

GCSE

Religious Studies A (World Religion(s))

General Certificate of Education **J620**

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

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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

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

General Comments:

The paper achieved a good level of differentiation with an encouraging proportion of candidates scoring highly. Most candidates wrote extensively, with about half making use of additional booklets. Questions 1 and 2 were the most popular by a considerable margin. Comparatively few candidates attempted question 3, but where this was attempted it was generally done well showing a good understanding of the topic. Most candidates gained level 3 on part e) (evaluation) questions. Those who attain level 4 go beyond giving arguments on both sides of the debate to a personal response that is genuinely evaluative, looking at counter arguments for points they have raised and assessing where an argument is strong or weak.

There were few, if any rubric errors and the majority of candidates seem to have been able to complete the paper comfortably in the time available. Spelling, punctuation and grammar is generally of a high standard with most candidates using specialist language and terminology accurately and with confidence.

A major issue that limits the marks gained by candidates is failure to read the question correctly and so to be less specific than required in their response (examples appear in the specific question guidance below). Where a part c) question asks candidates to describe ONE thing, it is important that they do limit their response to one thing, as further ideas they move onto are not credited.

Some candidates answer the question paper in reverse, beginning with part e. This is understandable as the majority of marks are available for parts e) and d). There is no evidence from this paper that this approach has disadvantaged candidates, although similarly there is no evidence that candidates who take this approach are performing better than those who don't. There is also the danger that this approach may lead to candidates running out of time for the shorter questions and so missing a significant number of marks.

There is evidence of strong teaching on this paper with candidates being well prepared for the examination and many candidates performing very well indeed.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

Q1 (a)

Almost all candidates gave the correct response (Dhamma) to this question. A very few gave the name of a portion of the teachings (such as the Noble Eightfold Path) and this was not credited as the question asked for the name of the teachings and this was very specific.

Q1 (b)

Almost all candidates gained both marks on this question. The very few that didn't clearly did not understand the question and guessed at their answers.

Q1 (c)

Most candidates gained three marks on this question. Where they failed to do so it was often because they failed to read the question carefully enough and had described what dukkha is rather than how it might be caused.

Q1 (d)

Most candidates answered this well. Some candidates listed teachings such as the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, along with many other surface features of Buddhist teaching and practice, without going any further; these gained level 3. Most candidates either did not mention meditation or did so superficially, despite this being at the core of Buddhist practice. Those who gained the highest marks explained the way in which following these teachings would lead to nibbana (for example by seeing the world as it truly is.)

Q1 (e)

Whilst there were some excellent responses to this question, showing excellent understanding; many struggled and sometimes produced confused answers. The most common difficulty encountered by candidates seems to have been in understanding the connection between samsara, rebirth and nibbana in the context of the question, with many saying that without rebirth there was only one chance to reach nibbana (without considering what would happen to those who don't) or arguing that even without rebirth it was still possible to break out of samsara - without addressing the logical contradiction in this statement. Some interpreted the question to mean that Buddhists do not actually believe in rebirth. Most were able to offer reasons against the statement, based on the moral relevance of the Five Precepts and the Eightfold Path, as well as the usefulness of the Dharma in understanding the 'way the world is' and overcoming unhappiness in life. Many candidates did not appreciate the word 'teachings' in the question and took it to mean any aspect of Buddhist practice. A very small number of candidates wrote outstanding answers and those that did have a sound understanding of the question were almost always able to offer genuine evaluation, so reaching level 4. A few candidates indicated that the Buddha achieved enlightenment in one lifetime (without any rebirth), ignoring the Jakata Tales, which teach otherwise. An equal number, however, were aware that the Buddha had more than one birth and incorporated this into their response.

Question No. 2

Q2 (a)

Almost all candidates gave the correct response.

Q2 (b)

Very few candidates failed to gain both of the available marks.

Q2 (c)

Few candidates answered this convincingly. Most candidates failed to appreciate that the question asked for "one" way in which Uposatha days might benefit Buddhists and wrote about many potential benefits in a superficial way, thereby disadvantaging themselves. Many did not seem to know what Uposatha Days are and gave very general responses not linked to the specific practices of Uposatha days. Candidates giving a response of this kind generally gained 1 or 2 marks.

Q2 (d)

Most candidates were able to tackle this question well, although many did so superficially by stating rather than explaining ideas. Many seem to believe that observing festivals might lead to debauchery and crime, as Buddhists are unable to resist the decadence of such occasions. Many candidates did not actually refer to a specific festival in their answers, talking only in general terms. Where candidates did address different festivals they often did so well and thoughtfully. The most common approaches were that the Buddha did not require festivals, that festivals do not lead directly to enlightenment and that extra precepts and meditation can be undertaken at any time.

Q2 (e)

Candidates performed quite well on this question, although many did not refer to any actual pilgrimage sites, preferring to talk in general terms. However, the vast majority failed to appreciate the reference to money in the statement, which they seemed to interpret as “Pilgrimages are a waste of time”. Most were able to offer good arguments both for and against the value of pilgrimage. A number suggested that poor Buddhists might be driven to crime in order to pay to go on pilgrimage. Those who performed best on this question made some reference to Buddhist teachings on the use of money as well as the advantages of pilgrimage.

Question No. 3

Q3 (a)

Most candidates were able to give a correct response to this question with the most common response being ‘Mahayana’.

Q3 (b)

Any response that is true of Mahayana Buddhism was credited, even if it is not unique to Mahayana and most candidates gained the marks for this question. The most popular responses were the path of the arhat and the importance of the monastic sangha.

Q3 (c)

Many candidates attempted to explain a single difference between Theravada and Mahayana rather than the underlying question being asked. The question is focussed on the reasons that differences exist, rather than a description of the differences. While there were some excellent responses to this question, relatively few candidates achieved all 3 marks.

Q3 (d)

Responses were quite clearly divided between candidates who had a poor understanding of this area and were ‘guessing’ (often with such ideas as Zen Buddhists believing the scriptures to be inaccurate due to a long period of oral transmission) and those who were well prepared and had a very good understanding. This meant that the majority of candidates either achieved high level 3 or low level 2. This is an area of the specification that shows less evidence of strong teaching than some others.

Q3 (e)

This question posed difficulties for a number of candidates. Most were able to argue from a Theravadan perspective about how Bodhisattvas could not help Buddhists, particularly highlighting the idea that Buddhism is a personal journey and that the Buddha did not receive help to become enlightened. Arguments to support the notion that Bodhisattvas can help people tended not to go beyond an assertion that Mahayana Buddhists believe this to be the case, or that Bodhisattvas had ‘been there’ and so could offer good advice. A number of candidates stated incorrectly that Zen Buddhism does not accept the idea of Bodhisattvas. There were, as always, a minority of excellent responses showing outstanding understanding, but the majority of candidates here achieved low to middle level 3 or high level 2. Strong responses cited Bodhisattvas as examples of the Six Perfections and as objects of meditation. Some also considered the effects of metta and puna generated by Bodhisattvas for the good of all sentient beings. Surprisingly few candidates discussed the Dalai Lama as someone believed by many Buddhists to be a Bodhisattva and considered the value of his role.

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

General Comments:

The paper achieved a good level of differentiation with an encouraging proportion of candidates scoring highly. This session saw some of the most outstanding performances of recent years with a very high overall standard. Most candidates wrote extensively, with the majority making use of additional booklets. Questions 1 and 2 were the most popular by a considerable margin. Comparatively few candidates attempted question 3, but where this was attempted it was generally done well showing a good understanding of the topic. Most candidates gained level 3 on part e (evaluation) questions. Those who attain level 4 go beyond giving arguments on both sides of the debate to a personal response that is genuinely evaluative, looking at counter arguments for points they have raised and assessing where an argument is strong or weak.

There were few, if any rubric errors and the majority of candidates seem to have been able to complete the paper comfortably in the time available. Spelling, punctuation and grammar is generally of a high standard with most candidates using specialist language and terminology accurately and with confidence.

A major issue that limits the marks gained by candidates is failure to read the question correctly and so to be less specific than required in their response (examples appear in the specific question guidance below). Where a part c) question asks candidates to describe ONE thing, it is important that they do limit their response to one thing, as further ideas they move onto are not credited.

Some candidates answer the question paper in reverse, beginning with part e). This is understandable as the majority of marks are available for parts e) and d). There is no evidence from this paper that this approach has disadvantaged candidates, although similarly there is no evidence that candidates who take this approach are performing better than those who don't. There is also the danger that this approach may lead to candidates running out of time for the shorter questions and so missing a significant number of marks.

There is evidence of strong teaching on this paper with candidates being well prepared for the examination and many candidates performing very well indeed.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

Q1 (a)

Nearly all candidates gained the mark on this question.

Q1 (b)

Most answered this well and the majority of candidates did understand the distinctive features of Samatha meditation. Credit was given to 'in order to reach enlightenment' as it was felt that Samatha can be seen as a step on the path to enlightenment although it is not believed to lead to it directly. Where candidates did not gain both marks it was usually because it was felt that they had given the same response twice using different words.

Q1 (c)

A number of candidates did not know what metta is and answered on meditation in general. These responses were not credited unless accompanied by some evidence that the concept of metta was understood. Some focused on acts of loving kindness rather than meditation, but were not disadvantaged by this. The majority of candidates answered this well and gained the 3 marks.

Q1 (d)

Most candidates answered this reasonably well and gained level 2. Some had misread the question and described rupas without explaining how they could help lead to enlightenment. A significant minority were not sure what a rupa is and addressed other issues such as puja or prayer beads in their responses.

Q1 (e)

Candidates generally answered this question well and were able to give a variety of supported viewpoints. Candidates commented on the concept of anicca, meaning that Buddhists should not get attached to temporary buildings; on the inadvisability of spending money on buildings and on the fact that Buddhist practices can be carried out at home. Against this they suggested the value of worshipping or meditating en masse; on the special role of the vihara as the home of the monastic sangha and as a valuable resource for teaching and learning and on the belief of some Buddhists that puna accumulates around certain stupas. A fair proportion of candidates managed some degree of evaluation in their response and there were some outstanding responses.

Question No. 2

Q2 (a)

Almost all students gained the mark here. 'Circle of life' was credited and was 'Wheel of Life', although re-incarnation was not.

Q2 (b)

Most knew the correct answers.

Q2 (c)

Many candidates did not appreciate the word "one" in the question and disadvantaged themselves by discussing several teachings superficially. Some candidates applied wider Buddhist teachings to the family e.g. Anatta and this was credited where it was done accurately and with clear relevance to the question. Those who discussed the teaching of tanha and how this might lead a Buddhist not to have a family were also credited where they related their response clearly to the question. General responses that made no reference to specific Buddhist teaching were not credited. A significant majority of candidates cited the Sigalovada Sutta.

Q2 (d)

This question was answered quite generally and superficially by many candidates. Answers often listed ideas like metta, karuna, the 4 brahma viharas, karma, and compassion without mentioning the community. Some candidates offered more sophisticated answers referring to Right Livelihood and the Sigalovada Sutta. Some candidates made reference to Engaged Buddhism and the Western Buddhist Order and some specified the community of the monastic sangha. Most gained at least level 2, with a number of excellent responses.

Q2 (e)

Most candidates were able to give a sound response to this question with a wide variety of supported points on both sides. Most cited the monastic sangha as an example of acceptable unemployment and this was acceptable where it was clearly supported and related to the question. There were some excellent examples of evaluation and most managed to gain level 3 quite comfortably.

Question No. 3

Q3 (a)

Very few, if any candidates failed to gain the mark for this question.

Q3 (b)

Most gained the marks here. Common responses included memorising and chanting it as well as physically treating copies with respect.

Q3 (c)

Most were able to gain the marks without difficulty and a wide variety of acceptable responses were seen.

Q3 (d)

Most found this question reasonably straightforward. Almost all of the candidates knew what the Vinaya Pitaka is and were able to suggest reasons for its importance including holding the monastic community together; ensuring the optimum conditions for achieving enlightenment and allowing monks and nuns an opportunity to repent and make spiritual progress.

Q3 (e)

Most candidates were able to give a sound response with most achieving from the middle of level 2 to the middle of level 3. Candidates commented on the authority of scripture and how this might be affected by the non-divine status of the Buddha and the contingent nature of his teachings. Many distinguished between things that should not be changed (such as the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path) and parts that might be considered out-dated such as the Vinaya Pitaka.

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

General Comments:

Overall, candidates responded positively to the paper. The majority of candidates were well prepared for the questions 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 attempting question 3. However, for those who answered question 3, the standard was comparable to questions 1 and 2.

Questions that tested knowledge were generally answered well, as were (d) questions. These questions also allowed for differentiation. However, few candidates achieved the upper marks in (e) questions; this was mainly because few candidates offered a fully developed personal response.

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

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

There are still problems with candidates not indicating that they are using continuation sheets and also the standard of hand-writing for some candidates continues to be a great cause for concern as some scripts are virtually illegible and, thus, incomprehensible.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

- 1(a) This question was not answered well and few could answer correctly.
- 1(b) This question was generally answered well. A few candidates did confuse it with the Two Great Commandments.
- 1(c) This question was generally answered well. Most candidates understood the Christian concept of Salvation and were able to give an appropriate answer.
- 1(d) The responses to this question were pleasing. Candidates' understanding of the importance of the Holy Spirit has improved significantly over the last few years and many of the answers showed a good depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding.
- 1(e) This question was generally answered well although the range of opinions offered was quite slim. Many candidates concentrated on the fact that the foundations of Christianity are old and therefore not particularly relevant to the world today. Some candidates could see that Biblical commandments and teachings could be adapted to suit today's world and that the principles behind them remained timeless. As mentioned in the General Comments, many candidates failed to achieve Level 4 because their personal statement was quite weak.

Question No. 2

- 2(a) Most candidates answered this correctly.
- 2(b) Answers to this question varied. There is still the misconception amongst many candidates that Sunday is the 7th day of the week on which God rested after the creation and is therefore the Sabbath. Other candidates do understand that it is the day that Christians may choose to rest but that it is not actually the Sabbath. The majority of students knew it was the Christian Holy Day but fewer that would be hoped could recognise Sunday as the day Jesus rose from the dead, and therefore the day that Christians have as their weekly remembrance of the resurrection.
- 2(c) The majority of answers for this question were based on the idea of “giving something up” for Lent to remember when Jesus fasted in the wilderness. A few described other ways, for example, the mark of ash on Ash Wednesday.
- 2(d) The responses to this question were rather disappointing mainly because many candidates did not understand that Easter is a separate and very different time to Lent. Many answers included Holy Week, the crucifixion and Palm Sunday, whilst neglecting to include much if anything about Jesus’ resurrection. This meant that many candidates did not receive higher marks for this question as they did not describe the importance of Easter at all.
- 2(e) This was generally well answered but many candidates did struggle to think of reasons why Christians should not go on pilgrimage other than cost or physical disability. Some answers were rather formulaic as if they have been taught a list of reasons for and against pilgrimage rather than exploring the spiritual benefits of the journey versus a general life of Christian observation.

Question No. 3

- 3(a) The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly.
- 3(b) The answers to this question were quite mixed. Some candidates had obviously studied WCC in depth and knew of its purpose and its actions in relation to Ecumenism. Some candidates, however, were rather vague and the answers quite generalised and not specific enough to be credited.
- 3(c) Generally answered satisfactorily. The majority of answers tended to revolve around the practicalities of worship rather than the theology but were valid.
- 3(d) Overall, this question was answered quite well with candidates looking at the practical reasons why Christians might share a building as well as the religious reasons. Most mentioned Ecumenism in their answers.
- 3(e) There were some really good responses to this question, firmly supported by Biblical references. A number of points of view were offered and personal responses were varied and interesting.

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

General Comments

While there were a significant number of candidates who performed well on this paper, there were a number who were unable to access the full range of marks available. A small majority of candidates were well prepared for the questions and appear to have been well taught; however there were some candidates who lacked the basic knowledge and understanding to access higher marks.

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

Questions that tested knowledge were generally answered well, as were (d) questions. These questions also allowed for differentiation. However, few candidates achieved the upper marks in (e) questions; this was mainly because few candidates offered a fully developed personal response.

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

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

There are still problems with candidates not indicating that they are using continuation sheets and also the standard of hand-writing for some candidates continues to be a great cause for concern as some scripts are virtually illegible and, thus, incomprehensible.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question No. 1

- 1(a) Overall, this question was answered well.
- 1(b) Many candidates struggled with this question. Most did identify the font as a feature used for baptism but too few also identified the baptistery pool. Very few identified the Paschal Candle.
- 1(c) The responses to this question were, in some ways, rather disappointing. Some candidates failed to mention Eucharist/Mass at all and many thought it was mainly used for marriages and reading the Bible.
- 1(d) The responses to this question were varied. A significant number of candidates failed to mention that the primary purpose of worship was the adoration of God and too many believed that worship was mainly a way of asking God for something.
- 1(e) The responses to this question were rather disappointing. In many instances, it was not clear that the candidates really understood what symbols were and why they were used. Too many candidates equated symbols with idolatry.

Question No. 2

- 2(a) Generally well answered.
- 2(b) Many of the responses to this question lacked a demonstration of religious knowledge. Too many candidates were concerned with buying a wedding dress or writing their own vows. Very few mentioned attending marriage preparation classes or asking for the Banns to be read or discussing marriage with the appropriate clergy.
- 2(c) Overall, this question was answered well.
- 2(d) Overall, this question was answered well.
- 2(e) Many of the responses to this question were quite weak. Some candidates struggled to get beyond the idea that, if you are religious – you should have a religious funeral; if you are not – you shouldn't. Stronger responses looked at the theology behind the service while some concentrated on the benefit to the bereaved.

Question No. 3

- 3(a) There were a disappointing number of candidates who did not know that "Gospel" means "Good News".
- 3(b) This question was answered well. There now seems to be a better understand of what the Apocrypha is and its place in the canon.
- 3(c) Generally, this was answered well.
- 3(d) This question was not answered as well as expected. Some candidates simply concentrated on the fact that a number of people wrote the books over a period of time and then the books had to be translated. Few looked at the historical background of the books, their purpose and the reasons why they were or where not including in the canon.
- 3(e) The responses to this question were quite mixed but, overall, addressed the question well.

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

General Comments:

Candidates mainly answered question 2.

Candidates were well prepared for the paper and had good general knowledge and understanding on which to base their answers.

There were very few candidates that answered all of the questions or failed to answer any questions.

Weaker responses seemed to be able to access the questions and form some relevant responses to most questions.

Stronger responses were able to engage in detail with the most questions but did struggle on one or two.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

A. Many struggled for a clear definition. Many showed knowledge of Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament but ignored the Benediction aspect. On occasion it became mixed up with St Benedict and his order.

B. Very few candidates failed to get 2/2

C. Very few candidates failed to get 3/3

D. While the rosary could be described well, not all candidates were able to show their understanding of its importance. A few considered the Mysteries as leading into contemplation of the Life of Jesus and Mary. Many understood how it aided meditation through repetition and handling the beads.

E. Candidates showed a good level of knowledge and understanding and were able to address the question specifically. This enabled many to gain higher marks.

Question 2

A. Some considered charity; others a charity. Both were credited.

B. A good range of biblical and general teaching was offered in response. This was often the second Great Commandment, the Golden Rule or St James 'Faith without action...'. Bible stories such as Dives and Lazarus, Parable of the Sheep and Goats and the Widow's mite and Jesus were all used to good effect.

C. Some candidates considered the different charisms of apostolic and contemplative orders to frame their response to good effect. Some had a general idea of what Religious orders could do, often including fund raising. Some were confused and thought of orders from above or orders of service.

D. Many responses here were not precise. A few better responses centred on the domestic Church, first place of learning about the Faith. Some considered the Holy Family.

E. Well argued, tried and tested points on both sides. Many felt that parents were in the right to begin the initiation into the Catholic Church which could then be chosen by the individual at Confirmation.

Question 3

A. Some knew it was 45. 46 was also credited as the order may include Mac I and II in some Catholic bibles. Many made wild guesses.

B. Many good responses

C. Well answered by most candidates.

D. Not all candidates picked up the cue 'used in worship' from the questions leaving answers on the importance of the Old Testament in general and therefore became a little repetitive in E. Better answers looked at the inclusion of the Old Testament readings in the Liturgy of the Word, how the priest links the Old Testament reading and the Gospel in his homily, the responsorial psalm in Mass or psalms in private prayer and the influence in hymns. Others considered influence on behaviour such as 10 Commandments.

E. Again candidates made good use of their knowledge and understanding to address the question specifically. Some made use of a prepared essay structure where they include views for and against and comment on the strength and weakness of those views. Candidates would be better served by focusing on discussing the statement in the question from different perspectives including a Christian one and supporting their discussion with evidence in the form of quotes, scholars or facts. This fits the levels of response much better than a pre-prepared "I think, a Christian thinks, a hole in their argument is" type response.

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

General Comments

The vast majority of candidates did well on this paper. The questions were accessible and allowed for a range of responses. The most popular questions were in sections A and B. A slight increase from previous years in the amount of candidates answering section C. No common rubric errors.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

Q1 (a)

The vast majority of candidates answered this correctly and achieved 1 mark. Answers included Moksha, Mukti or Nibana Brahman.

Q1 (b)

Again, the vast majority of candidates that answered this identified two distinct things Hindus believe about Shiva. Answers included, the destroyer god, lord of the dance, and yogi. Those few candidates that didn't get full marks either identified beliefs about a different god or wrote that Shiva was a goddess.

Q1 (c)

This question was answered very well by the majority of candidates, outlining in detail what Maya was. Very few candidates did not understand what the term meant or got it confused with samsara.

Q1 (d)

Again, generally this was answered well by candidates. Top level responses outlined a number of reasons why a Hindu's dharma might be different. Answers mainly referred to varnashramadharma and broke it down giving examples. Some candidates identified that Sanatan Dharma applies to all. And some identified how a woman and a man's dharma might also be different and gave examples.

Q1 (e)

There was a range of responses to this question, and it was generally answered well. Some candidates got a little confused with the term such pluralism – using it incorrectly.

Candidates that answered well were able to identify different explanations of the Deity.

Question No. 2

Q2 (a)

The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly, 'Divali'. Very few candidates identified it as Holi.

Q2 (b)

Again, the majority of candidates received full marks for this question. Examples include puja, arti ceremony, offered of prashad, teachings from the festivals, reading from specific holy books related to the festival.

Q2 (c)

Most candidates answered this well. Most wrote about the defeat of Holika and Prahlad being rescued from the fire by Vishnu. Some candidates told the story of how Holika would eat children and it represented good triumphing over evil.

Q2 (d)

The question was generally answered well. Candidates referred to the importance and power of the goddess within Hinduism and for women and the bringing together of the family. Some candidates simply described what happened during Durgapuja and didn't refer back to the question about the importance of it.

Q2 (e)

This was answered well. Candidates outlined a number of reasons why a festival could be deemed as important to Hindus e.g. brings families together, rekindle faith, teaches the younger generation about the religion, the important lessons to be learnt from the stories associated with the festival. Then many candidates would go on to say that there were reasons why festivals were not the most important thing in Hinduism for instance, that they have become commercial and the meaning has been lost, other things are seen as more important for example pilgrimage, following varnashramadharma, puja, ahimsa.

Question No. 3

Q3 (a)

Most candidates answered this correctly.

Q3 (b)

Again, the vast majority of candidates gained full marks on this question identifying two characteristics of Vishnu. These included blue to represent endless sky, preserver, he comes down to earth as avatars.

Q3 (c)

This was reasonably well answered. Some candidates offered more than one belief on Shaktism and could only be credited for the first one outlined.

Q3 (d)

This was answered well. Candidates identified reasons like location, traditions being passed down from one family member to the next and Hindus being drawn to a particular personal god.

Q3 (e)

Generally this question was answered well and candidates argued why Vaisnavism could be considered the most important division – arguments included preserver god, family tradition, links with Hindu texts, bhakti devotion, examples of how Vaisnavism has been embraced by the West – Hare Krishnas. They would then go on to state the other divisions and say why these also may be considered important.

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

General Comments:

Some rubric errors were noted although there are still a few candidates who like to try all 3 questions (or parts thereof). Most used their time well.

Legibility still remains a problem on some scripts.

Some candidates lost marks due either to misreading or misinterpreting the question. Also, accepting only the first answer (when a choice was given) still led to some candidates losing marks.

A number of candidates wrote far more than was needed for part d) answers.

On parts a)-c) answers, a number of candidates gave a word only when more explanation was needed for accuracy and for examiners to mark appropriately.

There seems to be a continuous improvement in the answer to Part e) of the questions. Although many of the answers tended to be formulaic, most candidates clearly understood that they need to give different points of view as well as offer a personal opinion.

However, a lack of knowledge in some places meant not all candidates managed to access full marks and a significant number of students still struggled with the part d) questions but this tended to be due to not reading the question properly. A number of candidates seemed not to understand what they were being asked to do in part c) questions 'describe'.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

Parts a-c: Most candidates gained full marks.

d) There were some good answers but too many simply gave a short generic comment followed by listing/describing rather than explaining the importance of the Five Pillars.

e) A number of thoughtful answers which contrasted the belief in the Day of Judgement with belief in Allah and the Shahadah. However, a number interpreted belief as a thing or action and wrote about various aspects of Islam rather than concentrating upon beliefs.

Question No. 2

a) The majority of candidates gained the mark.

b) A number gave Ashurah, Salat-ul-Jumu'ah, Mawlid an-Nabi, Ramadan or Hajj and gained no credit. The question specifically asked for the two **major** annual festivals in Islam.

c) Usually correct. Some candidates however gave very generic comments and quite a few gave one word answers.

d) A number of candidates seemed to not know the meaning of the word 'affect' and many gave a description of Salat-ul-Jumu'ah only. Also, a number concentrated upon the negative effects though usually inaccurately. Some candidates saw the word 'observing' and discussed it as a negative, meaning that if they were to be observed then they would feel self-conscious.

e) This caused problems as many candidates regarded 'Salat-ul-Jummah' as a festival. A significant minority also wrote about Ramadan and Hajj as festivals. Some candidates argued well about festivals in general while not mentioning any by name.

Question No. 3

This was the least popular question.

a) In general most attempts were correct.

b) Most candidates were able to give Shia specific answers.

c) Generally well answered.

d) The few candidates who attempted this achieved the bottom of level 2 due to a lack of knowledge in general about Sufism.

e) Some candidates thought interpretation meant translation. A number discussed the difference of having a physical book as opposed to the oral tradition.

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

General Comments:

Overall there was a wide range of responses. Questions 1 & 2 were the most popular. There were very few rubric errors and usually where there were, candidates realised and crossed out the answers they did not want marked. Not all students mentioned the fact that they had continued the answer elsewhere.

Almost all candidates completed the paper in the time allowed.

The lines allocated are an indication as to how much writing is expected for an appropriate response particular in parts a, b and c). However, a number of candidates still write far more than is needed to gain full marks.

All candidates were able to respond to the e) part of the questions though with varying degrees of success. Some answers displayed insight and understanding with good evaluative skills but a number still used the 'I agree/disagree formula which restricted their access to higher level marks.

Some candidates are still having problems within the part d)s either through misreading or lacking the necessary knowledge.

A number of candidates lost out on access to higher level marks through the misreading of the question; this was particularly noticeable in parts 2e) and 3e).

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

- a) For the most part answers were correct.
- b) Failure to see the word 'during' caused a lot of candidates to lose marks.
- c) Most candidates answered this question correctly and gained the full 3 marks available.
- d) Many candidates failed to discriminate between Allah and Muhammad (pbuh) showing either a misreading of the question or a lack of understanding as to the position of Muhammad (pbuh) in relation to Allah.
- e) Many students do not seem aware that Dua is private prayer, supplication, not Salah done in private.

Question No. 2

- a) Surprisingly many candidates answered this incorrectly.
- bi) A well answered question.
- bii) A number of candidates did not see the word 'at' in the question and interpreted it to mean before the funeral or funeral arrangements.

- c) This was a well answered question by the majority of candidates.
- d) This proved the most difficult question to answer for many of the candidates. There seemed to be a lack of understanding here as to the why it is important or explanation aspect of the question.
- e) Some candidates did not see the word 'not'. Many also referred to the child's 'right' to choose its own religion whilst others mentioned the discomfort or pain of some of the rituals. Not many seemed to have developed the religious and cultural reasons for performing birth rituals, causing them to lose marks.

Question No. 3

- a) Almost all of the candidates answered this question correctly.
- b) In general, this question was not well answered.
- c) A well answered question by the majority of candidates, enabling them to gain the full 3 marks available.
- d) Generally well answered by many candidates.
- e) Many argued from the standpoint of the Qur'an being a book whilst others concentrated on the transmission of the actual content. Some candidates gave thorough answers with detailed and supported points of view.

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

General Comments

Candidates' performance was impressive this year. Teachers are to be commended for the exemplary way that most candidates had been prepared. Very few examples of rubric errors were noted. Those candidates who attempted all questions obviously found that their overall mark suffered. The question on different Jewish groups and the Holocaust was the least popular option for candidates but it was attempted as effectively as the other two. The time available was generally well used and most candidates appeared to have completed all the necessary components of the paper. That said, there was evidence that some had inevitably rushed towards the end. Candidates should use the amount of space available as a rough guide to the necessary length of a response. Many wisely made use of the blank spaces at the end of part d) and e) responses. The vast majority of candidates wisely did not spend time devising complicated essay plans. Examiners are increasingly seeing genuine discussion responses rather than undeveloped lists of arguments. The very best included personal opinion throughout and not just at the end of the answer. A failure to include clear personal responses significantly reduces the number of marks that a candidate can achieve. In addition, clear reference needs to be made to Judaism. Although the handwriting of some candidates proved to be difficult to decipher, the standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar were high, given the context. As ever, it is necessary to report that evaluation responses that rely on alternating misrepresentations of the major divisions of Judaism did not score highly. This is rarely a good approach and tends to rely on a significant degree of stereotyping. There was a slight tendency for some candidates to confuse the teachings and beliefs of Judaism with those of Christianity and Islam. Candidates must ensure that they only provide the number of answers requested. Examiners have been asked to only credit the first responses given.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

1a. This question was well answered by the vast majority of candidates. There was some confusion as to the plural of mitzvah but examiners were reasonably flexible when awarding the mark.

1b. Relatively few candidates found this question to be a problem. The most common means identified included the Torah, Tenakh, Talmud and rabbis. All were credited though marks were lost where responses were seen to overlap too significantly.

1c. This question abandoned the common three part structure. Most candidates responded well but others gave three separate beliefs about G-d, rather than explaining the one. Omnipotence, for example, defined as 'all powerful' plus development or exemplification gave a candidate all three marks.

1d. This was one of the more poorly answered questions on the paper. This was largely because many candidates interpreted it as an opportunity to explain Jewish beliefs about life after death. Some briefly set out the importance being morally upright and avoiding wrongdoing. The better responses unpacked what this might entail and others went on to discuss how belief in an afterlife impacts on the Jewish funeral traditions and might provide comfort to those near death or recently bereaved.

1e. The evaluative response on the mitzvot provoked a wide range of good responses. Clearly an understanding of the term 'mitzvot' was a necessity. Some candidates compared the moral and ritual mitzvot whilst others examined the chukim and mishpatim. Specific examples were given and reference was often made to the Ten Commandments. On this occasion there was some appropriate reference to different Jewish groups and their attitudes towards observance. A wide range of opinions were evident and the nature of the quotation meant that Judaism was nearly always apparent. Candidates would be advised to evaluate throughout the answer, not just in the last paragraph.

Question 2

2a. Alternative names for Shavuot were generally identified in both Hebrew and English. The main confusions seemed to come with Shabbat and Sukkot.

2b. Candidates were able to identify different aspects of the Shavuot celebrations. These often included the night of study, decorating with flowers, eating dairy products and the sidra in the synagogue. Very general responses like 'praying' were not credited. Candidates lost marks where confusion over the identity of the festival persisted.

2c. This question was generally well answered. Candidates often made reference to some of the historical reasons for building a booth, such as identifying with the Jews in the wilderness. They were also credited for setting out some of the spiritual motivations like their reliance on G-d and themes like harmony and hospitality.

2d. This was quite a general question and it often led to detailed and interesting responses from the candidates. Many set out some of the important themes shared by many festivals. They discussed their role in bringing the family and the community together to reflect on their faith and look back to the experiences of their ancestors. The better responses went on to consider specific examples of Jewish festivals – Pesach and the High Holy days, for example - in order to illustrate their previous points. This approach worked very well.

2e. Evaluative responses on the importance of Jewish pilgrimage varied greatly in standard. Some candidates clearly had little idea of the nature of a pilgrimage whilst others simply reflected on the value of the pilgrim festivals without reference to a religious or spiritual journey. At the other extreme were excellent discussions about the tradition in the absence of the Temple and the value of pilgrimage to other sites such as Masada and Yad Vashem. The practicalities of pilgrimage were sometimes discussed. Adequate reference to Judaism was rarely an issue and opinions were balanced and often supported by argument.

Question 3

3a. A lot of candidates confused Liberal Judaism with other progressive movements which led to a wide variety of suggestions as to the place of origins.

3b. Candidates were well informed about the implications of the Holocaust. Some referred to the physical memorials to the victims and to days on which they are remembered. Others focussed more on the implications for the faith that Jews might have in the benevolence and omnipotence of G-d.

3c. This question also abandoned the usual three part structure but it was generally very well answered by the majority of candidates. The most frequent error was for candidates to state three separate causes, rather than develop the one. Aside from this, most identified a cause and provided adequate description and explanation. Most concentrated on historical causes which were, of course, credited.

3d. Some candidates have a tendency to present the choice to follow a progressive tradition as based on convenience rather than faith and commitment. This tendency was somewhat apparent in this question. That said, some strong responses included informed discussions of Liberal traditions and beliefs, including reference to their origins. The best made a clear distinction between Liberal and other progressive groups, sometimes focussing on the requirement to establish what G-d requires of an individual.

3e. This question was designed to establish whether candidates thought that there was a core set of beliefs to which all Jews should subscribe. Many reflected on this and supported their arguments with reference to clear examples from within the Jewish tradition. Candidates clearly had strong views which they were able to articulate. Once again there was often a downplaying of the commitment of progressive Jews. The implication was that Jews only follow these traditions if they lack the commitment for orthodoxy. Other responses included excellent discussions about free will and the extent to which Judaism is actually based on practice rather than belief.

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

General Comments

Examiners felt that candidates had been very well prepared for this paper and all involved are to be commended, as ever, for their efforts and commitment. Most candidates had a clear idea of the rubric and very few errors were reported. Occasionally a candidate would attempt all three questions and this had obvious negative consequences for their final mark. Some candidates abandoned questions part way through. They are advised to read all parts before deciding which question to answer. A range of different abilities, faith backgrounds and outlooks were apparent. Candidates generally seem well advised when it comes to the allocation of their time. Usually the amount written should reflect the number of marks available and the evaluation response must remain a priority. It is pleasing that candidates now tend to discuss the quotation rather than simply listing arguments for each side of the debate. The best responses include opinion throughout the answer, not just at the end in a final paragraph. It is beneficial for personal opinion to be clearly signposted. It remains the case that those responses that omit any reference to Judaism are unlikely to achieve very highly. Once again, it is necessary to state that those responses structured around what different Jewish groups are meant to believe are rarely successful. This is because they often misrepresent and stereotype the traditions in question. It would be better to discuss the beliefs and practices without attributing them, unless candidates are confident in their differentiation. A small number of candidates evidently confused Judaism with other religions, notably Islam and Christianity. All questions were reasonably popular but the third on sacred writings was the least often answered. It is not clear whether this is due to the order on the paper or the nature of the subject matter. Examiners will always endeavour to interpret candidates' handwriting using the different tools available to them. There are clearly no marks for presentation. That said, where it is impossible to understand, marks are obviously not awarded.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

1.a. Most candidates recognised the Ner Tamid. Examiners accepted reference to an eternal light and a light that hangs above the ark. If there was no mention of its whereabouts in the synagogue or permanent nature, then no mark was awarded.

1.b. This question was generally well answered. Some candidates simply wrote that it was disrespectful to portray G-d and this was deemed too general. At other times, candidates repeated themselves. Good reference was made to The Ten Commandments and G-d's nature.

1.c. The responses to the three part question on the mikveh were generally well informed though occasionally too concise. Candidates recognised its importance during the High Holy days and for nidah. Others gave useful examples like conversion and prior to marriage. The main concerns were those candidates who completely misidentified the mikveh, often confusing it with mitzvot or the mezuzah.

1.d. This question, dealing with worshipping G-d in the home seemed to provoke detailed and informed responses. Some were a little general in nature, concentrating on the advantages of having somewhere private to pray whilst others made excellent use of specific festivals and Shabbat, citing some of the rituals that might take place in the home and also the importance of the home in encouraging the beliefs and practice among children. To that end, they demonstrated an understanding of both the importance of worship and also of the home. Reference to following the mitzvot was, of course, judged as worship.

1.e. Whilst some candidates spent time misrepresenting the beliefs of certain Jewish groups, others discussed the genuine differences in synagogue design regarding the bimah and separate seating, for example. Other candidates linked the synagogue to the layout of the Temple, thus highlighting its importance, whilst others considered how an overly ornate building might lead to distraction from worship. Overall, candidates had little difficulty in identifying different arguments to evaluate and the nature of the quotation made reference to Judaism a straightforward matter. The best responses included evaluation throughout and kept the question as a clear focus. The weakest were either one-sided or confused Judaism with other Abrahamic faiths.

Question 2

2.a. It is important that candidates provide an accurate translation when requested. Unsurprisingly some were confused with the male rite of passage whilst others provided a description of the ritual, rather than stating the meaning.

2.b. There was a deal of flexibility in the marking of this question. Responses did not have to be specific to Judaism although many were. Candidates were credited for specific Hebrew terminology like gemilut hasadim and tzedekah. Equally, marks were awarded for reference to tithing, donating money, time or belongings.

2.c. Although many candidates recognised various rituals associated with death, some of those listed did not pertain to the funeral itself. Examiners did credit answers relating to the corpse but not to subsequent rituals like sitting shiva. Some responses were also considered too general or inaccurate to be credited. The best referred to the burial, the saying of Kaddish, the ripping of garments and so on.

2.d. Candidates coped well with the change of subject at this point. It was evident that candidates were sometimes explaining the importance of the Bat Mitzvah from the perspective of their own traditions which was, of course, respected. Some responses totally focussed on the Bar Mitzvah which obviously impacted significantly on the mark they were able to achieve. The best responses recognised the importance of the change of status inherent in becoming Bat Mitzvah, as well as the ceremony itself. There were good discussions about the importance of the preparations.

2.e. The aim of this question was to encourage a discussion of the merits of the structured mourning rituals often followed by the Jewish community. Most candidates recognised this intention and entered into appropriate discussions of shiva, sheloshim and yahrzeit. There were differing views as to the cathartic nature of these practices. The weaker responses simply alluded to having extended mourning rituals without demonstrating any knowledge or understanding of specific Jewish traditions. There were relatively few examples of candidates failing to give a personal opinion. Reference to the different denominations was generally misplaced and ill-informed.

Question 3

3.a. Candidates were required to identify the Ketuvim as 'Writings'. Many candidates were too general in their responses, simply identifying them as holy texts.

3.b. Success in this question was largely dependent on the candidate being correct in identifying the Ketuvim previously. If this was achieved, then the answers tended to be accurate. Both English and Hebrew terminology was acceptable.

3.c. The question was very well answered by the vast majority of candidates. There were two main approaches taken. Some candidates focussed on the way that observing the mitzvot and studying the Torah denoted respect. Others concentrated on the Torah in a physical sense and alluded to the ark, yad, bimah and so on. Both approaches were rewarded by examiners.

3.d. Most candidates found this question accessible. The best responses took on board the emphasis on private worship and so concentrated on the impact of the texts in the home and on a Jew's personal relationship with G-d. The good responses also considered the importance of all parts of the Tenakh, rather than just the Torah. Rather, they reflected on how the teachings of the prophets and books like the Psalms might be used by individuals and families. The main problem faced by a small number was the misidentification of the Tenakh, sometimes as an item of ritual dress.

3.e. This evaluation question was also generally accessible and well answered. A small number of candidates omitted to make adequate reference to Judaism and some gave personal responses that were too brief and often tacked on to the end of a balanced discussion. Candidates seemed confident in setting out the arguments for both sides of the debate and backing these up with examples from the Tenakh. Some discussed how the Talmud and the oral tradition might be seen as relevant to the discussion, in terms of adapting sacred writings to contemporary life. This question was ideally suited to a consideration of Progressive and Orthodox views on the divine nature of sacred texts. The weakest responses assumed that the question simply related the importance of Hebrew.

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

General Comments:

Most candidates are well prepared and have a sound working knowledge of the Sikh faith, albeit in some cases this is limited. Most can use specialist terms accurately, with only a relatively few weaker responses using specialist terms inaccurately.

All questions were accessible at some level for the majority of candidates.

Candidates who read the entire question and took time to reflect on what was required inevitably did better than those who adopted the 'all I know about' attempt.

There were no specific definitions required in the paper this year, so candidates were able to answer part a) questions accurately.

Part e) responses showed an attempt to tackle the various alternative viewpoints associated with the statement given in many cases, although some candidates were unable to progress beyond a simple 'one view...another....my view... response.

Few rubric errors and no time issues evident.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

1a) Almost all candidates recognised what was asked for.

1b) A mixture of general and specific examples were given, either or both being acceptable in the context of the question.

1c) Most gave a number of creditable responses.

1d) Candidates were able, in the main, to identify how an event is significant to a faith community.

1e) Most candidates were able to reflect on the importance of both nam and sewa and to consider which might be considered to be more important, or if, indeed, it could be said that they were of equal importance.

2a) No problems evident.

2b) Candidates who described a gurburb rather than identifying two things that happen specifically during one were disadvantaged here.

2c) The majority who answered this were clear about what happens.

2d) Candidates were able to describe events but a number failed to make the link to show how they might strengthen the faith of a Sikh, thus limiting the marks awarded.

2e) Some good considered responses from a number of perspectives. Candidates do need to remember that a personal response is required, although this does not need to be a 'tag on' paragraph at the end, but can be within the main body of the response.

Question 3 was answered less frequently than either Q1 or Q2.

3a) Most candidates were able to name a division.

3b) Answered with general points, most of which were acceptable.

3c) Some candidates failed to give a response to the question 'why' and merely listed general ideas.

3d) Most candidates were able to explain that some Sikhs do not accept that they no longer need a line of succession and seemed to understand the different views.

3e) Some interesting and inventive suggestions given, although most were able to grasp the pros and cons of the premise.

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

General Comments

Most candidates are well prepared and have a sound working knowledge of the Sikh faith, albeit in some cases this is limited. Most can use specialist terms accurately, with only a relatively few weaker candidates using specialist terms inaccurately.

All questions were accessible at some level for the majority of candidates.

Candidates who read the entire question and took time to reflect on what was required inevitably did better than those who adopted the 'all I know about' attempt.

There were no specific definitions required in the paper this year, so candidates were able to answer part a) questions accurately.

Part e) responses showed an attempt to tackle the various alternative viewpoints associated with the statement given in many cases, although some candidates were unable to progress beyond a simple 'one view...another....my view... response.

Few rubric errors and no time issues evident.

Questions 1 and 3 were very popular with vast majority of candidates answering these two questions, only a handful of students answered question 2.

The standard and quality of responses was improved on previous years with answers showing a good knowledge and understanding of Sikhism and ability to apply knowledge to the questions asked.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

1a) -1c) most candidates answered correctly.

1d) Most candidates understood what sewa is but some gave only this information. Those who explained how sewa can be viewed as an act of worship in Sikhism were able to access higher levels.

1e) Candidates were able to consider a variety of forms of worship and to assess whether any could be said to be better than others or best. Generally a good level of discussion was evident. Candidates should remember that a personal response is required, although this can be evident throughout the response rather than at the beginning or end.

Question 2

2a) Most gave either a generic or faith specific response correctly.

2b) Candidates gave accurate choices from the considerable number of possibilities.

2c) Generally answered correctly.

2d) A range of acceptable responses were provided by candidates.

2e) Candidates were able to consider whether the statement was wholly, partly, or not true. The majority were able to consider the importance and value of public ceremonies and to assess the premise that a public ceremony does not necessarily indicate the strength of belief. Some candidates did not get beyond a description of a ceremony and were therefore unable to access higher levels.

Question 3

3a) Some candidates gave a definition, which was not required, rather than that it is the Sikh symbol.

3b) Most could identify the faiths included correctly.

3c) A wide range of responses were credited.

3d) Some students were not clear as to what the Ai Granth was and answered the question using the Guru Granth Sahib as the focus.
Those who knew what it was answered the question well.

3e) Candidates who knew the teachings included in the Mul Mantra were able to explain the importance of the teachings to the practice of Sikhism. Most could consider whether a variety of possible things required for Sikhs in their religious life.

B583 Christian Scriptures 1 (Mark)

General Comments

Overall knowledge of the prescribed passages was satisfactory but there was a noticeable lack of specific knowledge of details or quotations from the Gospel text that could lift answers to the higher level of marks. This affected the general performance across all three questions. It resulted in candidates achieving a higher level of performance on parts (d) and (e) of questions than they did on the shorter answer (a) to (c) sections.

Some candidates did demonstrate detailed and accurate knowledge of the text, in quotation or paraphrase and achieved a good performance across all sections of the paper.

On the whole, part (d) answers were well answered with a significant number of candidates gaining level 3. Most demonstrated good understanding and application of the meaning and teaching of the different passages and their importance for Christian belief and practice.

In answers to part (e) questions, the majority of candidates responded well to the stimulus statement and understood the need to provide a discussion of different views. However, a number still failed to develop a personal response which would have taken competent answers into the higher levels. In some notable cases, candidates had been taught to approach (e) questions in a systematic manner (e.g. *“My initial thoughts are... My mind thinks... On one hand... On the other hand... One strong argument against this statement is... Overall I agreed/disagree with this statement because...”*) As a result, these candidates were often able to write well balanced, analytical responses with strong elements of personal response.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

1 (a) - (c) Generally accurate answers to (a). (b) Most knew one item accurately. (c) Few candidates gained full marks.

1 (d) Notable for full marks and level 3 answers. The baptism of Jesus section appeared to be better known than the account of John.

1 (e) Many candidates answered solely in terms of arguments for the Christian (Catholic) ritual but there were some perceptive answers from the perspective of believers' Baptism with reference to Jesus' baptism. Many personal responses were, however, simply a summary of views already presented. Centres still need to make candidates aware that an appropriate personal response is required for level 3 marks and that a developed, supported personal response is needed for level 4.

Question 2

2 (a) – (d) Some candidates interpreted this to be the ‘Calming of the Storm’ or the Resurrection appearance in John 21, where Peter attempts to walk on the water and the disciples caught many fish.

These answers for 2(a) – (c) were therefore incorrect.

A significant number of 2 (d) answers could only be rewarded for those elements of explanation that could be seen as also applicable to the prescribed text. The correct reference for this particular text is Mark 6: 45-52. It explains why well explained answers to (d) only received lower level marks (for elements they had in common with the correct text.)

2 (e) This was the best answered part (e) question on the paper. Good responses presented different points of views of the credibility and efficacy of the miracle stories and a personal response, using as evidence the different miracle stories they had studied from the Gospel. Some competent responses that argued for and against a belief in miracles, in a general way, would have been enhanced by reference to examples from Mark to support the arguments.

Question 3

3(a) Generally this was answered accurately.

3(b) – (c) There were few completely accurate responses. Candidates gained marks mainly for '*Am I leading a rebellion/Am I a brigand/bandit and that you come with clubs...*' There were some who knew the 'preaching in the Temple' quotation or paraphrased it to 'As I was preaching'.

3(d) This question was well answered. Many good answers achieved level 3/ 5 or 6 marks for responses that included a combination of social/political and religious reasons for the arrest of Jesus.

3(e) This statement generally produced competent responses. Mostly, candidates compared Christian responses to the authority of Government with obedience to the authority of God. Answers usually contained a brief reference to Jesus' response to the authority of his time but they were brief and undeveloped. Those that did achieve level 4 usually displayed thoughtful personal responses to the need to challenge corrupt authority.

B584 Christian Scriptures 2 (Luke)

General Comments

Overall knowledge of the prescribed passages was satisfactory but there was some evidence of confusion about some of the key texts. For example, some candidates dwelled on the story of Martha and Mary instead of the story of Jesus' anointing by the 'sinful woman', or referring to the story of the rich ruler rather than to the parable of the 'Rich Fool'. Possibly, another problem here was candidates mixing up accounts of parables with accounts of related events. Where candidates misidentified the passages it made it hard for them to be successful with particular questions.

Some candidates did demonstrate detailed and accurate knowledge of the text, in quotation or paraphrase and achieved a good performance across all sections of the paper. For example, many were able to show good knowledge of what Luke's gospel tells us about Simeon as a character in Luke, why Jesus was commending the 'sinful woman' and exactly how the Rich Fool had intended to use his wealth.

On the whole, part (d) answers were well answered with a significant number of candidates gaining level 3 and higher. Most responses demonstrated good understanding and application of the meaning and teaching of the different passages. In questions 1(d) and 2(d) higher scoring candidates were able to explain how the topics or passages in question related to living life as a Christian.

In answers to part (e) questions, the majority of candidates responded well to the stimulus statement and understood the need to provide a discussion of different views supported with arguments, examples or evidence. However, a number did not develop their answers with satisfactory or personal response to make clear what they personally thought or how they personally judged the arguments they had considered. Where candidates gave this personal reflection and response they were more successful in accessing the higher levels of marks.

There were an insignificant number of rubric response errors and candidates understood the number of questions they needed to attempt.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

1(a) Most got the answer right as '8 days' but 2 and 12 days were commonly given as answers.

(b) This was generally well answered with reference to the correct animals used in the offering.

(c) Candidates were able to give a good level of detail about Simeon from the text, although many wanted to comment on his 'old age' and this detail is not recorded in the text.

(d) Some candidates got the idea of 'universalism' which was creditable but some answers were very general on the topic of how Jesus would suffer and die. The better answers picked up on elements from Simeon's speech.

(e) There were many interesting answers about the Holy Spirit with many making use of relevant texts where the Holy Spirit is mentioned, like the Pentecost story from Acts or the story of Jesus' baptism. Many candidates offered alternatives to the Holy Spirit as a guide for Christians (like 'the teachings of Jesus' or 'parables') in attempting to balance their answers and this was usually made relevant. The best answers made reference to the role and impact of the Holy Spirit in the gospel of Luke. Other good answers made reference to the importance of the Holy Spirit in ceremonies like baptism and confirmation in the lives of modern day Christians.

Question 2

2(a) Some candidates got muddled up with the account of the Rich Ruler in Luke 18:18 rather than to this parable in Luke 12, though they often resolved this problem correctly when they got to c).

(b) Many showed good knowledge of God's words to the rich man in the parable but some gave responses related to the Rich Ruler.

(c) This was very often answered very well with all elements of what the rich man had intended to do with his wealth.

(d) This was generally handled very well with many candidates able to give good background to Jesus' teaching about wealth. Those who gave examples of how these teachings might affect Christians today did particularly well.

(e) Also a reasonably well answered question in many cases and many candidates were able to counter-balance discussions of, for example, the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector with the Rich Ruler in Luke 18 to make their points. Some felt that giving wealth away was unfair when people had worked hard for it; some missed the point of wealth being a possible distraction to getting into the kingdom of God.

Question 3

3(a) Most candidates managed to give a good answer in identifying the owner of the house, though 'Simeon' was mentioned a few times.

(b) A variety of monies were offered as answers but a lot of candidates got the amounts correct and knew the text.

(c) Where candidates knew the story they were able to list the specific actions which Jesus had praised the woman for.

(d) Some candidates misread the question and framed their answers around women in general rather than relating their answers to this particular woman. The better answers often explained elements of the story such as references to 'her sinful life', or the accusation of Jesus' seeming inability to recognise her failings even though he was a 'prophet'.

(e) Candidates often used their knowledge of other stories such as the Good Samaritan, stories about wealth etc. and then tried to work them round to the idea of judgement. A few related this to the idea of 'only God being worthy to judge' quite successfully. Many candidates made good use of the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16 to make some good, reflective observations about judgement. Many responses made nuanced and sensitive comments about the practical demands of justice and law in having to make judgements, for example in relation to the harmful or dangerous behaviour of others. As ever with e) answers, candidates tended to gain noticeably higher marks when they gave a considered personal viewpoint or response to the particular topic.

B585 Jewish Scriptures (Tenakh)

General Comments

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

Some candidates were able to describe, explain and analyse the teachings found within the set passages very well and there was clear evidence of a high level of engagement with the questions. Many candidates were able to discuss confidently and fluidly both the passages set for study and the wider historical-critical context of the texts and the impact of the texts for 21st century Judaism. Many candidates produced mostly accurate answers to the part (a-d) questions. However, some candidates were unable to answer the analysis or part (e) questions to this same high level due to a lack of analysis and supported justified argument. Some candidates showed limited specific subject knowledge and give general and/or vague answers or used a small body of knowledge repeatedly. It was felt however, that on the whole the knowledge shown within the candidate answers and the structure of answers was very good.

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

1(a) The majority answered this accurately.

1(b) It was apparent that the set text was well known by many candidates and many scored full marks on this question.

1(c) This question resulted in mixed responses by the candidates. Some answers gave a focused description of 'sanctity of life' often supported within an example. Some candidates appeared to be unaware of the difference between 'sanctity' of life and 'quality' of life' and as a result answered the question incorrectly. Some candidates could not access this question at all and had no knowledge of the key concept.

1(d) There were some very good responses to this question which showed a detailed awareness of the set text and high level explanation as to how, and why, the text can/cannot be applicable to modern life. Satisfactory responses concentrated on describing one or two commandments (normally 'Do not kill' or 'Do not steal') and explaining the continued importance of these within both modern Judaism and the modern legal system. Better responses improved upon this with explanation that linked to key concepts such as ethical monotheism, sanctity of life, quality of life and which addressed the contemporary issues outlined within the specification (business ethics etc.).

1(e) Responses to this question were, in the main, good. Some answers showed a very high ability to engage with the question and candidates discussed fluidly and confidently medical ethics in terms of euthanasia, abortion and life support machines. Such candidates were also able to discuss the question from various angles: the patient, the doctor, family involved and where able to offer clear understanding of different religious responses. Some candidates did not focus on the 'medical ethics' part of the question or appeared to have no understanding as to what this term means; as a result they were unable to score highly. Some answers would have been improved by greater awareness of the other side of the argument and/or a discussion of medical ethics in more detail. Judgements were frequently made without supporting reasons which limited the level of response the candidates could obtain. Again, answers could have been improved with clear indication of appropriate personal response which was fully supported and justified. Some candidates (despite showing excellent knowledge) were unable to gain a high level of response due to a lack of analysis and argument. The arguments which showed the most sophistication, were the ones which not only explored the biblical text but which also drew upon contemporary issues outlined within the specification and where able to construct an argument around modern day case studies.

Question 2

2(a) Many candidates were unable to gain the mark as they showed limited knowledge of the set text. However, there were some excellent responses to the question and some candidates demonstrated a high level of learning.

2(b) As part (a) many candidates showed limited knowledge of the set text and many did not score full marks.

2(c) There were some excellent answers to this question which showed a detailed understanding of the set texts; candidates were able to discuss fluidly the different creation narratives in order to gain full marks. Some answers were too simplistic or showed confusion over the creation accounts; these answers did not gain full marks.

2(d) Satisfactory responses concentrated on describing some of the key aspects of Genesis 2 and explaining what these show about male/female relationships (sacredness of marriage, female as 'helper' etc.). Better responses improved upon this with good explanations of why these aspects are important to Judaism today. It was pleasing to see many candidates referring to modern issues which the text does not explicitly confront and discussing same sex relationships with maturity and confidence. There were some excellent answers to this question which showed a detailed understanding of the text and how the text can be both helpful and not helpful for modern Judaism and modern society.

2(e) A number of responses made an excellent or very good attempt to draw distinctions and comparisons between the two sides of the argument. Many candidates were able to talk about the continuing importance of marriage for Judaism and analyse how marriage is a mitzvot and a foundation of Jewish life outlined within Torah. Many candidates were able to also argue that marriage is outdated and where able to discuss confidently and maturely same sex relationships/marriage and changes in wider contemporary law and thinking to cohabitation, children outside of marriage and adultery/divorce rates. Some answers discussed different religious communities; many answers would have been improved however, by discussing the different ways that secular, progressive, reform and orthodox traditions may view the argument presented. On the whole there were some very pleasing answers to this question.

Question 3

3(a) Most candidates were able to answer this correctly.

3(b) Some candidates showed an excellent awareness of the text and were able to answer this correctly. Some candidates made the question more complex than it was by referring to wider theological concepts rather than just describing the textual narrative.

3(c) Responses varied here. Some were able to accurately recall the set text and where able to give a paraphrased version of v.10-11 whilst others appeared to not know the set text and recounted events from chapter 2. There were some excellent answers which demonstrated a high level of awareness of, and interaction with, the set materials.

3(d) Many candidates answered this question very well and demonstrated a detailed understanding of the nuances of the set text. The highest level responses showed a detailed understanding of different groups within the narrative (Jonah, Ninevites, sailors etc.) and how these demonstrate relationship to G-d; these candidates often structured their work in a PEEL structure providing a clear point, evidence from within the text, and then an explanation of how this evidence linked to the set question. Better answers were those that discussed the events of all four chapters and how these showed individuals (not just Jonah) in a 'relationship' with G-d. There were some very pleasing answers to this question.

3(e) Performance varied here. The majority concentrated on the fact that the text of Jonah does not teach about responsibility for the world and then proceeded to give an answer for a question that was not set. Some candidates however, really grappled with the question at a high level and where able to discuss confidently, and fluidly, aspects of the text which demonstrate, or not, stewardship and action towards each other and the world. Many answers would have been improved by greater awareness of the question demands and by being able to use the text of Jonah to support the argument being made. Judgements were frequently made without supporting reasons which limited the level of response the candidates could obtain. Again, answers could have been improved with clear indication of appropriate personal response which was fully supported and justified.

B586 Jewish Scriptures (Talmud)

General Comments

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

Some candidates were able to describe, explain and analyse the teachings found within the set passages very well and there was clear evidence of a high level of engagement with the questions. Many candidates were able to discuss confidently and fluidly both the passages set for study and the wider historical-critical context of the texts and the impact of the texts for 21st century Judaism. Many candidates produced mostly accurate answers to the part (a-d) questions. However, some candidates were unable to answer the analysis or part (e) questions to this same high level due to a lack of analysis and supported justified argument. Some candidates showed limited specific subject knowledge and give general and/or vague answers or used a small body of knowledge repeatedly. It was felt however, that on the whole the knowledge shown within the candidate answers and the structure of answers was good.

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

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

- 1(a) The majority answered this accurately.
- 1(b) Many candidates answered this correctly. Some candidates interpreted 'parts' as 'orders' and flexibility in response was allowed. Centres are reminded that this paper can be taken by those of faith, or none, and as such when an answer asks for the 'Hebrew term' the answer does not need to be written in Hebrew but rather the English term/transliteration. Often answers were ambiguous in their response due to a candidate using cursive or

Biblical text (or a combination of both) alongside an English phrase which may, or may not, be the correct translation of the Hebrew they have offered.

- 1 (c) Again, many candidates answered this correctly and showed a detailed understanding of, and awareness of, the specification content. As above candidates do not need to recall this learning in Hebrew.
- 1(d) Some candidates answered this question very well and demonstrated a detailed understanding of covenant within text and tradition. The highest level responses showed a detailed understanding of different covenants (Abraham, Moses, David etc.) and how these demonstrate a relationship between G-d and his chosen people. These candidates often structured their work in PEEL paragraphs providing a clear point, evidence, and then an explanation of how this evidence linked to the set question. There were however, some disappointing responses where candidates wrote very little and appeared to not be aware of the skills required for a 6 mark explain question.
- 1(e) Responses to this question were, in the main, good. Some answers showed a very high ability to engage with the question and candidates discussed fluidly and confidently the history of, and use of the Talmud. Such candidates were also able to discuss the question from various angles and where able to offer clear understanding of different religious responses. Some answers would have been improved by greater awareness of the other side of the argument and/or a discussion of why Talmud may, or may not, be relevant today. Judgements were frequently made without supporting reasons which limited the level of response the candidates could obtain. Again, answers could have been improved with clear indication of appropriate personal response which was fully supported and justified. Some candidates (despite showing excellent knowledge) were unable to gain a high level of response due to a lack of analysis and argument. The arguments which showed the most sophistication, were the ones which not only explored the relevance of Talmud through clear examples but which also drew upon the areas of study outlined within the specification and where able to construct an argument around clear examples.

Question 2

- 2(a) Many candidates answered this question correctly. As 1(a), centres are reminded that this paper can be taken by those of faith, or none, and as such when an answer asks for the 'Hebrew term' the answer does not need to be written in Hebrew but rather the English term/transliteration. Often answers are ambiguous in their response due to a candidate using cursive or Biblical text with or without niqqud (or a combination of both) alongside an English phrase which may, or may not, be the correct translation of the Hebrew they have offered. The specification does not require, or expect, candidates to record answers in any language other than English.
- 2(b) Responses varied for this question. Many candidates were able to correctly give one term, however often gave 'hashem' for the second answer which was within the question and as such could not be credited. Again, candidates did not need to respond in Hebrew as they are expected to study the texts in English as the paper is open to candidates from any faith tradition, or none.
- 2(c) Responses varied here. There were some excellent answers to this question which showed a detailed understanding of the concept of forgiveness as demonstrated in Amidah paragraph 6. Some answers, however, were too simplistic or did not focus on the stimulus text material; these answers did not gain full marks.

- 2(d) Many candidates answered this question very well and demonstrated a detailed understanding of Yom Kippur. The highest level responses showed a detailed understanding of the different nuances of ‘forgiveness’ and how Yom Kippur is central for Jews to demonstrate forgiveness in relationship to G-d and fellowman. The better answers were from those candidates who often structured their work in PEEL paragraphs so providing a clear point, evidence, and then an explanation of how this evidence linked to the set question within each paragraph of their answer. There were some pleasing answers to this question.
- 2(e) A number of responses made a very good attempt to draw distinctions and comparisons between the two sides of the argument and provided clear evidence for both sides of the debate. Many candidates were able to talk about the continuing importance of the Ten Commandments for Judaism today and used this to analyse how sins against people may be seen as worse than those against G-d as they also have legal status. Many candidates were able to discuss confidently why sinning against G-d may be seen as ‘worse’ and provide reasoning for this. On the whole there were some pleasing answers to this question.

Question 3

- 3(a) Most candidates were able to answer this correctly.
- 3(b) Some candidates showed an excellent awareness of the text and were able to answer this question correctly. Some candidates were able to answer part (i) correctly but did not show awareness of the text for part (ii).
- 3(c) Responses varied here. There were some excellent answers which demonstrated a high level of awareness of, and interaction with, the set materials and wider theological concepts. Some answers however, were far too simplistic or did not engage with the question demands fully.
- 3(d) Satisfactory responses concentrated on describing ethical monotheism and explaining what this shows about G-d. Better responses improved upon this by explaining why this concept is still important to Judaism today. Many candidates however did not mention the set text that this question was assessing and did not show an awareness of this concept within Ethics of the Fathers. As a result there were some good answers to this question but many candidates struggled to achieve a L3 response due to a lack of content and explanation.
- 3(e) Performance varied here. The majority concentrated on the fact that there will never be peace and provided historical and current day examples to exemplify this point. Some candidates were let down here by not addressing the question with reference to the set texts they had studied rather providing a very general answer. Some candidates however, really grappled with the question at a high level and were able to discuss confidently, and fluidly, aspects of the text in light of the question demands. Again, judgements were frequently made without supporting reasons which limited the level of response the candidates could obtain. Again, answers could have been improved with clear indication of appropriate personal response which was fully supported and justified.

B589 Perspectives on World Religions

General Comments

The paper proved accessible to most candidates and the vast majority of candidates 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 4 sides for each response. This approach was least successful when candidates flitted between questions, for example; 2e, 14e, 2d, 14d, 2c, 14c, 2b, 14b, 2a then 14a. 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. 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) 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 rule applies to all the point marked parts of the questions, parts a), b) and c). Some candidates gave unnecessarily extended responses to these sections, especially to part c) of the question. This must have affected their overall time management. In order to limit the amount a candidate might offer in a part c) response, the questions are, when appropriate, constructed to require that candidates consider only one aspect of the topic. Candidates who address the task in a straightforward way fare best as they naturally offer a statement about the topic and then develop the response and then exemplify or develop the response further gaining three marks.

In part d), where candidates are required to demonstrate their understanding of an issue, some 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 not strong in many scripts. Candidates who supported their understanding with useful references to accurate religious teaching or offered support from religious texts and / or the life and attitudes of key figures within the religion, fared best. 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 some excellent responses to the e) part of each question although reaching the full marks for this part is challenge. 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 series comments, weighing the various arguments and woven into the discussion as a whole. Many candidates, as required by the rubric, considered the issue in the stimulus with clear reference to the religion of their choice. On occasions the candidate's knowledge 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: Responsibility for the Planet

Questions 1 – 6

- a) Some candidates missed the word **not** in the question but most responded with a sentence clearly stating an appropriate reason.
- b) Very few candidates failed to offer two appropriate ways, local or global, in which people might help to solve environmental problems.
- c) The majority of candidates understood that the question was about the origin of the world. Many referred to the first verses of the creation narrative in Genesis but some alluded to the Big Bang theory and Intelligent Design. A few developed their response to include the origin of humanity which could not be credited, as the question was about the origin of the world.
- d) This was generally well answered across all of the religions. Some candidates suggested (incorrectly) that teaching such as “Thou shall not kill” applied to animals. Others focused on the possession of a soul by humans which clearly distinguished them from animals and allowed for different treatment. Some candidates referred to the views of thinkers such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Saint Francis of Assisi.
- e) Some responses got to the crux of the matter in the stimulus straightaway, by saying there is little or no difference between being religious and looking after the planet. A truly religious person would naturally want to look after the world that God has made. Often these responses continued with a development and discussion of different views on the issue.

Section B: War Peace and Human Rights

Questions 7 – 12

- a) Responses to this part were good with a wide variety of definitions of the word peace being offered and accepted, ranging from truces, no violence, personal peace, harmony, civil behaviour to the presence of justice.
- b) Responses were good to this part as well, although some were too focused on the why and not the how. Different types of pacifists were mentioned (absolute / conditional). Common responses were: to protest, not fight, help as a medical staff.
- c) Many candidates chose to explain why war is wrong, offering material from religious texts or thinkers in support. The Just War theory was popular as an explanation for Christian attitudes. A minority of responses addressed more than one side of the war debate but the as the question only asked for one teaching, only the first part of the response could be credited.
- d) Some candidates struggled with this as they did not easily make the connection between the teaching for their chosen religion and the UDHR. Some just gave knowledge about the UDHR rather than explanation of attitudes. Many candidates recognised that much religious teaching is reflected in the UDHR. However, many failed to develop the links sufficiently. Some of these responses just explained why Christians believe in equality, without reference to the UDHR at all.

e) The positive nature of the stimulus initiated good discussions and many responses addressed several different aspects of the issue. There was tendency amongst some candidates to focus on the idea of Holy War as a justification which some religious people might still give for engaging in war and for saying it is a good thing. This view was sometimes based on a simplistic understanding of the medieval Crusades. Other responses suggested that all religious people are naturally against war. Many responses offered the realisation that the evidence from history was not in support of the stimulus. Although war might deal more quickly with a problem than diplomacy; it brought its own very negative consequences. Responses were often supported by reference to religious texts which as some candidates commented, could be marshalled to support almost all shades of opinion on the issue.

Section C: Prejudice and Equality

Questions 13 – 18

a) Sexism was well understood and as a result, a majority of responses to this part were worthy of credit. Responses which contained only an example could not be credited as the question asked for the meaning of the word, not an example.

b) In response to this part, some candidates failed to give examples and referred instead to types of prejudice such as sexism or racism.

c) Many responses connected the attitude to prejudice expressed, with appropriate teaching as development or exemplification of the view expressed. The question asked for one attitude, so in those responses which referred to several views, only the first could be credited.

d). Candidates responded well to this question and appear to have found it quite straightforward. Some made reference to human rights, others to the teaching and example of Jesus and other religions figures. The Pauline quote “neither Jew nor Greek” was frequently given. Many responses referred to examples of people who had supported equality; for example, Martin Luther King, Ghandi, and Nelson Mandela. Most candidates avoided the temptation to launch into a biography of these people, but were selective about which aspects they used to illustrate their response.

e) Some candidates, who clearly felt strongly about racism, wrote more about racism per se, rather than how religion might impact on it either negatively or positively. There was a clear distinction between these responses and others which provided appropriate religious teachings to support the arguments and reached a higher level as a result. The track record of religions and their attitudes towards racism was often discussed and for many candidates, the religions of the world seem to be significant contributors to the problem. There was evidence of confusion of racism with religious intolerance in some of these responses. For others, true adherence to the fundamental principles of any of the great world religions would truly overcome what was considered by many to be natural tendencies of fear and suspicion in humans towards ‘different’ people.

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