in the question: Regularly or True, so answers lacked the necessary depth.
- 2a** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 2b** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 2c** Almost all candidates who answered this question gained full marks.

- 2d** Many candidates failed to answer the question set and tended to describe the roles of members of the family or sometimes the concept of Ummah itself, rather than explain the importance of the family, and so answers lacked depth and understanding.
- 2e** There seemed to be a lack of engagement with the question. Answers generally did not address the issue of encouraging children to partake of religious practices from an early age and on a regular basis.
- 3a** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 3b** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 3c** Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- 3d** This was well answered by most candidates , though a number of responses did digress and talk about respect for the Qur'an and some candidates confused it with the ahadith.
- 3e** There were some interesting interpretations as to what constitutes a book. Some responses seemed to make a distinction between the Qur'an as message/words of Allah and a book.

B579: Judaism 1 (Beliefs, Special Days, Divisions and Interpretations)

General Comments

As in previous years, candidates have performed at a high level on this paper.

Overall there were relatively few rubric errors this year. The main concern is where some candidates attempt all questions. This obviously has significant implications for their overall mark, as their answers tend to be very brief due to the short period of time candidates can allocate to each part.

Examiners did not feel that any particular question was unpopular with candidates. Sometimes the first two are tackled more frequently due to their position on the paper but the question on the Holocaust seemed to attract significant interest. Examiners did not feel that candidates struggled with the use of timing.

The amount of space for each question on the answer paper is a useful guide. It seemed that candidates had been encouraged to spend appropriate amounts of time on each question in proportion to the number of marks available. In addition, far fewer candidates seem inclined to spend valuable time producing detailed but ill-advised plans prior to answering part e) questions.

Written communication was generally of a high standard, though some candidates' handwriting was hard to decipher. Pleasingly, candidates are only using bullet point responses to their evaluations when they are short of time. This is appropriate under those circumstances. One of our biggest concerns remains the way that candidates contrast Progressive and Orthodox beliefs and practices in evaluation questions and elsewhere. Where this tendency persists, candidates have a tendency to misrepresent various traditions. These responses often involved inaccurate accounts of what each group would think and candidates found it hard to differentiate.

On some questions, responses were a little generic. Increasingly, candidates are rejecting the 'I agree/I disagree/my opinion' format. Instead they are discussing different ideas and beliefs in turn. This is an advantageous strategy in most cases. It is important that personal opinion forms part of the evaluation and that clear reference is made to Judaism.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** Most candidates provided an accurate definition of what is meant by 'mitzvot'. Some thought it was a reference to Bar Mitzvah.
- 1b** A wide range of responses were credited here. Not all candidates made the connection between the question and their responses particularly transparent. Some provided beliefs about G-d instead.
- 1c** This question was very well answered. Most candidates were able to identify important beliefs.
- 1d** Not all candidates seemed fully prepared for this change of subject matter. Some correctly recognised that the beliefs themselves are ambiguous. Many went on to make good use of terms like 'Sheol', 'Gan Eden' and 'Gehenna'. Less articulate responses simply referred to heaven and hell, though it was not always clear to which religion candidates were referring. Some candidates simply referred to mourning traditions. Reference to reincarnation had to be clearly rooted in Judaism.

- 1e** This question seemed to provoke some impressive responses. Candidates had little difficulty identifying the reason for the quotation. The candidates were often able to explore why the fear of death was relevant to religious belief. They went on to present other motivations behind religion – belief in G-d, tradition, morality and so on. Some were inclined to lose sight of Judaism in their discussions and this limited the level which they could attain. Most seemed to think that religion existed for reasons other than a fear of death. Useful references were made to the security of tradition, community and the sense of being loved by G-d. Weaker responses just focused on being afraid of death.
- 2a** Most candidates responded accurately and sometimes provided extra information as well. Some assumed that Shabbat started on Saturday.
- 2b** Almost all candidates correctly identified the home and synagogue.
- 2c** Again, candidates were well able to identify prohibited actions. Generic references to 'work' were credited. Some candidates focused on the original melachot and others to more recent rulings. Some seemed to think that fasting was part of Shabbat.
- 2d** Candidates writing about fasting previously sometimes persisted with the wrong festival. Pesach was also sometimes discussed. This obviously impacted on the overall level achieved. Otherwise, this question was very well answered and explained the importance of many different facets of Shabbat. Although the question focused on the community, good references were made to its importance for the family. Weaker responses sometimes ignored the community and stronger responses referred to the commands to 'Remember' and 'Observe'. The role of the synagogue service was often discussed, especially the reading of the Torah. Candidates also alluded to the covenant.
- 2e** Answers were obviously clearly rooted in Jewish tradition and personal opinions abounded. The main concern was the tendency of many candidates to continue to misrepresent the different Jewish traditions, especially Reform and Liberal Judaism. The apparent misunderstandings do impact on the overall level. Sometimes answers were too formulaic. These often limited the scope for discussion. Otherwise, there was good use made of specific examples from within Jewish tradition such as exact timings and the nature of some of the prohibitions. Useful allusions were sometimes made to the coming of the Messiah.
- 3a** Although 'Shema' and 'Sheol' were often suggested, most candidates answered correctly.
- 3b** A wide range of responses was credited. Candidates often made use of their historical knowledge to good effect.
- 3c** Again, historical responses were credited and welcome. Some candidates put their responses in chronological order though this was not necessary. Some responses were a little repetitive but this did not necessarily disadvantage the candidates.
- 3d** Most candidates correctly identified the intention behind this question. There were some extremely impressive responses, occasionally more reminiscent of A Level, which accurately outlined the ideas of some key philosophers and theologians. Responses were a mixture of belief and more practical outcomes like the State of Israel and Yad Vashem. Weaker candidates were inclined to only examine the impact of the Holocaust at the time.
- 3e** Again, excellent use was made of the likes of Rubenstein, Fackenheim and others. Answers were well structured and made clear reference to Judaism in the process. Even the weaker candidates were able to identify the significance of the question. Personal

opinion varied, but sometimes it needs to be made rather more apparent. Many candidates seemed inclined to disagree with the quotation although some compared the Shoah to the Exodus to good effect. Others discussed the significance of 1948. A range of arguments was explored and developed.

B580: Judaism 2 (Worship, Community and Family, Sacred Writings)

General Comments

Examiners were impressed with the quality of work and the evident commitment demonstrated by the candidates.

Some candidates still have a tendency to answer every question. This rubric error obviously resulted in much lower marks for the candidates concerned. Very few candidates made no attempt to answer the questions on the paper and the full range of ability was apparent in the cohort.

Some candidates seemed to have issues with timing relative to the number of marks available but this was just a small minority.

Evaluation questions are obviously of paramount importance. Candidates may possibly achieve high marks by looking at both sides of a debate in isolation. Increasingly, however, better marks are achieved by discussing the different issues and arguments and not keeping the two sides separate in a 'for/against' structure. These responses are more effective as the arguments are more integrated and organic. Candidates need to present their own views clearly and to make explicit reference to Judaism. The latter was not always the case in the Bar Mitzvah question this year.

Generalised and stereotypical presentations of the different Jewish traditions are to be avoided at all costs.

The first two questions were rather more popular than the third. It may be that this was simply a result of the order on the paper, rather than a perception of the sacred texts topic area. There is some confusion between Judaism and other religions, especially Islam and Christianity.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** The vast majority of candidates identified the Shema.
- 1b** There were lots of credited responses. These included prayer, the use of ritual dress and Torah study. Observance of the mitzvot was credited and keeping kashrut was often cited.
- 1c** There was some confusion between 'artefact' and symbol. Many candidates, however, were able to identify different symbols, many of which were relevant to certain festivals. Some symbols mentioned were only relevant to the synagogue.
- 1d** This question was very well answered and allowed for a wide variety of responses. One approach was for candidates to consider the nature of G-d and their covenantal relationship with him. Others referred to the way that worshipping G-d has a unifying effect on the Jewish community. Weaker responses often contained a description of how G-d is worshiped without any relevant explanation.
- 1e** This question seemed to cause few problems for most candidates. Many personal reflections on worship within the Jewish community were set out to good effect. There were very few candidates unable to look at opposing viewpoints. Clear reference to Judaism was usually apparent. Candidates often understood worshipping with others to

be an allusion to the synagogue and they made good use of this, detailing the benefits of a recognised place of worship. The most able sometimes discussed the lasting influence of Temple worship.

- 2a** Although most candidates answered this question correctly, some were inclined to provide a brief description of what becoming Bar Mitzvah entails. Others seemed to confuse this with Brit Milah.
- 2b** This question was generally well answered. Candidates were able to identify activities which were relevant to the ceremony and to the boy's life within the Jewish community.
- 2c** This was again a well answered question. Certain aspects of the celebrations were credited, as were generic aspects of a synagogue service. Many responses made reference to the aspects of the synagogue service which particularly relate to the boy's experience.
- 2d** Candidates performed well on this question. They were able to identify important aspects of the preparation and service which would be especially significant for the boy. Many went on to discuss how these would impact on his later life. Useful reference was made to how he might take an active role in the synagogue and the issue of individual responsibility. Some very good responses considered the theme of covenant in this context, whilst others discussed the changed perceptions of the community towards the boy.
- 2e** Most candidates were able to make some relevant observations about the quotation, whilst many were able to achieve an appropriate standard. Personal opinion was nearly always very apparent. The main pitfall seemed to be the tendency of some responses to overlook reference to Judaism. Instead candidates embarked upon a discussion about various age limits and which were the most realistic. This obviously impacted on the level they were likely to reach. Good use was made of the distinction between male and female maturity and the way this is reflected in the Jewish tradition. The most able sometimes considered the different attitudes towards coming of age within some of the Progressive denominations.
- 3a** Most candidates responded appropriately to this question. Answers had to include a religious dimension.
- 3b** This question was well answered by the majority of candidates. A small number responded incorrectly with reference to parts of the Bible.
- 3c** Responses to this question were generally accurate. Examiners accepted Hebrew and English names. Many candidates provided both, although this was certainly not necessary for full marks to be achieved.
- 3d** This was a very well answered question. Candidates could explain many different reasons why the Torah is of value and they took different approaches to doing so. Some focused on the physical Sefer Torah, whilst others concentrated on the Pentateuch. The strongest responses often included both and went on to reflect on the importance of the Oral Torah as well. Good references were made to the covenant and the role of the Torah in bringing the Jews closer to G-d.
- 3e** Many candidates were able to produce very mature and well informed discussions. Although it has been identified as a weakness elsewhere, many were able to make good use of the different denominations in structuring their response. Many examples were provided and personal opinion was usually apparent. Although Judaism is not mentioned

in the quotation, it was rarely overlooked. Once again, the best candidates discussed how the Oral Torah helps Jews to apply the mitzvot to modern society.

B581: Sikhism 1 (Beliefs, Special Days, Divisions and Interpretations)

General Comments

Most candidates demonstrated that they were prepared for the examination and had a reasonable level of religious knowledge and understanding. They were able to recognise specialist terms and use them correctly in context in most cases. A number of weaker candidates was able to access the questions at their own level.

There were few rubric errors where candidates completed all three questions – this obviously impacts on the time allowed to answer a question and can have a significant impact on the marks scored. There was little evidence that candidates ran out of time

There are still issues to be addressed - a number of candidates seem not to read questions accurately and then provide answers to what they assume they are being asked. Specifically, there were descriptions rather than definitions for part a) questions and description rather than explanation in part d) questions.

Many candidates showed an ability to consider the issues raised in part e) questions but in general the skills required to show justification of a variety of points of view and their own responses was not fully mastered. Too often there is a 'for and against' structure to these responses with an acknowledgement of personal response rather than supported and justified responses.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** Many candidates did not give a 'meaning' but gave a description which did not answer the question.
- 1b** Generally well answered.
- 1c** Some candidates wrote about the present day, rather than the 'founding' as required. Many knew the detail of the event but several responses were rather vague.
- 1d** Weaker responses concentrated on a simple list without explaining how the items reflected belief. Responses which accessed the higher levels managed to show an understanding of the way in which wearing the 5Ks reflected belief as a whole, rather than individually.
- 1e** Many candidates concentrated on the issue of the wearing of the kirpan in public and dealt predominantly with safety concerns. The wider issues were addressed by some who considered the nature of religious freedom and the rights of individuals as well as the effect on society. A few cited specific topical examples.
- 2a** Generally very inaccurate. Candidates tended to over complicate and gave far longer answers than required whilst still not answering the question.
- 2b** The majority of candidates answered accurately.
- 2c** Most candidates gave correct examples. A few gave purely generic answers of features which can be found in any Gurdwara.

- 2d** Those candidates who knew what yatra is gave good considered responses, clearly understanding the views about pilgrimage in the Sikh faith. However, many candidates did not seem to know what it was.
- 2e** Many candidates began to attempt to consider different responses from the perspective of Sikh history and the present day. There were a few very simplistic responses.
- 3a** Some inaccurate responses. Few candidates had a clear knowledge of the meaning.
- 3b** Generalised examples were given rather than specific examples.
- 3c** Most candidates had a clear understanding and were able to give a full answer.
- 3d** Candidates who attempted this, responded in a thoughtful and considered way.
- 3e** There were some reasoned responses from many candidates but others gave simple lists for and against which somewhat limited the level they could achieve. Within the Levels of Response Descriptors it is not possible to achieve the higher levels without some form of justified argument and discussion – which is very difficult to achieve through the use of a list.

B582: Sikhism 2 (Worship, Community and Family, Sacred Writings)

General Comments

Most candidates demonstrated that they were prepared for the examination and had a reasonable level of religious knowledge and understanding. They were able to recognise specialist terms and use them correctly in context in most cases. A number of weaker candidates were able to access the questions at their own level.

There were few rubric errors where candidates completed all three questions – this obviously impacts on the time allowed to answer a question and can have a significant impact on the marks scored. There was little evidence that candidates ran out of time.

Many candidates showed an ability to consider the issues raised in part e) questions but in many instances have not yet mastered the skills required to show justification of a variety of points of view and their own responses. Too often there is a 'for and against' structure to these responses with an acknowledgement of personal response rather than a supported response.

Responses were spread equally across the three questions with Question 1 slightly more popular.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a** A number of candidates confused 'kirtan' with 'kirpan'
- 1b** Responses were generally good, with the exception of those who included people as 'items'.
- 1c** A good response from all candidates who attempted this question. Candidates clearly understand the respect with which the Guru Granth Sahib Ji is treated.
- 1d** Some candidates dealt with the ingredients and making of karah parshad, rather than explaining the importance. Others did explain the relationship of the making and giving of karah parshad to worship, equality and Waheguru.
- 1e** In better responses some attempt was made to engage with the issue, and show that there is more than one point of view about this issue. However, in other cases, a simple list 'on the one hand' and 'on the other' was given without any attempts to show justification or to support the statements. Links between langar and sewa were used effectively by some.
- 2a** Good responses.
- 2b** Most candidates had a clear idea of what reasons might be given. A few generic statements were made, showing that some did not understand the reasons.
- 2c** Some very vague responses containing little or no religious knowledge. Whilst other candidates attempted to give examples which linked to the practice of Sikhism (visiting the gurdwara, taking part in festivals, family role models etc).
- 2d** Simple responses listed different events in the ceremony without linking them in any way to the way in which they might help a believer to commit to their faith. Those candidates

who gave a full description of the ceremony without relating this to the question as set were unable to access higher levels. Other candidates chose different parts of the ceremony and explained clearly how they might do this.

- 2e** Some good general points were made to address the issues, but many candidates found it hard to move from the general to the specific. Candidates were free to use examples from any ceremonies but most restricted themselves to amrit sanchar.
- 3a** This question was commonly wrongly perceived as a question about the 'granthi'.
- 3b** A number of responses listed languages rather than types of writings.
- 3c** Good responses.
- 3d** Most responses were about general writings in the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, rather than the writings of the Gurus specifically. This limited access to higher levels.
- 3e** Responses were limited in the range of alternatives to sacred writings. Few candidates considered religious leaders, family, learning from festivals or modern electronic learning tools. Many had a simple 'yes they are/no they are not' response with limited development. Some candidates discussed all the ways the Sikh sacred texts are used in the religious life of followers, and some acknowledged that the Guru Granth Sahib Ji is considered to be a living source. Few responses considered any texts apart from the main text of any faith.

B583: Christian Scriptures 1 (Mark)

General Comments

Candidates responded well to the demands of the paper. Questions assessing knowledge of the prescribed sections of Mark's gospel provided an opportunity for candidates of all abilities to make a response and many candidates displayed accurate knowledge of the text.

With regard to the AO1, assessment objective in part d) questions, candidates generally demonstrated good/satisfactory understanding of the significance of the prescribed texts, both to their study of Mark's gospel and to Christians. There was evidence that some candidates did not spend the appropriate amount of time in answering part d) and attention should be drawn to the number of marks available for this question.

In part e) questions, candidates generally showed an awareness of the AO2 assessment objective. Many responses demonstrated a good or competent level of skill in evaluating the application of the gospel teachings in Christian life, and were also able to express and justify an appropriate personal response based on an evaluation of a range of views. The majority of candidates could have improved their performance in part e) questions with more attention to the AO2 Level of Response Descriptors for Bands 3 and 4, especially with regard to the development of a fully supported personal response.

Comments on individual questions:

- 1a** The majority of candidates answered this accurately.
- 1b** Many candidates scored full marks.
- 1c** The majority of answers were correct, either paraphrasing or quoting Peter's reaction.
- 1d** Candidates generally provided good answers on the significance of the Transfiguration both as an event in Mark's gospel story and as proof of Jesus' identity for Christians.
- 1e** There were some high level responses to this question where candidates showed good perception of the role of the disciples as a group and the failure of individuals when put to the test. The majority of candidates were able to base their personal response and evaluation on a number of events during Jesus' ministry. Some candidates could have improved their performance by reference to the text they had studied and by giving supporting evidence for their views.
- 2a** This question was mostly answered accurately.
- 2b** Candidates answered with accurate information from the gospel account.
- 2c** The majority of candidates gained the three marks available, with accurate quotation or paraphrase.
- 2d** The best responses identified the source of the Pharisees enmity towards Jesus' authority and ability to heal the paralysed man as well as the humiliation at their own lack of faith. Some candidates also explained the reason for their jealousy at Jesus' influence upon the crowd. The majority of responses were good or satisfactory. Some candidates could have improved their performance by spending more time on this 6 mark question.

- 2e** In answer to this question, evidence from Jesus' miracles was frequently used to illustrate points, with varying degrees of success. Good responses used evidence from the text effectively to support arguments for different views about the ease with which people might or might not understand the miracles. Many candidates argued that understanding was a matter of faith and explained their own response according to this premise. In some responses there was a marked confusion as to whether the question was referring to the understanding of the disciples/people at the time.
- 3a** Most candidates were able to give the correct name.
- 3b** The majority of responses gained two marks. Although in response to this question and also Questions 3 c) and 3 d) some candidates confused the account in Mark with the one in Luke where a sinful woman anoints Jesus.
- 3c** Most candidates accurately quoted or paraphrased the text to gain full marks. Some candidates knew only of the angry response the incident caused, but were able to gain appropriate credit.
- 3d** Good responses showed understanding of the meaning and symbolism of the woman's actions and the way they reinforced Jesus' role as Messiah (King) and his prediction of his death. They also showed that Jesus' comments were a rebuke to those present for their lack of faith. It was noted that there was a tendency in some answers to just describe Jesus' comments about the woman, which showed good knowledge of the text but did not meet the assessment objective.
- 3e** Some candidates produced very good answers to this question and offered a balanced view of the equal importance of all events in the gospel and their contribution to Jesus' mission and purpose. The best answers contained substantiated, differentiated views with a personal response. The majority of candidates achieved a competent standard but candidates could have improved their performance by considering all sides of the argument equally. Many assessed the importance of Jesus' death with very good arguments but failed to substantiate other views or their personal opinion.

B583: Christian Scriptures 2 (Luke)

General Comments

Candidates responded well to the demands of the paper. It offered opportunities for candidates of all abilities to make a response. In questions assessing knowledge of the prescribed sections of Luke's gospel, many candidates displayed the accurate knowledge of the text necessary to gain full marks.

With regard to the AO1 assessment objective in part d) questions, candidates generally demonstrated good understanding of the significance of the prescribed texts both in Luke's gospel and to Christians. Many candidates gave full and thoughtful answers showing awareness that part d) questions carry 25 per cent of the total marks.

In part e) questions, candidates generally showed an awareness of the AO2 assessment objective and were able to relate to the topics. Many responses demonstrated a good or competent level of skill in evaluating the application of the gospel teachings in Christian life and were able to express and justify an appropriate personal response based on an evaluation of a range of views. Some candidates, who otherwise produced competent answers, could have improved their performance with more attention to the AO2 Level of Response Descriptors for Bands 3 and 4, especially with regard to the development of a fully supported personal response.

Comments on individual questions:

- 1a** The majority of candidates answered this question accurately.
- 1b** Most candidates scored full marks. There were some variations from the text.
- 1c** Many candidates were able to quote accurately Luke 10:27. Others made a good attempt to paraphrase the two commandments.
- 1d** Generally, answers were competent. Candidates could have improved their performance with a sharper focus on the teaching about prejudice and the Samaritan. Many responses were either a general commentary on the story of the Good Samaritan or a discussion of the compassionate nature of the Samaritan's actions.
- 1e** There were some very good responses to this question where candidates showed good perception and evaluation of the significance to Christians of teachings about eternal life. Many candidates were able to refer to Jesus' teachings in Luke and use them well to substantiate different views. The best responses contained some thoughtfully considered personal views. Some candidates limited their answers by an often confused discussion about whether everlasting life on earth was possible or desirable.
- 2a** This question was mostly answered accurately.
- 2b** Most candidates accurately identified the rich people, putting in gifts.
- 2c** The majority of candidates gained three marks, with accurate quotation or paraphrase.
- 2d** The best responses correctly identified particular teachings and parables about the use of wealth (or, concentrated on the teaching in the Widow's Offering) and considered the importance of these to Christians. The range of information used in answers was varied

and some candidates who did not refer to teachings might have improved their performance by a better knowledge of the text.

- 2e** The performance on this question was generally very good. Evidence from the gospel was used effectively to substantiate different views and there was good understanding of the meaning behind teachings and parables and their relationship to life today. Some candidates provided competent, if over-simplified responses, by making a literal comparison between first century life and life today. These responses could have been improved with a more imaginative approach. Most candidates had no difficulty in including a personal response on the issue of wealth.
- 3a** Candidates were able to give the correct name.
- 3b** The majority of responses gained two marks
- 3c** Most candidates gained some credit for this answer. Some candidates confused the Angel of the Lord, who spoke to the shepherds with the company of angel host who appeared afterwards, which affected the accuracy of some answers.
- 3d** Good responses highlighted the significance and symbolism of Luke's nativity account and its importance for Christian understanding. The majority of answers were satisfactory but lacked this focus. Most candidates could have improved their response by better concentration on the importance of the birth of Jesus rather than on wider issues such as salvation and other events in his life.
- 3e** The answers to this question were mostly good or competent. Good answers showed awareness of Christian concern to maintain the true meaning of Christmas but also the importance of the outreach to others at this particular time of celebration. There were some interesting and enthusiastic responses. Some candidates assessed the importance of combining the true meaning of Christmas with universal celebration and offered very good arguments but failed to give or substantiate their personal opinion. A notable number of limited answers gave the reason for a non-Christian celebration to be that Jesus was a Jew, so Jews should celebrate Christmas, which showed a basic misunderstanding.

B585: Jewish Scriptures 1 (Tenakh)

General Comments

The majority of candidates responded well to the demands of the paper; the questions differentiated well between candidates and produced a full range of marks. In general, candidates were well prepared for the exam and there was some evidence of excellent classroom practice and commitment. Some candidates produced outstanding and detailed answers showing a high level of ability to deploy relevant information and analyse accurately the question demands. Despite this, it was apparent that some candidates were not aware of the skills required to answer each type of question accurately and for full marks; this was especially evident in the part e) questions where some candidates often seemed to present 'pre-learnt' structured answers rather than demonstrating a fully supported personal response and a range of points of view supported by discussion.

Some candidates were able to describe, explain and analyse the teachings found within the set passages very well and there was clear evidence of a high level of engagement with the questions. Many candidates were able to display accurate knowledge and understanding of the prescribed sections of the set texts and produced mostly accurate answers to parts a) to d). However, many candidates were unable to answer the analysis or part e) questions to this same high level due to a lack of analysis and supported justified argument.

All questions were attempted with Question 1 and Question 3 proving to be the most popular. The questions appear to have provided opportunities for candidates of a wide range of ability to demonstrate their skills. Answers to parts a) to c) were in the main answered very well. Answers to part d) were generally strong and candidates understanding of the meaning of the set texts was usually very well expressed. Some candidates would have performed better with a greater understanding of the assessment objective for part d) questions as they gave detailed descriptions rather than explanations. Some candidates responded well to the assessment objective for part e) and examined different views on the significance of an issue and included an appropriate personal view, which was either developed as a balanced evaluation of the views examined, or, expressed a personal conviction, supported by reasons. Some candidates could have improved very knowledgeable answers by the inclusion of these elements and gained a higher mark. The highest level responses to part e) and, in some cases part d), adopted a discursive style and were aware that structure and organisation of material is an important factor in helping to maintain a focus on the question.

Comments on individual questions:

- 1a** The majority of candidates answered this accurately.
- 1b** It was apparent that the text was well known by many candidates and many scored full marks on this question.
- 1c** This question resulted in mixed responses from the candidates. Some answers focused on the question demands 'the creation of the first man' and so scored highly. Some were able to describe in detail the set text and included in their answers reference to man being formed from the dust, G-d breathing into the first man's nostrils, G-d saying let us make man in our image etc. Some answers however, focused on general creation, the creation of woman, the events following the creation of man and woman and/or made no reference to the set text. These answers would have benefited from greater reference to the set text rather than general description of creation. Moreover, some candidates seemed unaware that for the full 3 marks the answer requires some amplification and development.

- 1d** Candidates achieved some good answers through explanation of what this text teaches about the nature of G-d. Many candidates were able to explain in detail the different facets of the nature of G-d and relate these well to the set text passage. A mere description of the nature of G-d, with no reference to how this nature is shown through the set text, did not achieve the assessment objective for this part of the question.
- 1e** Responses to this question were, in the main, good; however, some candidates (despite showing excellent knowledge) were unable to gain a high level of response due to a lack of analysis and argument.

Candidates were good at referring to the aspects of the creation account which could support the question - the argument that as man was created last, and in 'our image' that he was to rule over and have dominion over all creation. Many candidates were also able to argue against the statement and were able to discuss the notion that in fact only G-d can rule over creation. Some candidates were able to discuss the concept of stewardship and the better answers were those which concluded that man does not rule over creation but rather cares for it for G-d. The arguments which showed the most sophistication, were the ones which not only explored the biblical text but which also drew upon contemporary issues outlined within the specification such as the global environment, animal welfare, vegetarianism and kashrut; although these were not needed for a Level 4 response. Some answers were let down by merely listing elements of the creation and man's role with no further evidence or explanation; this is not sufficient for a high level response. To achieve marks of Level 3 and higher, candidates were expected to explore differing views; whilst some did argue well and with enthusiasm they did so only in favour of the statement. Others would have achieved a higher level if they had included and justified, an appropriate personal view.

- 2a** This proved to be a very accessible question and was answered correctly by nearly every candidate.
- 2b** Due to the openness of the question, marks were awarded for various types of mitzvot (positive, negative, those between G-d and man, man and man, religious, ethical etc). As a result this question was answered very well.
- 2c** Many candidates failed to gain the maximum three marks available as they discussed events other than those demanded by the question; many candidates cited the giving of the covenant rather than the Exodus flight from Egypt itself. Despite this, there were some excellent and accurate answers to this question showing a high level of understanding.
- 2d** Satisfactory responses concentrated on the events of the Exodus and explained why these are important. Better responses improved upon this with good explanations of why these events are important to Judaism today and showed knowledge and understanding of the wider specification content demands. There were some excellent answers to this question.
- 2e** A number of responses made an excellent or very good attempt to draw distinctions and comparisons between the two sides of the argument. Many candidates were able to talk about the importance of the revelation of Sinai for Judaism and analyse how this event laid the foundations of the Jewish way of life. Many candidates were able to discuss the importance of the giving of the Ten Commandments and other mitzvot and how these have shaped Judaism and provide a basis for an ethical lifestyle.

Some candidates might have improved their arguments by relating this argument about ethics to contemporary issues such as parent/child relations, marriage and divorce and business ethics and/or 21st century lifestyle. Some answers discussed different religious

communities; many answers would have been improved however, by discussing the different ways that secular, progressive, reform and orthodox traditions may view the argument presented.

- 3a** Most candidates were able to name Nineveh.
- 3b** Many were able to answer b) (ii) correctly. However, there were many errors with the location needed for b) (i).
- 3c** Responses varied here. Some candidates were able to accurately recall the set text whilst others appeared to not know the set text and some even recounted events from chapter 2. The exact events as detailed in the text were required to gain the full three marks.
- 3d** The highest level responses showed understanding of the meaning and symbolism of the text of Jonah and how this text can be understood to show how an individual can make a difference in both a positive and negative way. Many candidates were able to discuss how Jonah delivered a message he did not want to and in doing so saved the city from doom. Better answers were those which discussed the events of all four chapters and how these showed individuals (not just Jonah) making a difference.
- 3e** Performance varied here. The majority of candidates concentrated on the fact that Jonah was not free and pointed to what happened to him as he attempted to run away from G-d's bidding to justify their argument. Many answers would have been improved by greater awareness of the other side of the argument and/or a discussion of Divine providence. Judgements were frequently made without supporting reasons which limited the level of response the candidates could obtain. Again, answers could have been improved with clear indication of appropriate personal response which was fully supported and justified.

B586: Jewish Scriptures 1 (Talmud)

General Comments

There were some excellent and very good responses to the demands of the paper and the questions differentiated well between candidates, producing the full range of marks. In terms of knowledge and understanding of the prescribed texts, candidates engaged with the questions and produced mostly accurate answers, although some candidates were let down by poor examination skills in the part d) and e) questions.

Many candidates were able to describe and explain the teachings found within the set passages very well and there was clear evidence of a high level of engagement with the questions. Some candidates were able to display accurate knowledge and understanding of the prescribed sections of the set texts and engage in analysis; however, the skill of analysis requires further development for some candidates. In general, candidates were well prepared for the examination and there was some evidence of excellent classroom practice and commitment. Some candidates produced outstanding and detailed answers showing a high level of ability to deploy relevant information and analyse accurately the question demands.

Answers to part d) of questions were generally satisfactory to good and candidates' understanding of the meaning of the set texts was usually well expressed. Some candidates would have performed better with a greater understanding of the assessment objective for part d) questions, as they gave detailed descriptions rather than explanations. Some candidates responded well to the assessment objective for part e) and examined different views on the significance of an issue and included an appropriate personal view, which was either developed as a balanced evaluation of the views examined, or, expressed a personal conviction, supported by reasons. However, many candidates, despite writing considerable length of answer did not perform that well as a result of their answers being either only one-sided opinion or a statement of their own opinion with no supporting arguments. Some of these responses did not contain any detailed reference to Judaism or offer supported contrasting points of view.

All questions were attempted with Question 1 and Question 3 proving to be the most popular. The questions appear to have provided opportunities for candidates of a wide range of ability to demonstrate their skills. The best answers were those which showed organisation and structure and which fully answered the question set through focused application of knowledge or well argued analysis and evaluation.

Comments on individual questions:

- 1a** The majority of candidates answered this accurately.
- 1b** Many candidates scored full marks on this question.
- 1c** This question resulted in mixed responses by candidates. Some candidates were aware of the set text and so were able to answer 'heart, soul, might'. Other candidates, although presenting correct answers about how Jews should love G-d in general, did not gain marks as they answered the question generally rather than focusing on the set text.
- 1d** The better answers were those which linked the importance of Torah study to the Shema and so continued to discuss the set text. A mere description of the importance of Torah and Torah study with no reference to how this is shown through the set text did not achieve the assessment objective for this part of the question. In the main the answers for this question were satisfactory and some were good and candidates showed a high level of ability to deploy relevant learning.

- 1e** Responses to this question were, in the main, good; however, some candidates (despite showing excellent knowledge) were unable to gain a high level of response due to a lack of analysis and argument. Responses were good at referring to the aspects of the Shema which could both support and negate the question. However, some answers required more analysis and supported personal opinion. The candidates which showed the most sophistication, were the ones who not only explored the Shema but who also drew upon contemporary issues to support their argument. Some excellent answers were able to offer comparisons to other prayers such as the Amidah in outlining their argument. Some answers were let down by merely listing points of discussion supporting or rejecting the question with no further evidence or explanation; this is not sufficient for a high level response. To achieve marks of Level 3 and higher, candidates were expected to explore differing views; merely stating 'on the one hand...on the other hand...' does not constitute high level supported analysis.
- 2a** This question was, in the main, answered correctly.
- 2b** This question was answered very well by candidates and most obtained full marks.
- 2c** Answers to this question varied significantly. Many candidates answered from the position of Jerusalem today and stated that Jerusalem is important for Jews as it is the capital of Israel, or 'lots of Jews live there', or it has become a haven after the Holocaust etc. Nearly all candidates mentioned the Temple or Kotel however, and showed excellent knowledge and understanding of this as a reason for Jerusalem's importance.
- 2d** Satisfactory responses concentrated on descriptions of festivals within Judaism whilst the better responses provided good explanations of why these events are important to Judaism and showed knowledge and understanding of the spiritual, community and historical facets of festivals. Many candidates struggled with this question and could only mention what one or two of the festivals are, rather than their importance in Judaism.
- 2e** A number of candidates made an excellent or very good attempt to present supported argument drawing upon their learning from the set texts; some candidates were able to argue that blessing G-d, whether it be through Grace after Meals or the Amidah etc, is very important for Judaism. Many candidates were able to talk about the importance of following Mitzvot as well as prayer and many were able to relate this argument well to modern Judaism and contemporary issues. There was a significant number of very good answers to this question which demonstrated a high level of ability to deploy relevant information and analyse it through supported argument.
- 3a** Most candidates were able to name 'The Elders', however, there were quite a few wrong answers noted.
- 3b** Many candidates were able to answer b) (ii) correctly. However, there were many errors with the answer needed for b) (i).
- 3c** Responses varied here. Some candidates were able to accurately recall the set text (be deliberate in judgement, develop many disciples and make a fence around the Torah) whilst others appeared to not know the set text or were confused and answered 'justice, truth and peace'.
- 3d** This question was, in the main, answered very well even if candidates had answered part c) incorrectly. The highest level responses showed understanding of the meaning and significance of The Ethics of the Fathers and were able to explain the importance of this for Jews today. There were some very good responses to this question which showed a high level of ability amongst candidates to understand the question demands and construct a well written response.

- 3e** This was a well answered question with responses mostly considering that behaviour was more important than belief, whilst also being able to argue that belief has a profound effect on behaviour. Many candidates were able to discuss ethical monotheism and how Judaism demands moral and ethical behaviour. Better responses were those which focused on the difference between revealed and non-revealed texts and how these may impact differently, or not, upon behaviour and belief. In the main this was a well answered question, however, many candidates were still let down by not engaging fully with supported analysis and examples and so did not reach the highest level of response.

B587: Muslim Texts 1 (Qur'an)

General Comments

More students sat the examination this year than last, but the number was still small, so the following comments need to be read with this caveat in mind.

Many candidates gave general answers to a number of the questions and did not adhere to the particular points being asked for in the question so although correct in themselves, they did not answer the question set so gained little or no credit.

There were few rubric errors and candidates seemed to use the allocated time correctly. However, candidates do need to indicate clearly when a part question is to be continued on another page. Also, candidates need to read the set question carefully and not answer the question they had prepared for..

Many responses to part d) questions were very limited due to a lack of specific detail, with some candidates just presenting lists which meant they were unable to access the higher level of response marks.

In the part e) responses, most candidates were able to express a supported personal viewpoint but many failed to offer appropriate other supported views, as the question asked, therefore limiting access to higher level response marks.

Comments on individual questions:

- 1a** Almost all candidates answered correctly.
- 1b** Most answers were correct though a number of candidates seemed to forget the surah in question and gave more general and inaccurate answers.
- 1c** Better responses referenced the surah in the question so giving correct answers, however, weaker candidates wrote in more general terms.
- 1d** There were some reasonable answers to this question with better candidates explaining reasons why, rather than describing steadfastness. Good responses included the benefits in terms of, for example, strengthening faith, gaining inner peace, and staying on the straight path.
- 1e** The better candidates clearly defined what the Five Beliefs were and did not confuse them with the Five Pillars. Good discussions focused on the word 'equally' and whether the most important belief was in the Oneness of Allah followed by the other four, or whether all Five Beliefs were necessary in equal proportion as they are all intertwined. Weaker responses confused the Five Beliefs with the Five Pillars.
- 2a** Most, but not all candidates, gave a correct answer.
- 2b** Many candidates managed to gain full marks on this question but a number did not relate to the specific surah as they were asked to do.
- 2c** Many candidates managed to gain some marks for this part of the question.

- 2d** This question was fairly well answered with the better candidates going beyond the surah and expanding upon the qualities of Allah. Weaker responses tended to give a list of qualities rather than explaining them.
- 2e** Many candidates found this question quite challenging as they assumed belief in Allah is essential for Islam and therefore found it difficult to consider different opinions/viewpoints. The better candidates also tended to consider how modern living could give people the impression that they are self sufficient and not in need of Allah.
- 3a** Almost all answers were correct.
- 3b** Most, but not all candidates, answered correctly. Again, reference to the text is essential.
- 3c** Most candidates answered correctly. Candidates are reminded to make reference to the surah mentioned in the question.
- 3d** The better candidates concentrated on how religious practices can bring people, and hence the Ummah, together.
- 3e** Some candidates referred to the meaning of worship and then set about discussing various types and which was better, whilst other candidates looked at whether belief or any one of the other Pillars was more important than worship.

B588: Muslim Texts 2 (Sunnah and Hadith)

General Comments

A small cohort of candidates sat this examination, so the following comments need to be read with that in mind.

The most popular questions were Questions 2 and 3 with very few candidates attempting Question 1.

A number of candidates simply gave general answers and did not refer specifically to the particular points being asked for in the question.

For part d) answers, depth and analysis are needed for candidates to achieve top Level 3 marks.

In responses to part e) questions, most candidates were able to express a supported personal viewpoint but often had difficulty in offering different and supported points of view.

There were few rubric errors and candidates seemed to use the allocated time correctly.

Candidates do need to clearly indicate when a part question is to be continued on another page. Candidates need to read the question carefully before attempting an answer and refer to the specific Hadith when instructed to do so.

Comments on individual questions:

- 1a** Generally poorly answered.
- 1b** Most candidates gave accurate answers.
- 1c** Very few candidates managed to gain full marks due to lack of specific detail in their answer.
- 1d** The better candidates looked at the different ways in which Sunni and Shia might interpret this Hadith and its consequences.
- 1e** Some candidates were able to identify similarities between Sunni and Shia but very few showed understanding of the significance of the differences beyond stating that one side or the other was wrong.
- 2a** Most candidates gave an accurate answer.
- 2b** Very few candidates managed to gain full marks on this question due to not referring to Hadith 5
- 2c** Most candidates gained at least 2 marks.
- 2d** Better candidates concentrated on the importance of avoiding changes in worship and what the consequences for the value of worship would be.
- 2e** Many candidates found it difficult to consider an alternative view so hindering their chances of accessing the higher level of response marks.
- 3a** Most candidates gave correct answers.

- 3b** Most candidates gave accurate answers.
- 3c** Very few candidates managed to gain credit on this question due to not referring to the specific Hadith; most answers were very general and not specific to Hadith 5
- 3d** A few candidates managed to access beyond Level 1 in their responses by showing the importance of not doubting and the consequences of introducing into worship anything about which one had doubts.
- 3e** This question produced some of the best part e) answers on the paper. The better candidates looked at the nature of faith and doubt; that it is natural to have doubts about something unseen but this is part of the nature of faith and a test of belief. However, many candidates still struggled to offer supported and justified different points of view.

B589: Perspectives on World Religions

General Comments

The paper proved accessible to most candidates. Many candidates offered clear and appropriate responses to the questions in parts a) to c) of each section where short answers are required. Some candidates gave unnecessarily extended responses to part c) which must have affected their overall time management.

In part d), where candidates are required to demonstrate their understanding of an issue, many candidates offered responses which demonstrated a sound grasp of the significance of the issue for the religion of their choice. Knowledge of underpinning teaching was often exceptionally strong. In many cases, candidates supported their understanding with useful references to religious teaching and in most cases, support from religious texts and/or the life and attitudes of key figures within the religion.

Similarly, there were many excellent responses to part e) of each question. Responses from many candidates consisted of well presented arguments on either side of the debate and clear evidence of a personal viewpoint. The personal viewpoint was often offered as a distinct section of the response but many of the best candidates showed the personal response as series comments, weighing the various arguments and woven into the discussion as a whole. Many candidates, as required by the rubric, considered the issue in the stimulus with clear reference to the religion of their choice. On occasions, the candidate's knowledge unfortunately dominated the response to the detriment of the argument. Other candidates offered a general religious response sometimes repeating the same religious teaching to support different issues which limited their responses. A few candidates failed to offer any religious content at all whilst some developed an argument for one side of the issue but with no consideration of alternative views or shades of opinion. These latter sorts of response, along with responses which did not offer any personal comment at all, could not be given much credit.

Comments on individual questions:

Section A: Responsibility for the Planet

- a) A correct response was give to this question by nearly all candidates.
- b) The majority of candidates referred to God's creation and stewardship. Some candidates struggled to find two reasons or just expanded the first reason as a second point.
- c) Many responses referred to stewardship and how, as animals are a part of God's creation, they are to be respected. Many candidates referred to St Francis of Assisi and to Jesus' words about the sparrows. Some candidates engaged in a discussion about the use of animals in medical and cosmetic research, leading on occasions, to unnecessarily extended responses.
- d) Candidates who focused on the origins of the world as opposed to the origin of mankind generally fared well. Conservative views about the inerrancy of scripture and the veracity therefore of the Genesis account of creation were well rehearsed as was knowledge about the Big Bang theory. Many candidates note that some Christians were content to combine the two views. Some candidates gave accounts of Creationism and of the idea of a prime mover behind the Big Bang.
- e) Candidates who grasped the thrust of the question produced some profound discussions about, for example, the extent to which Genesis is a mythological or poetic account

which loses its power if taken literally. Literal accounts on the other hand, according to this view, are the province of science. Genesis and science are therefore not contradictory but complimentary. Some candidates seemed to consider science as an entity with a mind and purpose, almost as a rival to God. The personal responses were often well developed with reference for example, to the need for faith which must rise above human knowledge, which is provisional and incomplete.

Section B: War Peace and Human Rights

- a) Although most candidates responded well to this question, some struggled to avoid a simple repetition of the question whilst others offered an example.
- b) Candidates were mostly able to give two different examples of human rights.
- c) Candidates drew on a wide range of teaching from the religion of their choice to support their responses. Candidates, who went beyond just stating teachings, fared best.
- d) The question asked for an explanation, to which many candidates responded with examples of teaching or accurate descriptions of, for example, the Just War theory. Responses which referred to this sort of knowledge and explained why, as a result, this might enable a religious person to justify taking part in a war could be awarded the highest marks. Purely descriptive responses could not be rewarded so highly.
- e) Good responses to the stimulus included as part of the discussion, references to, for example, the stand of Martin Luther King and how he used his faith to pursue human rights issues. Many candidates discussed the possible dangers of standing up for human rights, whilst some discussed whether it would be appropriate to stand up for the rights of truly evil people.

Section C: Religion, Poverty and Wealth

- a) A correct response was given to this question by nearly all candidates.
- b) Candidates were mostly able to give two different examples of gender discrimination although some gave examples of prejudice rather than discrimination.
- c) There were many good responses to this part, which used key teaching from the religion chosen, such as 'all people being created by God' and therefore no one is better than another. The parable of the Good Samaritan was offered by many candidates, some of whom unfortunately only stated it as a title, without any reference to the content or significance of the parable.
- d) Responses which referred to attitudes to gender in the texts of the religion studied or to current attitudes were often well developed and exhibited both a range and depth of understanding. Some responses were limited as candidates repeated similar material to that offered in part c) without showing how it applied to the issue of gender discrimination. Many candidates noted that gender was a problematic area for many religions today.
- e) Responses to this were often characterised by well balanced arguments and the use of appropriate technical language including: ecumenism; pluralism; conversion; inclusive and exclusive actions. Many responses referred to the work of missionaries. Some candidates considered the issue to be about freedom of choice and that it was important for religions to set out their stalls and attract people but not to coerce anyone in a way that might offend human rights.

B603: Ethics 1 (Relationships, Medical Ethics, Poverty and Wealth)

The report for this unit can be found on specification B Philosophy and Applied Ethics, J121/J621

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