

Religious Studies A (World Religion(s))

General Certificate of Education **J620**

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

OCR Report to Centres

June 2013

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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

Whilst this paper differentiated well, and the full range of marks was in evidence, the overall performance is slightly disappointing compared to previous sessions with evidence of a more superficial understanding of Buddhist teaching than has previously been seen. Candidates sometimes struggled to apply the principles they had learnt to the questions asked.

As in previous years, the vast majority of candidates answered questions 1 and 2, although where candidates attempted question 3, they often did very well.

Many candidates are still limiting themselves in part (e) questions because they are not writing enough to access the higher levels. Some centres appear to have provided their candidates with a 'writing frame' which can be helpful, but which needs to be applied carefully. In order to access the top level it is necessary to include both good religious knowledge and evaluation. Including viewpoints from other religions is only useful when it genuinely adds to the discussion.

There were few errors of rubric and most candidates completed the paper in the time allowed.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates gained the mark. A few confused it with anatta.
- (b) Most candidates gained two marks. Since the question asked for beliefs about dukkha, a little more than just 'dukkha means suffering' was required to gain the marks.
- (c) Almost every candidate gained the marks available. A very few confused this with the Three Marks or the Three Poisons.
- (d) This question proved problematical for many candidates who stated that anatta means 'no permanent self' but went on to talk about reincarnation of the soul with little evidence of real understanding. The best responses were truly outstanding and showed a deep understanding of Buddhist teaching, but these were in a minority.
- (e) Most candidates answered this question reasonably well with many attaining level 3. However, a significant number of responses were limited to a fairly superficial discussion about temptation in the modern world rather than thinking about what it might mean to uphold the Precepts in a modern global economy.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates gained the mark for this question.
- (b) Most candidates gained both marks for this question..
- (c) Most candidates gained the marks for this question although a significant minority gave responses which were too generic to be creditable (such as 'meditation'.)

- (d) Most candidates could describe Rain Retreats reasonably well although some struggled to explain the importance. This question differentiated well with the full spectrum of marks being seen.
- (e) Most candidates attained the top of level 2 or the bottom of level 3 but many struggled to get beyond this. Some found it difficult to find an alternative view and many gave a very generic response containing very little Buddhist teaching. Some contrasted with Christian festivals. This rarely added to the quality of the discussion. There were a few excellent responses which looked at the specific activities associated with Buddhist festivals although these were in a minority.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates were able to gain the mark.
- (b) Some candidates struggled with this question, naming two of the Noble Eightfold Path or Four Noble Truths or Three Poisons.
- (c) This was generally well answered, although some candidates gave generic Buddhist beliefs. Some candidates showed excellent understanding of Zen ideology.
- (d) Some candidates gave excellent answers to this question. Some limited themselves by merely describing the differences. Generally this was well answered.
- (e) Some candidates struggled with this question, giving very generic and basic responses. Some did very well indeed, looking at a variety of viewpoints and ideas. The best responses here were outstanding. This question differentiated well.

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

General comments

Whilst this paper differentiated well and the full range of marks was in evidence, the overall performance is disappointing compared to previous sessions with evidence of a more superficial understanding of Buddhist teaching than has previously been seen. Candidates sometimes struggled to apply the principles they had learnt to the questions they.

As in previous years, the vast majority of candidates answered questions 1 and 2, although where candidates attempted question 3 they often did so very well. A few candidates appear to have attempted this question because they wanted to answer part (e) and so sacrificed the marks for the rest of the question, sometimes leaving them entirely blank.

Many candidates are still limiting themselves in part (e) questions because they are not writing enough to access the higher levels. Some centres appear to have provided their candidates with a 'writing frame' which can be helpful but which needs to be applied carefully. In order to access the top level, it is necessary to include both good religious knowledge and evaluation. Including viewpoints from other religions is only useful when it genuinely adds to the discussion.

There were few errors of rubric and most candidates completed the paper in the time allowed.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) Whilst a few responses were too vague to be clearly applied to meditation (such as 'developing the characteristics needed for enlightenment') the great majority of candidates gained the mark for this question.
- (b) Most candidates managed to gain the marks for this question, although a few gave offerings which might be made to monks rather than during puja.
- (c) Most candidates gained 2 or 3 marks. Since the question asked for beliefs about rupas, more than a simple description was required.
- (d) Most candidates gained 3 or 4 marks. In order to access level 3, it was necessary to state that a vihara is a monastery rather than a generalised place of worship and to discuss the importance of this. To access the top marks. it was also necessary to do more than just describe what happens in a vihara. There were a few excellent responses to this question.
- (e) Some candidates struggled to go beyond describing the artefacts used in puja and their symbolism. Whilst there were some excellent responses, the majority of candidates only attained the top of level 2 or the bottom of level 3. Some of the better candidates discussed the difference between puja and meditation and applied the question of artefacts to this.

Question 2

- (a) There were some very inventive responses from candidates who appeared to be guessing but, by and large, most candidates gained this mark.

- (b) Most candidates gained both marks. Where they did not, it was usually because one or more of the responses was very generic and could have applied to any Buddhist.
- (c) Most candidates gained 2 or 3 marks. Most responses detailed a negative attitude to wealth rather than an opportunity to show generosity and compassion.
- (d) Most candidates gained at least 4 marks centring their responses around finding employment which fitted with the Five Precepts. The question was generally done well. There were no obvious difficulties with this question.
- (e) Most candidates did include reference to Buddhist teaching although a few responses were extremely generic and basic. The best responses contrasted a variety of approaches and looked at the life of the Buddha. Very few candidates knew that the Buddha had returned to visit his family. Many saw the importance of the family as self-evident and struggled to justify it. A few candidates produced outstanding responses.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates either knew the answer to the question or they did not. Some answered that it was 'loving kindness' but could not gain the mark since there was no reference to a sacred text or scripture.
- (b) Where candidates attempted this question they generally gained both marks.
- (c) Most candidates who attempted this question gained all three marks although there were some candidates who appeared to be guessing and did not gain any marks. Some gave three facts about the Pali Canon.
- (d) This was often answered well, although candidates frequently gave answers which were purely descriptive and did not address the importance of the text. This type of response rarely gained more than 3 marks.
- (e) There were some outstanding responses to this question, showing excellent critical thinking. This was one occasion where Buddhism could be helpfully compared to Christianity and many candidates took this approach. There were quite a few mid-range responses to this question. Candidates tended to either score a low level 2 mark or a high level 3 mark with a few candidates achieving level 4.

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

General comments

The responses to this question paper were pleasing. The majority of candidates were well prepared for the examination and the subject appears to have been well taught by teachers. It is gratifying that some schools have taught the subject in remarkable depth and breadth.

Questions 1 and 2 were the most popular with a minority of candidates attempting question 3.

Questions which tested knowledge were generally answered well, as were part (d) questions. However, few candidates achieved the upper marks in part (e) questions; this was mainly because only a few candidates offered a fully developed personal response.

There were virtually no rubric errors with only a very small number of candidates answering all three questions. Those candidates who did answer all three questions usually achieved a lower overall mark 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 failing to finish the paper.

There is still a problem with candidates not indicating that they are using continuation sheets and an increasing problem of virtually illegible handwriting.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) This question was answered correctly in the vast majority of cases.
- (b) This question was answered correctly in the majority of cases; a few candidates gave some of the Ten Commandments.
- (c) Responses to this question varied quite a bit. Most candidates seemed to know what the Sermon on the Mount was but not all of them knew the contents of the Sermon nor the importance of the teachings. A significant number thought that the parable of the Good Samaritan was in the Sermon on the Mount and that Jesus was the one to first state the two great commandments rather than reiterate Deuteronomy and Leviticus.
- (d) Overall, this question was answered well. Most candidates were able to explain the concept of judgement leading to an eternal life in Heaven or Hell and the idea of purgatory. Many candidates were able to express Christian beliefs about Judgement Day, either as an event which happens after death, or on the occasion of the Parousia.
- (e) This question was answered well in the majority of cases. Some candidates expressed their belief that life today was much more difficult than at the time of Jesus which, perhaps, shows a rather poor understanding of the world two thousand years ago. However, that apart, most were able to provide interesting relevant points of view. The main reason given as to why people are not able to follow Jesus' teaching seems to be lack of time. However, many did acknowledge that, if you wanted to do something badly enough, you would find a way to do it and that God would not expect anyone to do something that it was not possible to do.

Question 2

- (a) The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly.
- (b) (i) The question was almost universally answered correctly. However, not so many candidates were able to answer part (b) (ii) correctly, with a disappointing number showing no understanding of what Epiphany remembers.
- (c) This question was not answered as well as expected. There was obvious confusion between Advent and Christmas, and even Advent and Epiphany. There was much to suggest that there is a lack of understanding concerning Advent as a separate and important festival.
- (d) This question was answered well with most candidates achieving level 2 or 3. Most candidates could express the idea of the incarnation of God and the importance of Jesus' birth. A significant majority confused Christmas with Epiphany. Some candidates wrote quite a bit about what happens at Christmas rather than its importance to Christians. This is a perennial problem with questions which ask about the importance of something as candidates very often content themselves with a description and fail, therefore, to address the question.
- (e) There were many candidates who could not go beyond the fact that festivals were free, whereas you had to pay money to go on a pilgrimage or that it would be difficult to find time in a busy life to take part in a pilgrimage. Some higher level candidates were able to discuss the idea of pilgrimage being a personal, spiritual journey but most concentrated on materialistic or logistical elements. The arguments in favour of festivals were quite limited though quite a number of candidates did think that the importance of festivals had been diminished by commercialisation, especially Christmas and Easter, and that pilgrimage could now be seen as a more sincere form of worship and devotion.

Question 3

- (a) A large majority of candidates who answered this question did so correctly. The obvious and most frequent incorrect answer given was the Roman Catholic Church
- (b) Generally answered well though there is a tendency for this type of question to produce very generic answers rather than those specific to the place in question – in this case, Taize.
- (c) Responses to this question were not quite as good as expected. The emphasis was on variations within worship but the responses of some candidates strayed outside worship and were, therefore, not credited.
- (d) Those who chose this question responded well to this part. Most understood the importance of the Pope as world-wide leader; a few responses seemed confused and implied that Roman Catholics worshiped the Pope. Most could discuss the Apostolic Succession and the concept of the Pope's infallibility.
- (e) Responses were generally good although some candidates concentrated on logistics rather than more important related issues. Most felt that to have one leader of the church would be impractical and undesirable.

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

General comments

The majority of candidates were well prepared for the examination and the subject appears to have been well taught by teachers. It is gratifying that some schools have taught the subject in remarkable depth and breadth. This resulted in many good responses and pleasing overall marks.

Overall, all questions seemed to be equally popular.

Questions which tested knowledge were generally answered well, as were part (d) questions. However, few candidates achieved the level 4 marks in part (e) questions; this was mainly because only few candidates offered a fully developed personal response.

There were very few rubric errors. The vast majority of candidates managed their time well and there was little evidence of failing to finish the paper.

There is still a problem with candidates not indicating that they are using continuation sheets and an increasing problem of virtually illegible scripts.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates answered this question correctly.
- (b) The majority of candidates answered this question correctly. It has become clear that this topic – The Stations of the Cross – has been taught well in recent years.
- (c) Although candidates were able to answer this question, too many of the answers were generic, relating to worship in general rather than the Eucharistic worship. Candidates need to be encouraged to think carefully about the question they are being asked before answering so that they can give a full and appropriate response. However, there were some good responses.
- (d) This question was answered quite well. Some candidates spent too much time writing about what happens in a place of worship or what it looks like rather than the importance of the church. Some candidates did discuss the importance of a place of worship in the community, both close community and wider community, and these were usually well written responses at level 3; these responses also acknowledge the wide range of support and activities which are based at a place of worship.
- (e) Overall, this question was answered well. Most candidates could see how being a Christian is a full-time, daily commitment even though Sunday is also set aside as a special day of worship. Many expressed the opinion that there was not time in today's modern world to set aside time for worship but, in contrast, other opinions stated that people can always make time for something if they sincerely want to do it. Pleasingly, many candidates explained how living your life as a Christian was, in effect, a daily act of worship.

Question 2

- (a) The vast majority of responses to this question were correct. The most popular answers were water and candle.
- (b) In a significant number of cases, the responses to this question were disappointing. Many candidates ignored any religious significance and stated simply that, should the parents die, the Godparents would adopt the child. Only a minority of candidates seem to know and understand the promises made by the Godparents during the baptism service.
- (c) This question was answered well although there were some candidates who did confuse Confirmation with Believers' Baptism. Most understood what happened during the service and offered specific rather than generic answers.
- (d) This question was answered well, which was to be expected considering the quality of responses to part (c). A number of candidates explained very clearly the concept of commitment and how Confirmation was the next step from infant baptism. Some included the gifts of the Spirit and the importance of these to Christians. These were pleasing responses. However, as with part (c), some candidates did confuse Confirmation with Believers' Baptism.
- (e) The candidates who answered this question seemed to rise to the challenge offered. Many had very definite opinions about when young people are ready to make a commitment to a religion and their rights to do so if and when they chose. Some very good points of view were offered, supported by examples and development.

Question 3

- (a) Surprisingly, a number of candidates failed to achieve a mark for this question as their answers were not specific enough. There was a vast range of answers but not many which actually gave an acceptable answer.
- (b) This was answered well. A few candidates named types of literature rather than the names of New Testament books.
- (c) Overall, this was answered well. Most candidates concentrated on stimulus for prayer, private study and guidance.
- (d) This question was answered well. Many candidates showed a good understanding of the importance of the Old Testament for Christians including ideas such as Messianic prophecy, the old covenant, foundation of Jesus' teaching and so on. Many responses were interesting to read and showed the topic had been well-taught. Sadly, a number did confuse it with the New Testament and describe how it recorded the life and teachings of Jesus.
- (e) Overall, this was answered well. Many candidates concentrated on putting belief into action and that reading the Bible was not enough unless it resulted in Christian action. There were many good, supported discussions.

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.

Many candidates answered questions 1 and 2.

The quality of written communication was on the whole good and very few candidates got less than full marks for SPAG.

There were very few misinterpretations of the rubric with most candidates managing to answer two questions fully.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates had an accurate answer for this question; most going against the will of God. Merely saying that it was doing something bad did not gain the mark.
- (b) Almost all candidates were able to refer correctly to two teachings. Most looked at Last judgement. There was some good use of quotations from the Creed. Occasionally, it was about whether Christians should stand in judgement over others.
- (c) This was slightly more difficult for some candidates. Those who could answer the question knew that Jesus saved us from our sins. Most candidates managed to give three ideas.
- (d) Saints' lives were given – usually those mentioned in the specification. Better candidates considered what made them a moral person e.g. faith, obedience to God, compassion. On occasion, the factual information was wrong.

Candidates are struggling to make the morality connection with the veneration of saints. Many are able to tell the story of the saint but unable to identify the moral lesson or to exemplify it.

- (e) A familiar question and some good answers on the nature and role of Mary, concluding that she was or was not too perfect, depending on their view of difficulty of the Immaculate Conception and bearing the son of God but seeing role models as aspirational. Again, some candidates have just 'hung onto' the idea of "too perfect" rather than break out into how Catholic beliefs about Mary/or Marian attributes can be an illustration of good Christian living. Some candidates, however, are able to deal with the concepts of original sin and immaculate conception.

Question 2

- (a) Many candidates knew the answer. First day of Lent.
- (b) Not a well answered question as many candidates missed the word 'service' in the question and only offered the days.

- (c) Most candidates knew penances in Lent and offered three examples. Many candidates incorrectly answered this question simply by naming the days of holy week.
- (d) Again, a question which candidates could explore in different ways but good knowledge and understanding of the Lenten season and its importance as a run up to Easter. There was occasional confusion with Advent. Most candidates were able to identify and explain the importance of Lent and some also rooted this in scripture and extended it to Catholic practice.
- (e) Most candidates gave good arguments, using bible passages on Christian attitudes to wealth. Some found this question difficult as it appeared they were unsure of the meaning of the word 'materialistic'. On occasions, a candidate looked at materialism in the philosophical sense of proving God's existence through evidence.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates knew a protestant denomination. Non conformists were also credited. Occasionally, Orthodox was incorrectly offered as a response.
- (b) Usual answers involved the pope/patriarch, the filioque clause and married/unmarried priests. Some candidates considered the buildings and artefacts, look of priests, Greek/Latin liturgy. Quite a few could come up with one difference but the second example was the same e.g. transubstantiation or belief in Mary.
- (c) The question was well answered. Good use of involvement in Christian Aid.
- (d) 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, there was good knowledge and understanding on the influence of Luther, Calvin, and Henry VIII. On the religious side there was, good knowledge and understanding on the differences such as 'sola scriptura', consubstantiation rather than transubstantiation, objection to malpractices. On occasion, candidates wrongly answered on the Great Schism. In evaluation, some candidates showed very little application of the reasons for the schisms and the developments which have happened since then, that might further hinder ecumenical unity or facilitate it.
- (e) The question was generally answered well. There was good understanding of Jesus' prayer that they all would be one. Most candidates concluded that differences cannot be ignored.

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

General comments

Many candidates achieved well and were able to show good knowledge and understanding of Roman Catholic key words, teaching and practice.

Most candidates answered questions 1 and 3.

The quality of written communication was on the whole good and very few candidates got less than full marks for SPAG.

There were very few misinterpretations of the rubric with most candidates managing to answer two questions fully.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates knew what an artefact was. When candidates did not gain marks they often named items used in a service rather than those found in a church.
- (b) Candidates found this a difficult question with few knowing two promises and having to guess. The most common correct promise was to reject Satan. Looking after god children was often considered a tradition rather than a promise given.
- (c) Almost all candidates could give three examples of what happens during Mass.
- (d) Many weaker candidates answered on the importance of marriage without reference to the service. Many gave the symbolism of the rings and vows linked to teaching on marriage. Answers tended to be on the topic rather than the specific question.
- (e) Many candidates argued for and against using argument on both sides. There was some good use of bible passages from Sermon on the Mount about prayer, the 3rd Commandment, Jesus in the Last Supper about the importance or otherwise of Sunday obligation. There was also some discussion of more irregular attendance or attendance on another day due to other commitments. Many candidates seemed to be justifying their own position.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates could not correctly name a founder of a religious Community.
- (b) Good answers showed a range of knowledge.
- (c) This question was usually well answered with many candidates including a bible quote.
- (d) Candidate responses were well focused on the funeral rites and their importance in getting the soul to heaven.
- (e) Most candidates thought it important to respect the dead. Very few thought about the modern idea to have donations to charity rather than flowers. On occasion, there was reference to Mrs Thatcher's funeral which was nicely current.

Question 3

- (a) Answers ranged from 639 to 2. Many knew the correct answer – 72.
- (b) Most candidates were able to offer two Gospels.
- (c) This question proved difficult for many candidates. Some were able to give three examples of worship but they tended to be a little repetitive, reading in Mass, reading in a wedding ceremony, reading in a funeral. Many candidates ignored the word 'worship' using the terms teaching and evangelising in their responses. Other candidates ignored the word 'public' using private meditation or individual prayer in their responses. Better candidates considered reading psalms, inspiring the hymns, the homily or Liturgy of the Word.
- (d) Many candidates knew why the New Testament is important, citing the life and teaching of Jesus. Some looked at its practical use. Provided that candidates developed their ideas, they achieved higher levels. Some considered, to good effect, the use of the new Testament in liturgy and moral decision making. On occasion, candidates wrongly referred to the Old Testament.
- (e) Candidates who attempted this question did well and saw that reading alone does not make someone a better Christian; it needs to be put into practice. Very few considered that it could make someone worse, perhaps having misinterpreted particular passages. Some candidates were drawn into a side issue of the wrongness of judging who was a better Christian.

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

General comments

The paper differentiated well and the full range of marks was in evidence. The overall performance when compared to previous sessions was very encouraging with evidence of some excellent understanding and evaluation. Candidates usually managed to apply the principles they had learnt to the questions they were asked.

As in previous years, the vast majority of candidates answered questions 1 and 2, although where candidates attempted question 3 they often did so very well.

Some candidates are still limiting themselves in part (e) questions because they are not writing enough to access the higher levels. Some centres appear to have provided their candidates with a 'writing frame' which can be helpful, but which needs to be applied carefully. In order to access the top level it is necessary to include both good religious knowledge and evaluation. Including viewpoints from other religions is only useful when it genuinely adds to the discussion.

There were few errors of rubric and most candidates completed the paper in the time allowed.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) The vast majority of candidates gained the mark for this question. A few candidates missed out on the mark because they had written contradictory responses.
- (b) Almost all candidates gained the marks for this question.
- (c) Most candidates gained all three marks. Where they did not, it was because they stopped short and did not include sufficient development for the third mark.
- (d) Most candidates gained at least 4 marks. Many failed to progress beyond this because they gave a descriptive response which did not fully answer the question. There were, however, some excellent responses.
- (e) Some responses were fairly basic, contrasting Ganesh with one or two other deities. The majority of candidates attained level 3. A few responses were truly excellent, showing an outstanding understanding of Hindu ideology.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates gained this mark.
- (b) Most candidates gained these marks. Where they did not, it was usually because they had misread the question and described how Hindus might celebrate instead.
- (c) Most candidates gained three marks. Where they did not, it was either because the response was too generic to credit ('pray') or because they gave three examples of what was celebrated (as required in part (b)).

- (d) This was generally well answered with most candidates attaining level 2 and a significant number gaining level 3.
- (e) Surprisingly, this was less well answered than question 1 (e). Many candidates compared Holi with another festival (usually Divali) in a fairly superficial way. The best responses suggested that it depended on who and where an individual Hindu was. Some responses were of an excellent standard.

Question 3

- (a) Of the few candidates who attempted this question. Most gained the mark.
- (b) Most candidates gained both marks.
- (c) This question proved quite difficult for some candidates with a number suggesting things such as 'Shiva is the destroyer', which is not a universal belief. Many candidates, however, gained full marks. The most common responses were samsara, karma and moksha.
- (d) Some candidates struggled with this and gave a description of Vishnu instead. Some were clearly grasping at straws and tried to develop a response around the need to look after the world. A few candidates gave excellent responses.
- (e) Some candidates took a surprising approach to this question by looking at differences between the varnas. This was an acceptable response which, when done well, usually resulted in a good mark. Most looked at the major divisions and argued that, since all deities are aspects of Brahman, there are few real differences beyond the cosmetic. Surprisingly, few candidates were aware that this Advaita view is not universal. Again, there were a few outstanding responses.

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

General comments

The paper differentiated well and the full range of marks was in evidence. The overall performance when compared to previous sessions was very encouraging with evidence of some excellent understanding and evaluation. Candidates usually managed to apply the principles they had learnt to the questions they were asked.

As in previous years, the vast majority of candidates answered questions 1 and 2, although where candidates did attempt question 3, they usually found it quite straight forward and achieved good marks, especially in parts (a) to (c).

Some candidates are still limiting themselves in part e) questions because they are not writing enough to access the higher levels. Some centres appear to have provided their candidates with a 'writing frame' which can be helpful but which needs to be applied carefully. In order to access the top level it is necessary to include both good religious knowledge and evaluation. Including viewpoints from other religions is only useful when it genuinely adds to the discussion.

There were few errors of rubric and most candidates completed the paper in the time allowed.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) Candidates found this question surprisingly difficult with many struggling to express themselves. Some gave examples of symbols which was not what they had been asked for and so did not gain the mark.
- (b) Most candidates gained both marks without difficulty.
- (c) The majority of candidates gained all three marks.
- (d) Many candidates struggled to get out of level 2 as they did not move beyond a description of the place of worship and were not able to describe the significance and importance. Those who did so generally did very well.
- (e) This was not generally well answered, which was quite surprising. There was little discussion of the nature of deity or the status of murtis and many level 2 and low level 3 responses centred around personal preference.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates gained this mark.
- (b) Most candidates gained the marks. Encouragingly, very few seemed to be struggling to know what mundan was.
- (c) Most candidates gained all three marks.

- (d) Answers to this question tended to be fairly generic with many candidates failing to get out of level 1 or 2.
- (e) This question was better answered with a full and far ranging discussion around a variety of issues. Some candidates limited themselves because they ignored one aspect of the question (either ashrama or varna). There were some excellent responses which fully grasped the significance of the question. Candidates were able to apply their religious knowledge to issues in the wider world.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates gained the mark for this question. There was a variety of correct responses.
- (b) Almost all candidates gained both marks.
- (c) Most candidates gained full marks.
- (d) Where candidates did not achieve level 3 it was usually because of a descriptive response, which did not address the word 'important' in the question. This was, however, less of an issue than in some previous questions and a significant proportion of candidates gained level 3.
- (e) This question was well answered with many candidates giving a well-argued discussion. A few addressed the question of to whom it might be important and looked at a variety of different Hindu groups with a few even pointing out its significance beyond Hinduism. On the whole, responses to this question were very encouraging.

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 onto an additional sheet. The lines allocated for an answer 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.

Many candidates used a 'scattergun' approach when they were unsure of an answer in the hope of gaining marks.

Some candidates have been clearly taught the correct and appropriate terminology for this subject which they used well but a number seem to be lacking in this knowledge. The general feeling was that some candidates either did not read the question carefully or were not prepared for some of the questions.

All candidates were able to respond to the (e) part of the questions, 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 seemed to misunderstand /misread 1 (d), 1 (e) and 3 (e), which tended to lead to answers that were often vague and general, rather than specific and focused.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates responded successfully to this question, although some interesting alternatives were given!
- (b) This question was well answered.
- (c) There was a very mixed response to this question. Many candidates focused on which members of Muhammad's family had died, although there were some varied answers. A number of candidates failed to register 'before he was married'.
- (d) A well-answered question.
- (e) Some good discussion and understanding of 'compassion' and 'Day of Judgement', but some candidates tended to focus on just Day of Judgement with no mention of 'a compassionate God' – this tended to restrict access to the higher marks.

Question 2

- (a) Well answered.
- (b) Many candidates gave incorrect answers for this section – 'Ramadan' instead of 'Sawm' and 'ninth month' instead of 'Ramadan'.

- (c) Some candidates focused on the importance of Salat-ul-Jumu'ah rather than what actually happens. There were some generic answers on prayer preparations.
- (d) Generally well answered, although a minority of candidates focused on 'what' rather than 'why'.
- (e) This question resulted in some lengthy answers. However, the focus for many candidates was on a generally limited knowledge on what happened at festivals and on the involvement of children.

Question 3

- (a) A number of candidates gave all four khalifahs.
- (b) Candidates produced accurate responses.
- (c) Well answered.
- (d) This was the least well answered part of this question. Several candidates failed to answer this part.
- (e) This part produced some particularly good responses. In general, it was well answered.

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

General comments

A significant number of candidates attempted, even if they did not complete, all 3 questions.

A number of candidates used the extra sheets but some are still not clearly labelling the additional sheets correctly whilst a number give little or no indication that they were continuing their answers onto an additional sheet. The lines allocated for an answer 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 experienced problems with part (d) questions, it would seem, as a result of misreading the question. This tended to lead to answers that were sometimes vague and general rather than specific and focused.

All candidates were able to respond to the (e) part of the questions, though with varying degrees of success. Some were answered well, with insight and understanding of the relevant issues. However, many candidates are still using the old "I agree/disagree" formula. Formulaic answers such as this rarely achieve the higher levels. It is not enough to simply develop two points of view or state different viewpoints without giving arguments or reasons in support of them. Part (e) questions require genuine 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 view point. Many candidates gave "alternative views" from one, or sometimes two other religions. This was not successful as the differences in the religions meant that these responses usually failed to answer the question.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- (b) Most candidates responded successfully to this question.
- (c) Most candidates gained 2 or 3 marks although some just gave a word rather than an actual use.
- (d) Some candidates found this question challenging. The majority of them interpreted 'explain the importance' to mean 'describe the preparations' and answers were often full of knowledge but lacking in understanding of why the preparations are important.
- (e) This part was generally very well answered by the majority of candidates, who displayed an awareness of the difference between pictures/statues and other forms of decoration such as calligraphy and arabesque. Good answers compared/contrasted mosques with Roman Catholic churches.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates responded successfully to this question
- (b) Candidates responded successfully to this question.

- (c) Almost all candidates who attempted this part gained full marks.
- (d) This was not well answered; many candidates described the rituals but were not sure as to the religious reason for doing them. There were limited answers supplied by many candidates who went on to describe the roles of members of the family, or sometimes the concept of Ummah itself, rather than explain the importance of the family.
- (e) Again, there was a lack of depth to the responses with many candidates not really getting to the heart of the question which was not about whether Muhammad succeeded in spite of having no family; nor was it about the Ummah, although higher level responses discussed how the Ummah may be seen as a family and can often take on the supportive role, particularly in the case of converts.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates responded successfully to this question.
- (b) Candidates responded successfully to this question.
- (c) There was a lack of subject specific knowledge as to the meaning of the ahadith.
- (d) Many candidates failed to answer the question set as they did not see the word 'origins' and therefore only wrote about the Qur'an.
- (e) Candidates showed a lack of engagement with the question. Answers generally did not address the issue of the use of translations of the Qur'an, but rather discussed whether it was right or wrong to translate it.

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

General comments

Candidates are to be congratulated for their efforts and achievement on this paper. Many demonstrated an impressive understanding of the subject. As in previous years, there has clearly been excellent guidance from teachers.

Overall there were relatively few rubric errors this year. A small number of candidates attempted all questions, whilst others had not read all questions before embarking on their responses. Some omitted individual questions, whilst others restarted an alternative.

The difference in the quality of those responses submitted can be very significant. Examiners found that the questions on different divisions of Judaism were the least popular. This might be because Hasidism was perceived to be a difficult topic or due to its position in the question paper. Candidates may simply tackle the first questions that they come across.

There was little evidence of candidates having major issues with timing. Many candidates made use of the extra space available at the back of the answer booklet. Obviously the amount of space provided is a useful guide as to how much needs to be written. Candidates seem to have been taught useful strategies for responding to the evaluation questions and very few wasted time producing ornate and detailed plans for these.

Written communication was generally of a high standard though some candidates' handwriting remains very difficult to decipher. Barely any candidates resorted to drawing charts to list 'for' and 'against' arguments. Such an approach does not aid written communication. In the past, some centres have encouraged candidates to repeatedly contrast the views of different Jewish groups or denominations. This often led to inaccurate and stereotypical representations of the Jewish community.

Some candidates still confuse Judaism with other faiths, most notably Islam and Christianity. This tendency is still apparent but less so than in previous years. Candidates are increasingly discussing the issues at hand, rather than simply listing different arguments. It is important that personal opinion forms part of the evaluation and that clear reference is made to Judaism. Without these two features, candidates cannot achieve the top two levels.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates gave the correct response, although some proposed other figures from the Tenakh and even some from the New Testament.
- (b) This was generally well answered. Candidates made reference to the Promised Land, circumcision, monotheism and animal sacrifice. However, reference to the sacrifice of his son was not accepted as it was not deemed part of the covenant.
- (c) This was a very general question and echoed the wording of the specification. A wide variety of responses was evident and was credited. Some candidates gave specific examples like the food laws and circumcision. Others stated how Jewish Law can make life more difficult or enrich it. Candidates sometimes referred to the moral dimension of the mitzvot.

- (d) Candidates identified some of the very practical implications of the covenant, especially circumcision and the Promised Land. Others discussed more spiritual aspects like the nature of monotheism and the way that the covenant might provide reassurance for contemporary Jews. The most common mistake was to link Abraham to the 613 mitzvot which is, of course, anachronistic.
- (e) This question provoked some very impressive responses. Candidates had some difficulty identifying reasons why Abraham may not be a good role model but the more successful discussed the binding of Isaac and his relationship with Hagar. Others thoughtfully compared Abraham with other key Biblical figures like Moses and David. Some suggested that Abraham lived too long ago to be that relevant for contemporary society. Many felt that he was a good role model as he demonstrated great faith in G-d and carried out his instructions in many ways and on many occasions. They cited his willingness to sacrifice his son, his relocation to the Land of Canaan and circumcision.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates correctly identified the Day of Atonement.
- (b) Although some candidates restated their previous answer, there were some very good responses in both Hebrew and English. Either was accepted by examiners.
- (c) There were some very good responses, however, generalised examples like 'prayer', 'eating a meal' and 'celebrating' were not accepted. References to Tashlich, the apple and honey, the fish head and so on were all welcome and credited accordingly.
- (d) Although some candidates had confused Yom Kippur with other festivals, most clearly recognised some of the significance of the festival. Candidates were credited for discussing the Days of Returning and their importance for the community. Good reference was made to the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation. In addition, understanding of the Kol Nidre, the wearing of white, fasting and Neilah was also demonstrated. It was interesting to read about candidates' own experiences and this was credited where relevant.
- (e) Though there is still a tendency to misrepresent the different denominations, most responses were rooted in Judaism and included personal reflection. Many of the best alluded to fasting outside of Yom Kippur. Personal experiences were, once again, well used by candidates. Some reference was made to other religious traditions. Most candidates saw the benefit of fasting for both religious and secular reasons. They generally believed it to be beneficial for both groups and individuals, whilst a small number judged fasting to be counterproductive.

Question 3

- (a) Some candidates provided a description of Hasidism rather than a definition. 'Ultra-Orthodox' was a popular incorrect response. An impressive number still identified 'pious' as the correct answer.
- (b) This was well answered by nearly all candidates. A variety of responses were provided, though the majority were 'orthodox', 'liberal' or 'reform'.
- (c) The vast majority of candidates who opted for this question performed well here. Examiners credited answers specific to Hasidism as well as ideas that suggested that the group are 'Torah-true'.

- (d) The significant change of subject in this question did not seem to impact on performances. More able candidates identified specific features of The State of Israel such as the Western Wall, Yad Vashem and so on. Less able candidates were unlikely to get beyond seeing Israel as a place of refuge to avoid persecution and some had not recognised that Israel is now a Jewish state. The best responses embraced physical features of the land and religious beliefs about it.

- (e) A small number of less able candidates had no understanding of what Zionism is and produced largely irrelevant responses. Others looked at the advantages of a Jewish homeland in Israel and the benefits of a significant Jewish presence in the Diaspora. It was pleasing to see accurate and relevant use made of key figures like Herzl and Kook. The inclusion of reference to Judaism was rarely a problem and candidates have mostly been well coached into providing personal viewpoints. Some excellent use was made of religious views that opposed Zionism, both from a Reform and an Orthodox perspective.

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

General comments

Once again, examiners have been impressed with quality of work and the evident commitment demonstrated by the candidates and their teachers. A decreasing number of candidates still have a tendency to answer every question. The consequences of this error are very significant for the candidates concerned.

A full range of abilities was apparent in the cohort, many obviously writing from the perspective of the Jewish community.

A small number of candidates did not seem to have an awareness of how long to spend on a component or a question. Evaluation questions are obviously of paramount importance due to the number of marks available. The best responses to evaluation questions are those that actually discuss the issue at hand. It is less effective to simply list the arguments for and against in isolation. Candidates are being increasingly well prepared for these questions. Candidates need to present their own views clearly and to make explicit reference to Judaism.

Thankfully, fewer candidates are basing their responses on the misrepresentation of the different Jewish denominations or groups. Very few seemed to confuse Judaism with other world faiths.

Normally the third question on sacred writings is far less popular than the others but this was not apparent this year. This may be because the questions on the Torah were perceived as relatively straightforward.

As is often the case, examiners reported a small number of candidates who were disadvantaged by illegible handwriting.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to identify the chazzan as a cantor. Others provided a valid description which was credited. The most common error was confusing the chazzan with certain examples of ritual dress.
- (b) This was generally well answered. It is important to note that examiners credited both English and Hebrew terminology. The fabric of the scroll itself was not credited.
- (c) Candidates performed well on this question. Most identified the tallit, kittel, tefillin and yamulkah. The main difficulty faced by candidates seemed to be differentiating between ritual dress and cultural phenomena.
- (d) Nearly all candidates were able to identify different reasons why the rabbi is important for the Jewish community. They discussed the role that the rabbi plays in rituals and worship. Others made reference to the pastoral role of the rabbi and described how he/she might support families with personal problems. Their expertise in the Law was a common theme and the most able discussed their historical role in the development of Halachah and in dealing with confusion over certain mitzvot. Some even gave examples of specific rabbis with which they were familiar.

- (e) This was a popular option question but many candidates found it difficult to argue against the idea that prayer is the most important way of worshipping G-d. Many looked at the role of prayer in adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. They also made connections between prayer times and the Temple sacrifices. Some were then able to examine other key features of worship. Candidates discussed and evaluated the importance of festivals, fasting and obedience to the mitzvot as a whole. This last area afforded great scope for argument. Some misrepresentation of certain Jewish groups was apparent but most candidates made their own views clear and had obvious references to Judaism throughout.

Question 2

- (a) This question was generally well answered. Some candidates provided a translation of 'kashrut' like 'fit' or 'appropriate' whilst others made reference to the dietary laws. Both approaches were credited.
- (b) Most candidates identified linen and wool as the two types of material involved in shatnez. Some mistakenly referred to the likes of leather and polyester.
- (c) Candidates had a clear understanding of the food laws. They cited mitzvot relating to animals, poultry, fish, dairy and so on. The main mistakes occurred when candidates remembered fins and scales, for example, but could not recall whether they were needed or prohibited when eating fish.
- (d) This question provided scope for a range of different responses. Some candidates discussed how the food laws were symptomatic of the covenantal relationship with G-d. Others explained how they brought the community together. Some of the most interesting considered, not just the implications of keeping kosher, but also the benefit of certain food laws and traditions during certain festivals. The weakest responses were largely descriptive in nature and did not consider the importance of the laws.
- (e) Candidates seemed to find plenty to discuss on this question. They identified some of the benefits for a Jew from living in a Jewish community. There were few problems with rooting the answer in Judaism and including clear personal opinion. Some of the advantages mentioned included access to a synagogue and kosher food. Good use was made, on this occasion, of the different denominations and how some perpetuate closer knit communities. Some candidates explored how a Jewish community might prevent or encourage anti-semitism. Others looked at how a tight community might prevent reaching out to more secular Jews or learning from other religions or cultures.

Question 3

- (a) Nearly all candidates identified Hebrew as the correct response to this question.
- (b) Examiners credited any of the five books of the Torah. Hebrew and English terms were credited. Some candidates referred to books from other parts of the Tenakh and these were not accepted.
- (c) Although responses to this question were generally accurate, some candidates identified stories from elsewhere in the Tenakh. Examiners accepted very brief responses that did little more than state names but the best responses were more detailed and of greater clarity.
- (d) This was a very general question on which most candidates performed well. It would be helpful for candidates to have a clearer idea of the meaning of 'sacred'. As mentioned in a previous report, candidates need to recognise that it means more than 'important'. Candidates could explain many different reasons why the Torah is seen as sacred and they took different approaches to doing so. Some focused on the physical Sefer Torah, whilst others concentrated on the Torah being seen as the word of G-d, divinely revealed to Moses on Sinai. The strongest candidates often included both and went on to reflect on the sanctity of the Oral Torah as well. Some candidates made good references to the covenant and the role of the Torah in bringing the Jews closer to G-d.

- (e) This question seemed to provoke some lively debate. It obviously leant itself to a clear and unambiguous reference to Judaism. Many candidates were able to make good use of the different denominations in structuring their response. Candidates were able to distinguish between ritual and ethical mitzvot and discuss how these are seen. Others considered how the teachings of the Written and Oral Torah may be seen differently by different Jewish groups. There was no difficulty identifying the candidates' personal opinions. Most responses seemed to be quite supportive of the quotation.

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

General comments

The majority of candidates were adequately prepared for the examination and most had a reasonable level of religious knowledge and understanding.

A number of candidates were able to recognise specialist terms and use them correctly in context in most cases. However, weaker candidates seemed uncertain and there was a degree of confusion about faith specific terms in some cases. All candidates were able to access the questions at some level.

There were few rubric errors and little evidence that candidates ran out of time.

Candidates do not always read questions carefully, and this can be detrimental to their success as they answer what they think is being asked, rather than responding to the actual question. Specifically, there were descriptions rather than definitions for question 1 (a).

Most candidates were able to consider the issues raised in part (e) questions but not all were able to justify a variety of points of view and give their own responses. There were fewer 'for and against' structures to these responses with an acknowledgement of personal response rather than a supported response, than in previous years.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) This was answered accurately in most cases, although there was evidence that some candidates did not know the correct definition.
- (b) Most candidates answered accurately and included some specialist terms
- (c) A range of correct responses were given.
- (d) Candidates who gave responses that showed 'how' the life of Guru Nanak Dev Ji encouraged Sikhs in the practice of sewa accessed higher levels. Too many, however, settled for merely describing sewa.
- (e) Some good, well considered discussions were generated by the stimulus in this question. Candidates were able to consider belief versus action in the context of the Sikh faith, balancing meditation against sewa and showing how the two had a place within the faith

Question 2

- (a) No problems were experienced with this question.
- (b) Most candidates gave the birth/ death/ martyrdom of a Guru. Few mentioned the installation of the Adi Granth.
- (c) A range of accurate responses was given.

- (d) Weaker candidates restricted themselves to a description of the festival. However, others made the link with the historical military aspect as well as with the founding of the khalsa.
- (e) There was some discussion as to the usefulness of a festival. At the lowest level this was simply an observation about the teaching in a festival as opposed to the notion of having fun. Many candidates were able to consider the opportunities a festival provides to strengthen the community, the individual and the wider community.

Question 3

- (a) The majority of responses were correct, although some candidates misread the question and gave the total number of gurus.
- (b) A range of responses including equality in the langar, names, gender equality in the khalsa and in worship, was seen.
- (c) Some candidates struggled to respond in full, although there were some who managed to describe in detail.
- (d) It seems that there was a degree of difficulty in explaining this with specific reference to 'religious life'. Many candidates simply described the contents of the Rahit Maryada.
- (e) There was good discussion in what is a difficult issue. Many candidates pointed out that some Sikhs still maintain a human guru. Others were able to consider pros and cons and to justify their views.

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

General comments

The majority of candidates were adequately prepared for the examination and most had a reasonable level of religious knowledge and understanding.

A number of candidates were able to recognise specialist terms and use them correctly in context in most cases. However, weaker candidates seemed uncertain and there was a degree of confusion about faith specific terms in some cases. All candidates were able to access the questions at some level.

There were few rubric errors and little evidence that candidates ran out of time.

Candidates do not always read questions carefully, and this can be detrimental to their success as they answer what they think is being asked, rather than responding to the actual question. The majority of candidates were able to answer part (a) and part (b) questions successfully, demonstrating a basic level of knowledge of the faith. Candidates should address the question in part (d) more closely, rather than limit their responses to a descriptive answer which does not focus on what has been asked.

Most candidates were able to consider the issues raised in part (e) questions but not all were able to justify a variety of points of view and give their own responses. There were fewer 'for and against' structures to these responses with an acknowledgement of personal response rather than a supported response, than in previous years.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) This question was answered correctly by most candidates. There was, however, some confusion shown by a few candidates who suggested a variety of other items that might be found in the gurdwara.
- (b) Part (i) gave no problems, part (ii) caused some issues for a few.
- (c) There were some good responses from candidates who could clearly explain the practice of nam simran in the context of the question.
- (d) At the lower levels, candidates offered only a description of the langar, whilst higher level answers included an explanation of the purpose of the langar and the place of sewa.
- (e) Simple responses considered the need for a specific building for the purpose of worship. Better candidates broaden this to include the question of private/public worship and the additional functions of a holy building. Some candidates also considered the importance for the wider community and the symbolic nature of a holy building.

Question 2

- (a) No issues.
- (b) A wide variety of possibilities here – most candidates gave generic responses.

- (c) Some candidates did not know what the ceremony of anand karaj was, so only gained marks from generic 'prayers' or similar. The most common confusion was that this was a birth ceremony.
- (d) Most candidates answered within level 2 for this question, with general statements about the tradition and purpose of marriage. Some pointed out that all but one of the gurus were married and so provided role models for Sikhs.
- (e) Higher level answers showed a consideration of the religious implications of this statement rather than just the social problems which might arise (or not) if family members were not of the same faith. Some candidates dwelt on the idea of freedom of choice for family members. Few considered that this may be true for young members of the family but different with older members.

Question 3

- (a) No issues.
- (b) Very general responses were accepted, most candidates who attempted this could give reasonable examples.
- (c) A number of candidates confused 'festivals' with 'rites of passage' thus excluding them from gaining marks.
- (d) Candidates who described how the Guru Granth Sahib Ji is treated failed to reach higher levels. It was apparent that they had not read the question and did not explain why the Guru Granth is considered to be the highest authority. There was plenty of opportunity to respond from a historical and religious practice angle – as some candidates demonstrated.
- (e) Some candidates failed to acknowledge that the Sikh holy book does contain writings from both the Hindu and Muslim faith, which would have helped them to focus their answer in a more effective way. Weaker candidates did not see beyond the fact that a holy book should be written by, and for, members of one particular faith, thus missing a wealth of possible points of discussion. Other candidates did recognise the wider aspects of the issue, with some including reference to the inclusion of Jewish texts in Christianity, and/ the concept in Islam of the 'People of the Book'

B583: Christian Scriptures 1 (Mark)

General comments

The majority of candidates responded well to the demands of the paper. The questions assessing knowledge of the prescribed sections of Mark's gospel provided differentiation across the ability range.

Many candidates also showed good understanding of the text and were able to explain its relevance to Christian life and practice. Some candidates answered too briefly in part (d) questions and their overall performance might have been improved by a more detailed and thoughtful response to this type of question. Candidates should be aware that (d) questions carry 25% of the marks of a question.

Part (e) questions, which assess evaluation, require argument and debate on the statement in the question together with a well-supported personal opinion. In the highest level responses, candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the significance of an issue and were able to express and justify an appropriate personal response based on the evaluation of a range of views. Some candidates appeared to find the inclusion of an appropriate personal opinion to be a challenge or not important and limited this to a sentence or two of summary. This prevented some good responses from achieving the highest level. Candidates must remember that a good personal response is essential. Some candidate would have improved their performance if they had been more consistent in their arguments and explanations of different views. Less successful answers were often brief with the arguments unsupported. Some responses would have benefitted from the use of a more discursive writing style.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates answered this accurately.
- (b) Most candidates correctly described Jairus' request that Jesus should heal his daughter, to gain one mark, but most did not add that he asked Jesus to 'lay his hands on her' in order to gain the second mark.
- (c) The majority of answers gained three marks for accurate knowledge of the text.
- (d) Many candidates were well versed in this story and understood the importance of the miracle as being a rare occasion when Jesus demonstrated his power to restore someone to life. The better candidates were also able to explain the implications within the miracle of Jesus' own resurrection and the messianic secret in Mark.
- (e) The most successful responses enabled candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of the miracles in the gospel and different Christian views and attitudes to miracles as proof of Jesus' divinity. Many candidates offered robust arguments on both sides of the debate but, as mentioned above, some otherwise excellent responses failed to expand or support a personal opinion. Less successful responses were often muddled in their arguments or inaccurate in examples and evidence of miracles quoted from the text.

Question 2

- (a) Many candidates gave an accurate answer. Some inaccurate answers described the disciples' concern as being related to the size or threatening nature of the crowd.
- (b) Accurate knowledge of the text was required here and those candidates who knew of Jesus' command to the disciples that they should 'give them something to eat' and their outraged reply, gained full marks.
- (c) Good knowledge of how the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 was carried out gained the majority of candidates the three marks available.
- (d) Satisfactory responses concentrated on this miracle as a teaching about compassion for the poor and hungry. Better responses improved upon this with good explanations of the significance of the miracle in showing Jesus' authority and power over nature and the importance given to this type of miracle in Christian teaching as proof of Jesus as Messiah. Some candidates also included Mark's emphasis on the lack of faith of the disciples as an example of a recurring teaching in the gospel and a lesson for Christians.
- (e) There were some very good answers to this question. The best answers were able to bring in evidence from the gospel to support different views. Some candidates concluded, correctly, that the teaching in Mark's gospel is that faith and miracles are interrelated. There was evidence that a large number of candidates experienced difficulty in thinking through their arguments to reach a logical conclusion. The majority opted to argue that, for Christians, faith in God does not necessarily depend on the proof provided by miracles. They were less successful in explaining the arguments for other views beyond the premise that some people needed to see miracles. The comments made previously about the need for personal opinions also applies here.

Question 3

- (a) This was generally answered accurately.
- (b) The best answers gained two marks for details of the accusations at the Jewish trial. Most candidates gained one mark for the general description 'blasphemy'.
- (c) Many candidates gained full marks. Some responses inaccurately included details from Matthew's gospel of Pilate washing his hands.
- (d) Most candidates were aware of the difference in emphasis in the Jewish and Roman charges against Jesus and explained the reasons for this with varying degrees of success. Some candidates showed excellent understanding of the motives and tensions involved in two trials and two different charges. For some, a lack of knowledge of the difference limited their response.
- (e) The highest level responses evaluated what was dramatic and interesting in Mark's portrayal of Jesus, giving examples from the text and contrasted this with views about the credibility or reliability of the gospel stories or what is lacking in Mark which appears in other gospels. Some candidates did note the fact that a gospel might only be of interest to believers. Other candidates assessed whether the challenging nature of the gospel material might be stimulating to some but not relevant today to others. Some, less successful, candidates tried to argue that reading the Bible would be more interesting than reading Mark's gospel (in isolation) but found the view too confusing to argue successfully. The majority of candidates attempted to fulfil the assessment criteria and overall the attempts to include a supported, personal opinion were more successful in this question than in other part (e) questions.

B584: Christian Scriptures 2 (Luke)

General comments

Overall, there was a high standard of performance on this paper. The majority of candidates responded well to the demands of the questions. Most responses to the part (a) to (c) questions were accurate and precise. Candidates displayed good, relevant knowledge and understanding of the text.

In part (d) questions, the majority of candidates were able to give a satisfactory explanation of the meaning of the prescribed text in the context of Luke's gospel. The best answers were able to expand upon this to explain the significance of the teaching for Christian life and practice today.

To attain the highest levels in part (e) questions, the assessment objective requires candidates to demonstrate the ability to understand the significance of an issue and, through supported argument and debate, discuss different views on it. Also, candidates are expected to express and justify an appropriate personal response, based on the evaluation of a range of views. There was evidence that the majority of candidates had a good understanding of the assessment objective and many produced responses which achieved the higher levels of marks. However, there was also evidence that some able candidates did not pay enough attention to expressing and justifying a personal response. In some cases it was omitted or it was limited to a brief sentence and this prevented some otherwise very good responses from attaining the highest level. A number of candidates, who produced competent answers which did include different views and an appropriate personal response, could have improved their performance by more detailed development of some of the points they made.

Comments on individual questions.

Question 1

- (a) Most responses were correct.
- (b) Most candidates gained two marks.
- (c) The majority of candidates gained two marks. A large number of candidates answered inaccurately about the seed that fell on the rock.
- (d) Satisfactory responses contained a competent paraphrase of Jesus' explanation of the parable of The Sower. Better candidates expanded upon this to make relevant comparisons with Christian life experiences today. The best answers also included the meaning and application of 'increased a hundredfold' as the spreading of the word and evangelising today.
- (e) There were some very good responses to this question where candidates showed good analysis of both the complexity of the allegories in some parables. and the simple nature of a single message in others. Examples from the gospel were used as evidence to support arguments. Many candidates were also able to quote Jesus comments in Luke 8:9–10 as evidence of the purpose of parables in challenging the listener to understand. The best responses contained some thoughtfully considered personal views. Some less successful responses were just superficial arguments of the 'yes they are' versus 'no, they aren't' type of answer which contained contradictory statements rather than supported arguments

Question 2

- (a) Most responses were correct.
- (b) The majority of candidates gained one mark for the answer that the Centurion 'has built our synagogue'. The answer 'because he loves our nation/people' was less well known.
- (c) The majority of candidates gained the three marks available for accurate quotation or paraphrase.
- (d) Good candidates highlighted the example of the faith of the Centurion as one upon which Christians might reflect and attempt to emulate and that in times of need or sickness their faith should be unwavering. A few answers also showed awareness that Jesus' comment that the Centurion showed 'greater faith than all Israel' was a teaching on not judging the faith of others because they are not of the same race or religion. The majority of answers were a satisfactory explanation of why the Centurion's faith was remarkable and the compassion he showed for his servant. However, many of these responses lacked the focus of the importance of the story for Christians today.
- (e) Answers to this question were mostly good or competent and most candidates attempted to evaluate how Jesus' teachings in Luke might be interpreted as evidence to support universalism in Christianity and equality for all religious believers. Some candidates explored equality within Christianity, others assessed equality between believers in different religions. There was a wide range of opinion as to the areas of religion where equality was relevant. There was some confusion by weaker candidates as to whether 'equal' meant being 'the same' as in having the same beliefs. The personal responses tended to be more judgmental and less balanced than in other part e) answers.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates were able to give one accurate detail.
- (b) Most answers scored full marks.
- (c) Most answers gained full credit for three correct details.
- (d) Most candidates had good knowledge and understanding of the content of the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus. Satisfactory answers explained the meaning of the parable in the context of the gospel and the teaching on reward and punishment in the afterlife. The best answers contained examples of how Christians might put the lessons to be learned from the parable into practice in their own lives. Some of the best candidates commented on the end of the parable where Abraham predicts that those who ignore the parable will also ignore the warning, even if someone should rise from the dead.
- (e) The performance on this question was generally very good. There were some tightly argued and robust responses which extolled the independent virtues of a kind heart and a religious faith with most coming to the conclusion that a kind heart was a necessary product of religious faith. In the best answers, the personal responses were usually perceptive and well considered. Some less successful answers were either unbalanced in the views presented or the arguments were confused and lacked clarity. Some candidates omitted a personal response.

B585: Jewish Scriptures 1 (Tenakh)

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 exam skills in the part (d) and part (e) 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. Most candidates were able to clearly describe and explain the teachings found within the set passages and there was also evidence of a high level of engagement with the questions. 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.

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. As in previous reports, it is again noted that 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 and, as such, could not reach the level 3 mark criteria.

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, again 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 questions 1 and 2 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. There was good evidence of detailed SPaG on the part (e) questions and most candidates obtained full marks on this criteria.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates answered this accurately.
- (b) The majority of candidates answered this accurately and, as such, it was apparent that the text was well known by candidates. Many candidates did not mention 'blessing'. Some candidates were only able to score one mark here as they repeated the same information twice i.e. rested and stop creating.

- (c) This question resulted in mixed responses by the candidates. Some answers focused on the question demands of 'life as sacred' and so scored highly; some candidates were able to describe, in detail, the concept of sanctity of life and included in their answers reference to contemporary moral issues which may question the sanctity of life i.e. abortion and euthanasia and Jewish responses to this. Some candidates, however, appeared unable to make the connection between 'life is sacred' and the idea of sanctity of life resulting in some very confused answers or answers which scored only one mark. Some candidates were unaware that, for the full three marks, the answer requires some amplification and development and gave bullet points rather than a brief description using key concepts.
- (d) Satisfactory responses concentrated on attitudes towards animal welfare within Judaism while the better candidates provided good explanations as to why this is important to Judaism and showed knowledge and understanding of the biblical background to this attitude. Many candidates discussed the creation of animals and their importance within G-d's creation followed by discussion on the laws of shechitah. It was disappointing that very few candidates discussed the concepts of dominion and stewardship in relation to creation. Some candidates were able to cite biblical support, however, these answers were not in the majority.
- (e) This was a well answered question with candidates mostly considering that Shabbat was not out of date. Many candidates were able to discuss how Shabbat is part of a tradition and were able to link this confidentially to Biblical sources. Most were able to argue that by following Shabbat you are part of a world-wide Jewish community and that following Shabbat as a G-d given commandment gives time for rest, reflection and prayer. Many candidates were able to discuss their own views and potential difficulties with Shabbat as a teenager; so engaging personally with the question. In the main this was a well answered question and candidates were able to discuss differing denominational views to the question.

Question 2

- (a) This proved to be a very accessible question and was answered correctly by nearly every candidate.
- (b) It was apparent that the text was well known by many candidates and a majority scored full marks on this question.
- (c) Many candidates failed to gain the maximum three marks available as they did not focus specifically on the question of 'how' children should 'treat' their parents. Centres are reminded to ensure that candidates read and answer the question set. Despite this, there were some excellent and accurate answers to this question showing a high level of understanding.
- (d) Performance varied here. The majority of candidates concentrated on the Ten Commandments and were able to discuss how these forbid bearing of false witness, adultery etc., however, answers wider than this were seen. Judgements were frequently made without supporting reasons or evidence which limited the level of response the candidates could obtain. Some candidates were able to discuss the question from the perspective of a modern context i.e. truthfulness in business, school and relationships which enhanced their answer.
- (e) 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 Ten Commandments which could both support and reject the question. The arguments which showed the most sophistication were the ones which not only explored the biblical text, but which also drew

upon contemporary issues, although these were not needed for a level 4 response. Some answers were let down by merely listing commandments 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 candidates 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.

Question 3

- (a) The majority of candidates answered this accurately.
- (b) It was apparent that the text was well known by many candidates and a majority scored full marks on this question.
- (c) This question was answered very well by nearly every candidate. However, some candidates wrote far too much for this question and so limited the time they had left for the longer questions. Again, centres are reminded of the need to ensure candidates are aware of the different skills needed for the different length questions.
- (d) The highest level responses showed understanding of the meaning of divine providence and were able to make clear links to the book of Jonah. Many candidates were able to discuss the text and cite examples of divine providence and that G-d has a plan for each individual. Better answers were those which discussed the events of all four chapters and how these showed divine providence and those which also discussed divine providence and questions of free-will.
- (e) Performance varied here. The majority of candidates failed to link the question to the set text of Jonah and instead just made general statements. Many answers would have been greatly improved by greater awareness of how the question could be supported or argued against by reference to Jonah. Judgements were therefore, 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 2 (Talmud)

General comments

There were some excellent and very good responses to the demands of the paper. 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 exam skills in the part (d) and part (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 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.

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 opinion, supported by reasons. However, many candidates, despite writing at considerable length 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 questions 2 and 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 by means of focused application of knowledge or well argued analysis and evaluation.

Question 1

- (a) The majority answered this accurately; however, some candidates confused the Talmud and Torah.
- (b) The majority of candidates answered this accurately.
- (c) Responses varied here. Some candidates were able to accurately describe the covenant in detail whilst others gave vague responses with a lack of key concepts and terms or detail. Whilst a three mark question does need to be epic in length, to just write three or four key words does not constitute a developed answer.
- (d) The best candidates showed understanding of the how the Talmud influences daily life and were able to give examples to illustrate their discussion. Many candidates were able to discuss how the Talmud provides guidance when individuals or communities encounter issues and problems. Better answers were from candidates who enhanced their discussion through evidence and examples.

- (e) A number of candidates made an excellent or very good attempt to present supported argument drawing upon historical and contemporary examples of peace and justice. Many candidates were able to talk about the importance of both peace and justice from a religious and secular point of view and many were able to support their argument fully through the use of textual evidence. There were a significant number of very good answers to this question which demonstrated a high level of ability to deploy relevant information and analyse it by means of supported argument.

Question 2

- (a) The majority of candidates answered this accurately.
- (b) This question was answered very well by candidates and most obtained full marks.
- (c) Answers to this question varied significantly, with many candidates not considering that their answer should relate to the overall theme of the question or the set text. Many were able to describe what a tzitzit and tefflin are and different denominational approaches to these but did not make mention of what is described in the shema with reference to how, when and where to wear them. As such, some candidates' answers to this question were limited despite length of answer.
- (d) This question was, in the main, answered very well, however, there were several candidates who appeared to not know the meaning of this key term and either left the answer blank or were off topic. The best candidates showed understanding of the background, meaning and significance of Tzedaka and were able to explain the importance of this for Jews today. Disappointingly, however, not many candidates were able to cite biblical textual evidence to support their answer. There were some very good responses to this question from candidates who showed a high level of ability to understand the question demands and construct a well written response.
- (e) Responses to this question were, in the main, good; however, some candidates (despite showing excellent knowledge) were unable to gain a high level mark due to a lack of analysis and argument. Candidates who showed the most sophistication in their answers, were the ones who not only explored physical sacrifice but spiritual sacrifice and who also drew upon contemporary issues or case studies to support 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 a high level supported analysis. Some candidates limited their discussion to just 'animal sacrifice' and as such produced rather confused or short answers.

Question 3

- (a) The majority answered this accurately.
- (b) As above, the majority answered this accurately.
- (c) This was a very well answered question, however, a few candidates were only able to correctly name 2 of the 3 people.
- (d) Candidates achieved some good answers through explanation of the importance of the Amidah for Jews. The better candidates were those who linked the importance of the Amidah to their forefathers, discussed the range of requests which can be made and so linking it to its relevance for a wide variety of people. In the main the answers to this question were satisfactory and some were good with candidates showing a high level of ability to deploy relevant learning.

- (e) A number of candidates made an excellent or very good attempt to present supported argument drawing upon their learning from the set texts. Many candidates were able to relate their argument well to modern Judaism and contemporary issues and provide detailed personal response to the question. There was a significant number of very good answers to this question which demonstrated a high level of ability amongst candidates to deploy relevant information and analyse it through supported argument.

B587: Muslim Texts 1 (Qur'an)

General comments

The cohort for this exam still remains small; therefore, the following comments need to be read with this caveat in mind.

There were few rubric errors and candidates seemed to use the allocated time correctly. Some responses to part (d) questions were 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 part (e) questions, 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. Candidates need to approach the stimulus from an objective standpoint, developing responses to the issue before coming to a conclusion

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Almost all candidates answered correctly.
- (b) Most answers were correct.
- (c) Better candidates just gave factual references.
- (d) Although many answers were of level 2 standard, a number of candidates seemed to miss that the Qur'an is believed by Muslims to be word of Allah. Good candidates went beyond just listing points and offered explanations for some of the points raised.
- (e) The better candidates displayed a reasonable knowledge between the importance of reciting the Qur'an and the need for understanding.

Question 2

- (a) Almost all answered correctly.
- (b) Many candidates managed to gain only one mark suggesting that they were not relating the question to the specific surah, as they were asked to do.
- (c) Well answered with most candidates achieving all three marks.
- (d) Fairly well answered with most candidates gaining level 2 or above. The better candidates tended to go beyond just referencing to the afterlife and referred to present day benefits of keeping to 'the straight way'.
- (e) Many candidates found this question challenging with most assuming that submission to Allah was general submission as opposed to action. This led to many candidates struggling to get beyond top level 2 /bottom level 3 marks

Question 3

- (a) Almost all answers were correct.
- (b) Most, but not all candidates, answered correctly. Again, reference to the text is essential.

- (c)** Most candidates answered correctly but once again, candidates are reminded to make reference to the surah mentioned in the question.
- (d)** This was well answered by a number of candidates who highlighted the link between a specific belief crucial to Islam and the behaviour of individual Muslims.
- (e)** Many candidates gave a very one-sided answer to this question so failing to offer different points of view. Higher level candidates tended to contrast scientific attitudes on life after death to religious beliefs.

B588: Muslim Texts 2 (Sunnah and Hadith)

General comments

The cohort for this exam still remains small; therefore, the following comments need to be read with this caveat in mind.

The most popular questions were questions 1 and 2.

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

For part (d) questions, depth and analysis are needed for candidates to achieve top level 3 marks. In part (e), 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.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

- (a) Almost all candidates answered correctly.
- (b) Most candidates gave accurate answers.
- (c) Most candidates managed to gain full marks.
- (d) The better candidates looked beyond prayer as being a pillar and looked at how it strengthened the believer's faith and relationship with Allah
- (e) Many candidates managed to access top level 2 or lower level 3 marks. Candidates tended to choose a pillar they thought most important and then compared it to the other four. Some compared hajj and zakat alongside the other three pillars. Some candidates found it difficult to develop arguments for an opposing viewpoint so failed to access the top level of response.

Question 2

- (a) Many answers were vague or inaccurate.
- (b) Most candidates gave accurate answers.
- (c) This was poorly answered with a number of candidates only achieving one mark.
- (d) Answers were fairly general though better candidates related present behaviour to references from the Last Sermon.
- (e) Many candidates found this a difficult question, partly by not defining what they meant by being 'equal' so leading to superficial responses which failed to reach the higher levels.

Question 3

- (a) Almost all candidates answered correctly.
- (b) Most candidates gave accurate answers, though some confused this hadith with the Last Sermon.
- (c) Most candidates achieved full marks.
- (d) A few candidates managed to move beyond level 1 in their responses by showing the different ways in which Sunni and Shia might interpret this hadith and its consequences, but some answers were very superficial.
- (e) There was scope here to develop what was meant by 'Following' the words of Allah other than just reciting or understanding them. Candidates struggled to offer different and supported points of view.

B589: Perspectives on World Religions

General comments

The paper proved accessible to most candidates and the vast majority were able to fulfil the demands of the paper within the allocated time. There were few rubric infringements.

A minority of candidates responded to the questions 'out of order' beginning with the (e) part of the questions. There is no rule against this but it was noted that some of these candidates spent far too long on the (e) parts, writing as much as four sides for each response. This approach was least successful when candidates flitted between questions, for example; 2(e), 14 (e), 2 (d), 14 (d), 2, (c), 14 (c), 2 (b), 14 (b), 2(a) then 14 (a). Some of these candidates were unable to sustain logical lines of thought, which affected the quality of their responses.

Many candidates offered clear and appropriate responses to the questions in parts (a) to (c) of each section where short answers or even a one word response are required. Some candidates gave unnecessarily extended responses to these sections however, especially to part c) of the question. This must have affected their overall time management. Some candidates offered several responses where only one or two were required. Centres should be aware that responses will be marked in the order in which they are written. Where a candidate offers several responses, for example to a part (a) question which is asking for one response, the candidate's first response will be marked. If that response is wrong, no other responses will be credited even if they are correct. This is to ensure that candidates who do not really know the answer, do not gain marks accidentally by the 'scatter gun' approach to responding to questions.

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 very 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. Many candidates referred to recent or current figures within the faith. A few candidates limited the value of their response by offering a discussion of the topic, including their own opinion along the lines of a part (e) response.

There were many excellent responses to the (e) part of each question although reaching the full marks for this part is challenging for many candidates. 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 responses showed the personal response as a series of comments, weighing up 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 the value of their response. A few candidates failed to offer any religious content at all whilst some developed an argument 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

- (a) The overwhelming majority of candidates responding to questions 1, 2 or 3 offered the Big Bang Theory. As the question was about the origin of the world and not the origin of humanity, evolution was not accepted as a response.
- (b) The majority of answers identified elements such as stewardship, care and responsibility. Many candidates focused on stewardship and dominion as reasons. Some, responding from the point of view of Christianity or Judaism, suggested that as, according to Genesis, animals were created before humans we should ensure their welfare is guaranteed. A significant minority of candidates incorrectly said that human rights should be applied to animals, or that animals and humans were equal. Some misread the question and offered two ways people might show respect towards animals.
- (c) The vast majority of candidates spoke about the Creator giving humans the planet to look after (or to sustain it) and the need to look after the planet for future generations. Various examples of stewardship, both of the natural environment and of human beings, were offered.
- (d) The best responses to this part offered some explanation as to why followers of the religion of their choice held different views about the origin of the world. Candidates referred to traditions about creation from within the religion and also how the development of science had altered perceptions and challenged traditional thought. Candidates who offered an account of beliefs about the origin of the world, without explanation as to why these beliefs are held, limited their response to the middle or lower band of marks. A significant number of candidates seemed to assume that scientific approaches to this issue were impossible to reconcile with religious views.
- (e) Candidates offered different appropriate approaches to this stimulus. Some considered the stimulus to be referring to natural disasters, others to the destruction of the environment by human activity and some to the impact of moral evil on the environment. Those who concentrated on the environmental effect of human activity referred to this being an issue for all humans and that whilst there may be many followers of a religion in the world, it was not fair to expect them to be able to save the world on their own. Some considered that, with divine help, it might be possible but even then it was considered to be a responsibility of all as all people share the planet. Those who took the stimulus to be referring to disasters such as earthquakes agreed that their religion could not save the world from them but saw ways in which the religion did and could offer help. Candidates referred to worldwide charities with a religious origin or sympathy which were at the forefront of disaster relief. Some candidates, writing from the point of view of Christianity, referred to the view that as Christians felt the burden of stewardship they could save the world through evangelism and the conversion of more people to the faith, who would then work to solve the environmental problems.

Section B

- (a) Most responses offered a criterion from the Just War Theory as to how war can be morally justifiable.
- (b) Candidates offered reasons drawn from the teaching of the religions such as; love your neighbour, turn the other cheek, you shall not kill, ahimsa, pacifism, or the sanctity of life. Some cited the examples of religious figures such as Mahatma Ghandi or Martin Luther King Jnr.

- (c) Most candidates were able to offer three distinct examples such as torture, imprisonment without trial and no access to education. A few candidates gave elaborate and extensive explanations of how these were an abuse of Human Rights, which clearly affected their time management
- (d) This question asked candidates to link religious teaching with the UDHR. This was accomplished by those candidates who took the general moral principles of the religion and linked them to the principle of equal treatment which underpins much of the UDHR. Some candidates failed to make the link at all and just referred to moral principles without reference to the religion or to the UDHR.
- (e) Many responses to this stimulus consisted of a discussion of the Just War theory. Some referred to the wider effects of war and made links with human rights, the sanctity of life and the immorality of vast expenditure on arms when many people are living in poverty. There were some very mature reflections on the way in which religions had approached the issue of war over time and the extent to which religious texts could be offered to support and to contradict the stimulus. It was noted that some responses tended to be describing views in exceptional detail rather than commenting on them or discussing them.

Section C

- (a) The idea of equal treatment was offered by most candidates.
- (b) Many candidates failed to give examples of racism. Responses such as 'racist treatment' or 'being racist to immigrants' could not be credited, as the exact nature of the treatment was not given. Some gave historical examples such as Segregation in the USA, the attitude of the Ku Klux Klan or Apartheid in South Africa.
- (c) Most candidates seemed to be aware of the attitude of their chosen religion. In the case of Christianity for example; the concept of Christianity as an evangelistic religion which actively seeks to welcome converts. Only one attitude (the attitude of some....) was required in response to this question and only one was credited, which in line with the marking process described above, was the first offered by the candidate. Marks were awarded for appropriate description of the attitude.
- (d) There were many good responses to this question with sound reference to the teaching of the religion. Candidates referred for example to the dignity of humans as creations of the divine. Responses from a Christian perspective often referred to the parable of the Good Samaritan and St Paul's teaching about all 'being one in Christ'. Some responses cited Peter's vision, or Jesus choosing to teach women as well as men. Some candidates identified the resurrection appearance to Mary as an example of gender equality.
- (e) Many responses to this stimulus saw the potential for good which could come from the world having only one religion especially if the moral principles of the religion became universally practised. Many candidates also noted, however, that all religions have their divisions and that they had all failed to live up to their own moral expectations and therefore the world might not be any better. It might in fact be worse, if the track record of internal religious disputes were a guide to how things might be. Many responses focused on the importance of hard won religious freedom as a human right and also on the value of diversity and pluralism in a modern multicultural society.

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

Please see reports booklet for Specification B: Philosophy and/or Applied Ethics (J121/J621) for the report on this unit.

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