

GCSE

Religious Studies A (World Religion(s))

General Certificate of Education **J620**

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

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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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 was generally well answered, although there were fewer scripts of very high standard than last year. Most candidates has been well prepared for the exam. There did seem to be a higher proportion of weak candidates who were clearly did not have a strong understanding of Buddhism and who were attempting 'common sense' responses than has been evident in previous years. As in previous years, questions 1 and 2 were very much more popular than Question 3. Where candidates did attempt Question 3 they had usually been well prepared for it and achieved good marks.

Although there were a smaller proportion of excellent responses than in previous years, those that were seen were of an exceptionally high standard, showing excellent skills of evaluation and debate.

There were very few rubric errors with a tiny proportion of candidates attempting all three questions. There was very little evidence, except on one or two occasions, that candidates had insufficient time in which to complete the paper.

An unfortunate trend this year, in part e questions, is that candidates are attempting to provide a viewpoint from a second religion and/or from an atheist position. While the specification is clear that these can be credited, they must be directly relevant and add something new to the discussion. In this paper there are no questions where (for example) a Muslim perspective is likely to add anything substantive to the debate since Islam has nothing to say on the topics of the life of the Buddha or enlightenment. It is strongly recommended that Centres teach candidates to address the specific question asked, and to ask themselves whether a perspective from a second religion can add anything that is genuinely of value. Several candidates achieved a mark below that which they might otherwise have done by straining to fit this 'pattern' where it was clearly not relevant. Likewise, while an atheist perspective may be of value at times this is by no means always the case and discernment is required.

Another new trend this is that some candidates are now concluding their response with a 'conclusion' that merely re-states what has been said elsewhere without adding anything new. This is to be discouraged as it uses time to no avail. Centres are reminded of the need for candidates to give a justified personal view in part e questions in order to reach level 3.

Centres are reminded that it is very important that candidates be taught to read the question and respond to the particular question asked. This is particularly important in part d questions, where the whole of the question needs to be taken into account.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1(a) Almost all candidates answered this correctly. A few confused it with Dhamma and some suggested Anicca. One or two, surprisingly, suggested the Four Noble Truths. A few candidates misunderstood the question and gave a definition of suffering.

1(b) This was generally well answered with the most common responses being telling the truth and speaking kindly/respectfully. Negative responses (not lying) were also credited. Some candidates failed to achieve both marks as they effectively gave the same response twice. ('Do not lie', 'tell the truth'.) General answers such as 'Be kind' were not credited, as they could not be directly linked to speech. Other candidates failed to achieve the marks as they gave examples of the Noble Eightfold Path ('Right Mindfulness' etc.) rather than of Right Speech.

1(c) Credit was not given for a simple statement of the law of karma or for a statement such as 'What goes around comes around.' Examples could be related to particular actions or to consequences such as rebirth in one of the realms. This question achieved a good level of differentiation with all mark points being widely used.

1(d) Many candidates wrote a general response on the subject of the Three Poisons but did not answer the second part of the question, thus significantly limiting the number of marks available to them. This question provides a good example of the importance of reading, and responding to, the entire question. Almost all candidates knew what the Three Poisons were. Most could explain how to overcome them through the Noble Eightfold Path. Comparatively few, however, could explain exactly how and why they could prevent a Buddhist from achieving Nibbana. Where candidates did address this however they did very well indeed, with many taking each in turn and explaining why it presented a barrier.

1(e) Some candidates struggled with this question although most managed to produce a sound response. Most were able to explain the importance of the Buddha as a source of teachings and as the origin of festivals and pilgrimage sites. Arguments in favour of the statement proved more problematic, although some did say that the Dhamma is eternal and could have been discovered by another. Some convincingly contrasted Theravada and Mahayana approaches to the status of the Buddha and the Dhamma. Some seemed to suggest that the Dhamma and the Sangha would still exist even without the Buddha without, apparently, noting the logical issue with this. Very few took the direction of considering the possibility that the Buddha is a mythical character. Some attempted, with very limited success, to give an Islamic viewpoint. Attempts at an atheistic viewpoint were slightly more successful but the highest scoring responses tended to be those that contrasted Theravada and Mahayana approaches.

2(a) Most knew this. Those that did not tended to suggest that it was where the Buddha was enlightened.

2(b) Most candidates offered two acceptable suggestions. The most common responses were food/drink (which were credited as one response not two) and the provision of shelter. A common response that was not credited was going with them on the pilgrimage.

2(c) A wide variety of responses were credited. The most common responses were meditation and circumambulation of a stupa. Generic responses that were not deemed to be specific 'practices' and so not credited included 'following the Eightfold Path' or, strangely, 'following the Four Noble Truths.'

2(d) Again, a disappointing number of candidates read the first part of this question and not the second. This led to generic responses about the importance of festivals. The best responses included a variety of points such as learning Dhamma from monks, recitation of the scriptures, putting teachings into practice and learning about the life of the Buddha. Part d and e questions in particular seem to generate a number of phrases that are ultimately meaningless such as 'feeling closer to your faith' or 'feeling closer to the Buddha.'

2(e) This was disappointing. Most candidates gave a reasonable account of the reasons why pilgrimage was not a good way of achieving enlightenment with day-to-day practice being suggested as a better alternative. Many protested that there are those who cannot afford pilgrimage, which would make it unfair. Very few, however, were able to give a clear account of practices associated with pilgrimage and what the spiritual advantages of these might be. It was not clear that candidates had been well prepared on particular pilgrimage sites and their significance beyond a connection to particular incidents in the life of the Buddha. A small minority appeared to think that the Buddha had been enlightened while on pilgrimage himself. Some, who had obviously also studied Islam, seemed to think that there was a requirement to go on pilgrimage once in a lifetime and a few even referred to it as Hajj. While the full range of marks was used, this was a straightforward question and it was slightly disappointing that more candidates did not achieve a higher mark.

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

3(b) Most candidates were able to gain both marks here although a number gained only one of the available marks as they effectively said the same thing twice in different ways. Credit was not given for Theravada as both concepts exist in both branches although in differing degrees.

3(c) Most candidates gained all three marks with the majority giving three of the Six Perfections. Again, Mahayana was not credited for the reasons given above.

3(d) This was well answered in comparison with the other part d questions on this paper. Most referred to ritual aspects such as prayer wheels, prayer flags etc. Many referred to the Bardo Thodol and the significance of the Dalai Lama in some areas of Tibetan Buddhism. Some candidates were clearly struggling and suggested ideas such as pilgrimage having less importance due to the remote location. Some suggested that Tibetan monks married, which is not universally true, but is true of some orders.

3(e) Where it was attempted, this question was also very well answered by many. Candidates tended to focus on the importance of the monastic sangha in traditional Buddhism and the issues that this could raise in the West. Many continued to discuss the ways that Triratna Buddhism has sought to address this. Less able candidates often tended to dwell on the temptations towards drink, drugs and sex that are presumed to be endemic in the West and non-existent in the society in which Buddhism originated. Some of the best responses considered the issue of Right Livelihood in some considerable detail. Most concluded that the Buddha was clear that his teachings were a guide and open to re-interpretation and that for this reason Buddhism was suited to the West.

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

General Comments:

The paper was generally well answered, although there were fewer scripts of very high standard than last year, and a marked increase in weaker responses. There did seem to be a higher proportion of candidates who clearly did not have a strong understanding of Buddhism and who were attempting 'common sense' responses than has been evident in previous years. This was particularly evident in Question 1, where many candidates seemed to understand meditation in general terms, but did not have a clear understanding of different forms of meditation; as question 1 was the most popular question this did affect the outcome for some candidates. As in previous years, questions 1 and 2 were very much more popular than Question 3. Where candidates did attempt Question 3 they had usually been well prepared for it and achieved good marks.

There were, as always, a number of papers of a very high standard indeed.

There were very few rubric errors with a tiny proportion of candidates attempting all three questions. There was very little evidence, except on one or two occasions, that candidates had insufficient time in which to complete the paper.

An unfortunate trend this year, in part e questions, is that candidates are attempting to provide a viewpoint from a second religion and/or from an atheist position. While the specification is clear that these can be credited, they must be directly relevant and add something new to the discussion. In this paper there are no questions where (for example) a Muslim perspective is likely to add anything substantive to the debate since Islam has nothing to say on the topics of Vipassana meditation of the Monastic Sangha. It is strongly recommended that Centres teach candidates to address the specific question asked, and to ask themselves whether a perspective from a second religion can add anything that is genuinely of value. Several candidates achieved a mark below that which they might otherwise have done by straining to fit this 'pattern' where it was clearly not relevant. Likewise, while an atheist perspective may be of value at times this is by no means always the case and discernment is required.

Another new trend this is that some candidates are now concluding their response with a 'conclusion' that merely re-states what has been said elsewhere without adding anything new. This is to be discouraged as it uses time to no avail. Centres are reminded of the need for candidates to give a justified personal view in part e questions in order to reach level 3.

Centres are reminded that it is very important that candidates be taught to read the question and respond to the particular question asked. This is particularly important in part d questions, where the whole of the question needs to be taken into account.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1(a) Most candidates knew the answer to this question, although a few left it blank. There were very few wrong responses and those that did occur were from candidates who were clearly guessing by inserting any faith specific word such as 'puja'.

1(b) Most candidates who attempted this question gained the marks.

1(c) Most candidates gained at least two marks for this question and a significant number achieved all three. Marks were awarded for general comments such as ‘clearing the mind’ and ‘focussing’ since these are particularly applicable to samatha meditation. The idea of samatha as a preparation for other types of meditation was quite a common response and was also credited.

1(d) Many candidates wrote a generalised response describing metta bhavana meditation but did not go beyond this to answer the specific question about how this might help a Buddhist on their spiritual path. A disappointing number of responses wrote about meditation in general and the usefulness of ‘relaxing’ and ‘clearing the mind’ but gave no clear evidence that they knew what metta bhavana is, and so did not move beyond level 1. The best responses suggested that the cultivation of metta could help to overcome the Three Poisons, or that it was an example of Right Intention or Right Mindfulness and explained why this might help a Buddhist towards Nibbana.

1(e) Disappointingly few candidates had a clear idea of what vipassana meditation is or why it is widely practised in Buddhism. Some confused it with Metta Bhavana, while others wrote a generalised response about meditation with no particular reference to vipassana. The impression was clear that this was the least well-understood form of meditation. Many candidates gained a significant proportion of their marks in this question from their discussion of why other ideas or practices might be more important than vipassana meditation. As always there were some excellent responses but disappointingly few reached level 3. The impression was that candidates were not generally well prepared for this question.

2(a) Again, most candidates knew the answer to this question, although a few left it blank. There were very few wrong responses and those that did occur were from candidates who were clearly guessing by inserting any faith specific word such as ‘puja’. The most common response that was not credited was ‘monks’ or ‘monks and nuns’.

2(b) Most candidates offered two acceptable suggestions. The most common responses were monks/nuns and lay people. Some embellished their response, for example suggesting that monks might live there and lay Buddhists use it during festivals. Any sensible response was credited.

2(c) Candidates tended to do either very well or very badly on this question. Many were extremely detailed, knowing about the various stages of Bardo and often more details than was required for three marks. Others, however, did not read the question carefully and said only that one reached enlightenment or was reborn. Unless there was clear reference to what happened between death and rebirth (such as an assessment of kamma or ‘judgement’ then this was not credited.

2(d) Most candidates did reasonably well on this question. Some emphasised ‘teaching’ or ‘employment’ rather than showing the causal relationship between the two. The focus of answers tended to be on the on Five Precepts, and relevant sutras. However, many listed jobs that Buddhists should not do, rather than suggesting any that they could do. Many candidates seem genuinely to think that the only jobs available are dealing in arms, drugs, or sex, and therefore Buddhists can expect a life of unemployment. Sophisticated answers, which appreciated the application of ‘skilful means’ were comparatively few.

2(e) This was generally answered well by most candidates. However, many do not appreciate the nature of the monastic tradition in different denominations. For example, many candidates believe that Mahayana does not have monks or nuns at all, or that Zen does not have monks because it focuses on meditation only (despite the strong monastic tradition in Zen). Many think that all Mahayana monks and nuns can marry, not really appreciating that this is true only in a few Zen traditions and one Tibetan school. Some fell back on “people have the right to do what they want, no-one can tell you what to do” line of reasoning. The best responses discussed

whether it was only possible to reach enlightenment as a member of the monastic community or focussed on its general benefits (for example in leading to a happy and anxiety free life). Some suggested that a life in the monastic sangha is 'wasted', especially if enlightenment is possible through other means. A few looked at the social benefits of the sangha, for example in providing health care and education and suggested that these were in themselves worthwhile activities.

3(a) Of the comparatively few that attempted this question, most were able to answer this correctly. Most of those that did not left it blank.

3(b) Many candidates were able to gain both marks here. Some gave very generic responses, where these were generally applicable to the Abhidharma Pitaka (e.g. 'to help them reach enlightenment') they were credited. Where they had no obvious relevance to it, (e.g. 'to read the words of the Buddha') they were not.

3(c) Comparatively few candidates achieved all three marks on this question. Some did not know what the Metta Sutta is, despite the fact that it is clearly stated on the specification. Some gave very general answers about metta, usually that it gives good kamma and so leads to a good rebirth. Since kamma is not referenced in either of the two texts that are known by the name of Metta Sutta, these responses were not credited. Some described metta bhavana meditation but showed no evidence of knowing the text. Some candidates tried to list numerous teachings, but as the question asked only for one, only their first response was credited. It is important that Centres make sure that candidates are aware that when they are asked for one response, only one must be given. Where candidates were familiar with the Metta Sutta this was very clear. Most referred to the need to cultivate compassion comparable of that of a mother for her child.

3(d) This was generally well answered, with most candidates directly addressing the question and showing some skill at applying what they knew about Buddhist teaching to it. A number of candidates discussed metta, Right Action, Right Speech and the possibility of gaining merit. A few discussed how, rather than why teachings might be spread but this was quite rare and most candidates achieved level two or three.

3(e) There were some generalised 'common sense' responses to this, suggesting that all scriptures must be equally important because they are scriptures. It was quite clear that most of the candidates who presented responses such as this had little specific knowledge about Buddhist scriptures. This was also, however, the question that prompted the highest proportion of really good responses. Many contrasted the Pali Canon with other scriptures and many wrote in some detail about the importance of the Lotus Sutra. Some discussed the Zen approach to scripture and also discussed the Buddha's own pronouncement that his teachings were only a 'raft'. The best responses to this showed a high level of knowledge and sophistication in the discussion and evaluation.

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

General Comments:

As is often the case with this paper, 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.

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. The option to use word processors is available and, for those with Access Arrangements, the use of a scribe or voice recognition software or a transcript would ensure that candidates are fully awarded the correct marks and are not penalised because of problems with handwriting.

Some candidates do not indicate that they are using continuation sheets.

A significant majority of candidates achieved the full three marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar; the lack of capital letters is the most common error. Specialist words are usually spelt correctly.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1a) This question was well answered. Candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the Ten Commandments.

1b) Many candidates answered this question correctly, usually stating that God was almighty and the creator. Some candidates did give beliefs concerning Jesus. However, in the Apostles' Creed, Jesus is not described as God but as God's son, therefore these answers could not be credited. This question was particularly in relation to the Apostles' Creed.

1c) Disappointingly, there were many candidates who did not know the order of the two great commandments and therefore answered the question from the point of view of 'Love your neighbour

1d) A significant number of candidates did not answer the question as they concentrated on love and forgiveness rather than judgement. Few candidates included the idea of how a person will be judged in the same way as they judge others. Candidates who achieved higher marks used quotations from the New Testament to support their statements, for example, “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”

1e) Fewer candidates than expected achieved Level 4 because they failed to provide an adequate personal response. Some candidates did not provide any personal response. Quite a few candidates believed that the two great commandments are in the Sermon on the Mount, therefore they spent a lot of time discussing a teaching which is not relevant to the question. Sadly, there were some candidates who did not know what the Sermon on the Mount is. That said, there were some good answers that showed that the topic had been taught well and that candidates had developed a relevant personal viewpoint.

Question No. 2

2a) Candidates answered this question well, there were very few errors.

2b) The majority of candidates achieved two marks for this question. The most popular answers were that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and that he was God incarnate. However, there were examples of the perennial error of saying that Jesus was immaculately conceived. Credit was not given for saying that Jesus was born on 25 December.

2c) As with 1c, some candidates ignored the instruction to ‘describe one way’ preferring to give lists of things Christians might do during Advent. There was some confusion between Advent and Lent. Most candidates who answered correctly chose to describe the advent candle wreath and how it is used. Some candidates still do not understand that Advent and Christmas are two distinct Christian festivals of differing character and attribute Christmas practices to Advent.

2d) While there was some confusion between Epiphany and Pentecost, the majority of candidates did answer this question with varying degrees of accuracy. A significant number included the commemoration of Jesus’ baptism and his first miracle at Cana along with the importance and symbolism of Jesus’ revelation to the Magi. The concept of Jesus being revealed to the whole world was largely understood as well as how the gifts foretold the nature of Jesus and the purpose of his incarnation.

2e) The arguments made for both sides of this statement were somewhat varied and, in some cases, developed quite well. In a number of responses some candidates spent more time describing why faiths other than Christianity should be allowed to celebrate Christmas even though most of the answers were secular rather than religious. The arguments why only Christians should were rather more limited. As with 1e, many candidates failed to achieve upper Level 3 or Level 4 because of the lack or brevity of the personal response.

Question No. 3

3a) This question was not particularly well answered. Many candidates named the Pope; only a minority knew the answer to be the Patriarch of Constantinople. Some just offered the word ‘patriarch’. Also, some candidates did not read the question properly and did not realise it was a ‘living authority’ that was being requested.

3b) This was almost always well answered, and a significant number of candidates earned two marks. The most popular answers were Taizé and Corrymeela.

3c) This question was not particularly well answered mainly because candidates did not focus on the word 'worship' in the question. Many candidates did not know much about Orthodox worship beyond the use of icons. Candidates, in general, seem to display less knowledge about Orthodox Christianity in comparison to Protestant or Roman Catholic Christianity.

3d) This question was answered well by the majority of candidates who chose it. Most could understand the need to break down the barriers that have risen between the different Christian denominations over the centuries and also the benefits of Christians from different groups meeting and sharing their worship and experiences.

3e) A few candidates took this question literally and tried to describe the differences between church buildings today and the places of worship Jesus was familiar with; this meant that they could not access the upper levels. Other candidates did consider both the church as a building and a meeting place and the church as a group of people and they were able to offer more varied and developed answers.

Some candidates discussed the organisation of the church and discrepancy between some of Jesus' teachings and the practices of Christians today. Others concentrated on the moral and ethical issues that affect the world today - Christians in particular - and were able to offer some interesting viewpoints. Others pointed out that, as Jesus is eternal, omniscient and omnipresent, he would be familiar with everything that exists in the world today and in the future and therefore would recognise everything. As with the other two e) part questions, where personal responses were limited or non-existent, the overall mark for this question was limited.

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

General Comments:

Questions 1 and 2 were the most popular questions on the paper but a significant number of candidates did answer question 3 and the standard of the responses was comparable to the other two questions.

Questions that tested knowledge were generally answered well. Some candidates did struggle when it came to showing understanding of a topic or offering a personal response. Few candidates achieved the upper marks in e) questions because of the lack of this response.

There were very few rubric errors with only a very small number of candidates answering all three questions. These were mainly candidates who had very limited knowledge and just tried all the questions in the hope of achieving some marks. Those who answered all the questions usually achieved lower marks as they had insufficient time to answer each question fully.

Some answers, particularly e) questions, were formulaic and time was wasted in writing out an identical sentence to start each paragraph.

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

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. Some candidates benefitted greatly from using a word processor. Other would benefit from the use of a scribe or voice recognition software or a transcript if appropriate and available. Such support would ensure that candidates are fully awarded the correct marks and are not penalised because of problems with handwriting.

Some candidates do not indicate that they are using continuation sheets.

A significant majority of candidates achieved the full three marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar; the lack of capital letters is the most common error. Specialist words are usually spelt correctly.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

1a) In the majority of cases this question was answered correctly. A few candidates confused the lectern with the pulpit.

1b) Candidates who failed to achieve full marks for this question did so because they did not answer the question asked. They tended to say how and where private prayer takes place, or even what prayer was, rather than naming types of prayer. However most candidates did understand the question and gave types of prayer as requested and gained the two marks.

1c) A significant number of candidates achieved the two marks for this question. The most popular answer was the Eucharist/Holy Communion. However those who failed to achieve full marks either gave a list of features rather than describing one feature, or described a physical feature of a church, for example, the font.

1d) Overall, the responses to this question were disappointing. A significant number of candidates described the inside of a church without saying how the features show what Christians believe. It is clear that many candidates knew what was usually found in a church but not what they symbolised. Better answers were able to go through the main features of a church and explain the meaning or symbolism behind each feature including such features as cross/crucifix, font, altar, stations of the cross and so on.

1e) This question was answered quite well up to a certain level. Many could offer reasons why religious leaders were necessary or not and give examples, often comparing different denominations in the process. The Society of Friends was the obvious example of a denomination that did not need a religious leader. Some candidates ignored the word 'worship' and discussed the place of religious leaders in general thus limiting the marks they could be awarded. Other candidates had obviously practised a question relating to public and private worship and tried to adapt the answer to suit this question but this was rarely a successful approach. It was rather disappointing that the key elements of the role of a religious leader were omitted by many candidates. Few talked about the actual role of an ordained priest or their importance in some of the sacraments. There was not much discussion about the hierarchical nature of religious leaders or why this is so. Finally, many candidates failed to achieve the upper levels because they did not offer a personal response or only offered a brief, undeveloped response.

Question No. 2

2a) Most candidates knew the answer to this question but it was surprising how many did not. "For better for worse" or "in sickness as in health" were the most common incorrect answers.

2b) The responses to this question were quite mixed. Some answers were secular and did not relate to religion as such while others did consider what parents should do to fulfil the baptismal promise, for example, attending church, Sunday school, Bible classes, leading by example, charitable works, family prayer and so on.

2c) This question was not answered well. Some candidates confused confirmation with baptism (either infant or adult) while others saw the bishops and priests/vicars as one and the same. Those who had studied confirmation carefully answered well. Other candidates gave too generic answers which could relate to any type of service rather than confirmation specifically. There were instances of discussion about preparation classes but these, again, did not answer the question, nor did a description of the Eucharist that follows a Confirmation service. The candidates who did achieve higher marks discussed among other things the laying on of hands, anointing with chrism, quotes from the service and the importance of the Holy Spirit.

2d) This question was not answered well at all; it was probably the least well answered on the paper. Few candidates knew what was meant by a 'religious community', often equating them with denominations, church groups, charities or ecumenical communities. It was clear that, in many cases, this section of the syllabus had not been covered well, if at all. Very few candidates were able to mention anything about religious orders and good answers were very few and far between. Good answers tended to mention the differences between contemplative and active orders and explain why a person might decide to enter a community as a vocation or as a call from God.

2e) This question was answered from a variety of angles. Good answers looked at the concept of faith versus action or Bible study/prayer versus action or even preaching/teaching versus action; all were acceptable approaches. Others interpreted actions as attending church or praying but did not consider charitable works or living a Christian life. Some even interpreted the question to mean public worship as opposed to private worship. Some candidates, for whatever reason, equated actions with violence and therefore their answers were rather skewed in this direction. As with other e) questions, few candidates were able to offer a good personal response thus preventing them from achieving the upper marks for this question. In addition, some candidates did not refer to Christianity in their answer thus limiting their mark.

Question No. 3

3a) The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly.

3b) This question was usually answered well. Weaker responses simply gave two events from the Old Testament without actually saying how or why they were important. Better answers mentioned, for example, Messianic prophecy, the importance of the Noachide or Mosaic laws for Christians, the importance of the Creation stories and so on.

3c) Most candidates gained full marks for this question. This was most pleasing and showed that the topic had been taught well.

3d) Disappointingly, there still seems to be confusion amongst some candidates between the Old and New Testament and the contents of each. Higher level answers showed a sound understanding of the importance of the New Testament for Christians and focused mainly on Jesus' life and teachings and the fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies. There were not many candidates who mentioned the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles or Revelation although some did discuss why the start of the Early Church was important and the discourses on the end times.

3e) Surprisingly, some candidates did not seem to understand the meaning of the word 'fiction' in this question and this subsequently caused them problems. However, the majority of candidates answered this question well and those who achieved higher marks were able to argue that the Bible cannot be taken as a whole, but as a collection of many individual works each of which had a particular purpose when written. Some candidates were able to argue that, while some Christians are fundamentalists and take all of the Bible literally, other Christians believe that the Bible should not be considered as a whole but as a collection of writings – some fact, some myth and some symbolism. Many felt that, even if some of the Bible was symbolic, it did not detract from its purpose or its worth. Some candidates interpreted the question to mean the Bible is all made up and cannot be trusted at all, while others wrote that the Bible is God's word either dictated directly or inspired and therefore is true. Some students who wished to demonstrate that the Bible is fiction used science to support this view, particularly the Big Bang Theory. However, it seems that in some cases, the Big Bang is taught as evidence that the Bible is false when, in fact, many religious scientists have no problem in believing in the theory of the Big Bang while still believing in God. Indeed, it was a Belgian Roman Catholic priest named Georges Lemaître who first suggested the big bang theory in the 1920s when he theorized that the universe began from a single quantum. Overall, there were some interesting answers to this question and some high marks. However, as has already been said, the lack or brevity of a personal response kept some candidates from achieving Level 4.

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

General Comments:

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.

In general, candidates seemed to be able to access most of the questions and form some relevant responses to most questions. However, some of the technical terminology did cause some challenges, for example many did not know the term clergy.

The best responses are able to engage in detail with the specific questions set. Question 2 caused a number of candidates problems as many did not know what 'religious orders' were. In the context of the question this refers to religious communities such as Dominicans, Benedictines, and Jesuits. Charisms also caused some students some problems.

Some candidates had been exceptionally well prepared by their centres and understood Charisms and the nature and work of religious orders extremely well. Where candidates had not fully understood the question, but had given a response based on a reasonable interpretation of the question, credit was awarded.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

A: Almost all candidates knew what the lectern was and what it was used for.

B: The term 'Holy Orders' presented some challenges for some candidates but the majority understood the term and two specific examples.

C: This was probably the question that was answered best on the whole paper. Candidates gave a wide range of very clear and thoughtful responses.

D: Many candidates did not know the term "Clergy" and therefore lost out on the higher marks. Some made educated guesses and were awarded some credit. Candidates should be aware of the requirement to understand technical terms which are on the specification.

E: The question on artefacts was well answered, but around a third of candidates failed to get higher levels as they did not reference specific artefacts. Too many talked about them in general terms. The very best responses picked two or three specific artefacts to talk about and showed why they were either a distraction or an essential part of worship. Examples included the monstrance and thurible. The word artefacts did cause some confusion, and responses, more often than not, referred to a moveable object within the church such as chalice. However, a font is regarded as an artefact but it not a moveable object.

Question 2

A: Most candidates understood the term 'rite of initiation'.

B: Many candidates did not state the specific actions a sponsor might do at the confirmation service but gave suggestions of the wider actions of the sponsor. Where these were relevant they were credited.

C: Candidates could have seen charisms as "charismatic gifts", which 1 Corinthians 12:8–10 lists as the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, increased faith, the gifts of healing, the gift of miracles, prophecy, the discernment of spirits, diverse kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues. However, this list of charisms could have also included; fighting for the unborn; teaching; poverty; nursing; preaching; hospitality; prayer and caring for refugees.

D: This was very well answered by the vast majority of candidates who showed the theology behind the practice which was very nice to see.

E: Candidates seemed to offer different interpretations to the question here. For many it was not well answered and around half the candidates did not know what a religious order was. Some candidates interpreted the statement literally - a religious order being an order or instruction from a religious authority (which was deemed a legitimate interpretation of the question and duly credited). For those who did know the context specific definition, good discussion surrounding their relevance or otherwise ensued. The best responses showed the difference between apostolic and contemplative orders and discussed which of these was most relevant.

Question 3

A: Very few candidates got this question correct. Testament means covenant or agreement.

B: The vast majority could name two books from the Old Testament. Some included (incorrectly) the gospels, Some candidates gave 1 Kings and 2 Kings which is perfectly acceptable.

C: The vast majority knew how the Bible is used in private worship but the brevity of their responses stopped them from getting the marks. Examiners were looking for a specific activity which is particular to private and not public worship. For example, reading the Bible was not specific enough. Lectio Divina or reading the Bible and meditating on it were better responses.

D: The majority of candidates knew what the apocrypha was but only half were able to articulate why it was included. Those who did gave very clear accounts for its inclusion. Some knew that there are allusions to the Apocrypha in the New Testament; for example, chapter 11 of Hebrews seems to allude to Second Maccabees chapters seven and eleven. Some also said that the early Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen testify to the authority of the Apocrypha.

E: The vast majority of candidates could answer this question and write clear and sensible responses. There was a wide range of good answers and arguments, with many candidates taking specific books to highlight their viewpoints.

B575 Hinduism 1 (beliefs, special days, divisions and interpretations)

General Comments:

The paper was generally well answered, although there were fewer scripts of very high standard than last year. Most candidates had been well prepared for the exam. As in previous years, questions 1 and 2 were much more popular than Question 3, although there was a noticeable increase in the number of candidates who attempted question 3. Where candidates did attempt Question 3 they had usually been well prepared for it and achieved good marks.

Although there were a smaller proportion of excellent responses than in previous years, those that were seen were of an exceptionally high standard, showing excellent skills of evaluation and debate.

There were very few rubric errors with a tiny proportion of candidates attempting all three questions. There was very little evidence, except on one or two occasions, that candidates had insufficient time in which to complete the paper.

An unfortunate trend this year, in part e questions, is that candidates are attempting to provide a viewpoint from a second religion and/or from an atheist position. While the specification is clear that these can be credited, they must be directly relevant and add something new to the discussion. In this paper there are no questions where (for example) a Muslim perspective is likely to add anything substantive to the debate since Islam has nothing to say on the topics of Maya, moksha or Shaktism. A worrying number of candidates performed mental gymnastics in attempting to guess what a Muslim might say about these topics which was not only not helpful in responding to the question, but also wasted a significant amount of time. It is strongly recommended that Centres teach candidates to address the specific question asked, and to ask themselves whether a perspective from a second religion can add anything that is genuinely of value. Several candidates achieved a mark below that which they might otherwise have done by straining to fit this 'pattern' where it was clearly not relevant. Likewise, while an atheist perspective may be of value at times this is by no means always the case and discernment is required.

Another new trend this is that some candidates are now concluding their response with a 'conclusion' that merely re-states what has been said elsewhere without adding anything new. This is to be discouraged as it uses time to no avail. Centres are reminded of the need for candidates to give a justified personal view in part e questions in order to reach level 3.

Centres are reminded that it is very important that candidates be taught to read the question and respond to the particular question asked. This is particularly important in part d questions, where the whole of the question needs to be taken into account.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1(a) Virtually every candidate was able to answer this question correctly. All accurate variants on the name of Ganesha were credited.

1(b) This question was accessible to all. Almost all candidates knew what karma is, and the vast majority of candidates identified two clear and distinct beliefs about karma. Common responses included the role of karma in reincarnation, the law of cause and effect and the consequences of ones actions.

1(c) Again the vast majority of candidates were able to identify what the 'atman' is and gave three distinct beliefs about the 'atman'. Most candidates received full marks. Common answers included its link with Brahman, its ultimate aim to reach moksha and how it is trapped in the circle of samsara. Where candidates did not receive all three marks it was generally because they had either offered one or two responses, or had given the same response, worded differently, twice.

1(d) This question was well answered. Candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of who Lakshmi is and her role in Hinduism, often linking her role with that of Vishnu and explaining her role as a protector of dharma. Many candidates referred to her being worshiped at Divali by businessmen or because of family tradition. Some mentioned the particular importance of Lakshmi for women. Some candidates referred to the importance she holds to Hindus during the festival of Navaratri. Most candidates suggested that Lakshmi is particularly worshipped as a source of wealth, but the best responses went beyond this to explain the idea that wealth linked with the goddess is both gained and used dharmically. The best responses were able to explain a number of different reasons why Lakshmi is worshipped.

1(e) This question proved problematic for some and achieved a good level of differentiation with most mark points being used. Very few candidates, if any, approached the topic by comparing different Hindu beliefs on this topic (for example contrasting Advaita Vedanta teachings with other schools of Hinduism that regard the material world as real, such as Samkhya) although in previous years candidates have demonstrated this knowledge. Some candidates clearly had no understanding of the concept of maya and struggled to give very general responses along the lines of 'of course the world is not an illusion.' Stronger responses often suggested that science has demonstrated that the universe is not an illusion, and some contrasted scientific knowledge with jnana. Another common approach was to suggest that the fact that Hinduism teaches about murtis and puja and the existence of varnashramadharma is evidence that the world is not an illusion since our actions in it have real consequences in the accumulation of dharma. The best responses to this question were of a very high standard indeed, showing both good religious knowledge and an excellent level of reasoning and evaluation.

2(a) Most knew this. Those that did not tended to guess at another festival, generally Holi or Divali.

2(b) This question was accessible to all, with almost all candidates gaining two marks, correctly identifying two different things that Hindus would do before a festival – prepare food, clean the house, buy new clothes, decorate the house, fast or perform puja.

2(c) Again this was a well-answered question with most candidates receiving 3 marks. Answers included to scatter the ashes of loved ones, to bathe in the River Ganges, to visit a specific temple, to visit a priest, and to visit a temple dedicated to Shiva and offer puja.

2(d) Some candidates gave quite generalised responses about the freedom to choose what you do and the expense involved in festivals. These tended not to demonstrate a sound understanding of the issues raised by the question and were generally credited in level 1. However, others gave good accounts of the importance of the different festivals in different Hindu traditions, the difficulties in celebrating some festivals outside of India and the question of whether festivals were actually important at all to all Hindus. The best responses gave a number of different suggestions and explained each one in some depth.

2(e) Most candidates were able to give a sound response to this question. Candidates were able to give good descriptions of pilgrimages and to explain the value of activities taken on them. Most then contrasted this with other practices such as puja and discussed the relative importance. The best responses focussed directly on the question asked and considered the issue of moksha in some depth. Many concluded that while pilgrimage is very helpful on the

spiritual journey it is not the best way to achieve moksha. Many were aware that some Hindus believe that dying in Varanasi will ensure moksha and discussed this belief. There were fewer outstanding responses than with question 1 but most candidates achieved level 3.

3(a) The vast majority of candidates that did attempt this question correctly identified that it was worship of Shiva as the absolute. Those that did not tended to confuse it with Shaktism.

3(b) Most candidates gained two marks here. Common answers included Durga, Lakshmi, Parvati, Kali, and the Mother Goddess. A few candidates suggested Mother Nature, which was not credited as this is not a phrase that is used in Hinduism.

3(c) This was answered well with almost all candidates that attempted this question gaining three marks. There was an encouraging level of knowledge about Shiva and many gave more detail than was required for the three marks. Responses included Shiva's role in the Trimurti, the Lingam, his role as Nataraja and his relationship with Shakti.

3(d) This was answered well by most. Most suggested that the key factors were Vishnu's role as preserver and his many avatars. Some also discussed the position of a Hindu in India, family tradition and personal religious experience. Once again, the best responses gave a number of different reasons, which they then explained.

3(e) This question achieved good differentiation. Some candidates were clearly struggling and used arguments along the lines that the question was 'unfair' or 'sexist' and that people could do what they wanted, so missing the significance of the question. Others focussed on the benefits or worshiping particular goddesses rather than on Shaktism as such. There were, however, some strong responses with a few candidates referring to Ramakrishna and his devotion to Shaktism.

B576 Hinduism 2 (worship, community and family, sacred writings)

General Comments:

The paper was generally well answered, although there were fewer scripts of very high standard than last year. Most candidates had been well prepared for the exam. As in previous years, questions 1 and 2 were much more popular than Question 3, although there was a noticeable increase in the number of candidates who attempted Question 3. Where candidates did attempt Question 3 they had usually been well prepared for it and achieved good marks. More candidates than in previous years attempted Questions 1 and 3.

Although there were a smaller proportion of excellent responses than in previous years, those that were seen were of an exceptionally high standard, showing excellent skills of evaluation and debate.

There were very few rubric errors with a tiny proportion of candidates attempting all three questions. There was very little evidence, except on one or two occasions, that candidates had insufficient time in which to complete the paper.

An unfortunate trend this year, in part e questions, is that candidates are attempting to provide a viewpoint from a second religion and/or from an atheist position. While the specification is clear that these can be credited, they must be directly relevant and add something new to the discussion. While a Muslim perspective might have been relevant in Question 1, there was no relevance anywhere else on the paper, and those who used a Muslim perspective in Question 1 rarely did so very effectively. A worrying number of candidates performed mental gymnastics in attempting to guess what a Muslim might say about the topics of Upanayana and Hindu scriptures, which was not only not helpful in responding to the question, but also wasted a significant amount of time. It is strongly recommended that centres teach candidates to address the specific question asked, and to ask themselves whether a perspective from a second religion can add anything that is genuinely of value. Several candidates achieved a mark below that which they might otherwise have done by straining to fit this 'pattern' where it was clearly not relevant. Likewise, while an atheist perspective may be of value at times this is by no means always the case and discernment is required.

Another new trend this is that some candidates are now concluding their response with a 'conclusion' that merely re-states what has been said elsewhere without adding anything new. This is to be discouraged as it uses time to no avail. Centres are reminded of the need for candidates to give a justified personal view in part e questions in order to reach level 3.

Centres are reminded that it is very important that candidates be taught to read the question and respond to the particular question asked. This is particularly important in part d questions, where the whole of the question needs to be taken into account.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1(a) Virtually every candidate was able to answer this question correctly.

1(b) Again, the vast majority gained full marks for this question. Answers included for festivals, worship, marriage ceremonies, puja and to consult with a priest. One or two candidates suggested funerals and this was credited as in the context of the Hindu diaspora the mandir might well be used for funeral gatherings.

1(c) Almost all candidates gained the three available marks. Common responses that were not credited were murtis (which are not on the tray) and rosary beads as these belong to a different religious tradition.

1(d) This question was generally well answered and accessible to all. Weaker responses tended to give a generic description of all of the roles of a priest rather than to focus on the question, which specifically asked about worship. Stronger responses referred back to the question and stated the importance of the priest in leading worship with development. Responses tended to focus on the specialist ritual and linguistic knowledge of the priest and that fact that some rituals cannot take place without one. Many candidates also referred to the priest's knowledge of the Vedas.

1(e) There were some very general responses with a few candidates who had clearly misunderstood the question merely giving a description of murti worship. Fewer candidates than expected discussed the arguments around Nirguna and Saguna Brahman and the issues that this raises for the worship of murtis, although those that did so displayed good religious knowledge and were able to argue their case well. Many argued that since Brahman is everywhere there is no particular point in murti worship and contrasted this with the advantages of having something visual to focus on. One or two candidates were aware that murti worship is absent from the Vedas. This question achieved a good level of differentiation with the full range of levels being widely used.

2(a) Most knew this. Those that did not often answered that it was a statue of a god, confusing it with murti. A few left the question blank.

2(b) Again accessible to all candidates, and most candidates received two marks. Common responses included seven steps around the fire, exchanging vows, the couple being joined together by a scarf and the bride placing her foot on a rock.

2(c) Some candidates simply wrote a statement that charity leads to good karma and so received one mark. The strongest responses developed this by giving examples of the consequences of charitable actions in this and future lives. Some gave examples from scripture. A few of the strongest candidates were able to develop the idea of charity in the context of the dharmic requirements placed on Hindus in the Grihastha Ashrama.

2(d) Most candidates knew what varnashramadharma is and were able to 'unpack' the word, explaining 'varna' 'ashrama' and 'dharma'. A number of candidates, however, finished there and did not go on to address the question by explaining its importance. The best responses explained its role in the wider context of dharma and so its value in maintaining a fair and ordered society that balances spiritual and worldly concerns. Some suggested that following varnashramadharma was vital for gaining karma and so escaping samsara. A few discussed the controversy around the caste system and its relation to varna.

2(e) Most candidates were able to access this question. Some candidates did not know what the Upanayana ceremony was and gave very general answers – only achieving a level 1. Good answers included arguments for and against the relevance of the ceremony today – many suggested that it was out-dated (most children receive an education now and there is no need to study with a guru in the forest), not accessible for girls and only for the three upper castes and so was unfair and should be discarded. On the other hand, some candidates explained the importance of keeping tradition and passing this on, its relevance to their varnashramadharma and following all the samskaras. The best responses had some very good discussions around these issues, showing strong evaluation and so gained level 4.

3(a) Of those that attempted this question, most answered correctly.

3(b) A few candidates left this blank. Most suggested Samhitas, Upanishads, etc. although some gave 'types' of writings such as 'poetry' 'hymns' and 'prayer' and these were credited. Shruti was also credited where it was given.

3(c) Most candidates were able to gain all three marks here with the majority discussing the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna. Those that did not gain the marks had usually confused the Gita with the Ramayana and so had described an event from the latter.

3(d) Most candidates were able to describe, with examples, the ways in which Rama as well as some of the other characters in the Ramayana had demonstrated dharma in their behaviour. Many, however, did not go beyond this. The question asked about the significance of this for Hindus. The strongest responses suggested ways in which the life of Rama might influence, or be useful to Hindus who had moral decisions to make. One or two suggested that it could be of use when there appeared to be a conflict of interest between two types of dharma. This question demonstrates the importance of reading, and responding to the entire question as it is asked.

3(e) The vast majority of candidates were able to identify the difference between the two types of texts. A small minority confused the terms, getting them the wrong way around. The best responses skilfully described the differences between the two types of texts and how they have a difference in importance to Hindus. Candidates also wrote about the accessibility of these texts. Some argued that texts such as the Gita and the Ramayana actually have greater importance and generally argued their case very well. Although very few candidates attempted this question, those that did had obviously been well prepared and were generally able to give sound responses.

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

General Comments

Examiners found occasional rubric errors although a few candidates attempted parts of all 3 questions. Most used their time well.

Legibility still remains a problem on some scripts due to candidates' handwriting.

e) part answers again tended to provide the most differentiation at this level. As usual, some candidates lost marks due either to misreading or misinterpreting the question. A number of candidates gave very detailed responses in their part 'd' answers but all too often not directly related to the question being asked.

The most frequent combination was Q1 and 2 with far fewer candidates attempting Q3.

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 offering a personal opinion, usually followed by a conclusion.

However, a lack of knowledge in some places meant not all candidates managed to access the full mark range, and a significant number of students still struggled with the part d) questions but mainly due to not reading the question properly.

Question specific

Question 1

Parts a-c: most candidates gained full marks, although on part 'c' there was confusion between what is a fact (historical or otherwise), and what is a belief.

d)- There were some good answers but too many candidates answered as if the question said '**How**' when in fact it asked '**Why**' and gave accounts of how to live out the Five Pillars.

e)- A number of good and thoughtful answers. However, some focused more on the life of Muhammad pbuh rather than the teachings. Quite a few were unaware of Hadiths and the type of guidance given.

Question 2

a) – This part was well answered by the majority of candidates.

b) – Quite well answered, although some candidates gave an interesting selection of places not included on Hajj.

c) - Usually correct although many did not include aspects specific to Ramadan.

d) – Some good answers that included the word 'important'. However, a good number just listed events with little or no explanation as to why they are important.

e)-At times, there seemed to be a lack of critical or evaluative discussion about the stimulus statement, with response simply including information on all of the Pillars. However, a number of students had underlined the word 'thing' and addressed this, albeit a little fleetingly at times.

Question 3

As usual, the least popular question with very few candidates attempting it.

a) – Candidates often erroneously offered Makkah, or the Quiblah as a response. These was a feeling that most candidates did not read the question carefully - *What* do **all** Muslims **face**...?

b)-Almost all achieved both marks.

c)- On the whole, fairly well answered.

d)-Very few even attempted this question with only a handful of good answers.

e)-There were some interesting answers to this question. A number of answers, though, were a simple discussion not backed up by facts. Good answers did include statistics, aspects of issues of living in a Muslim country as opposed to UK; Shariah law; and laws against religious discrimination. Some referred to how challenges can be good for Muslims, for instance, Greater Jihad. Very few referred to religion in general which is what the question asked.

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

General Comments

Overall, there was a wide range of responses. There were very few rubric errors. Not all students indicated they had continued the answer elsewhere, on extra line space or continuation sheets. There seemed to be an even distribution amongst candidates as to which questions were attempted. The majority of candidates completed the paper in the time allowed.

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.

A number of candidates are still having problems with part d), either through misreading the question or lacking the necessary knowledge.

Question 1

- a)- The majority of answers were correct although some candidates confused Imam with Iman.
- b) –The majority of candidates mentioned that calligraphy was either for decorative purposes or to avoid idolatry.
- c) –A number of candidates seemed to think a minaret is inside the mosque.
- d)-Some very thoughtful answers, but a number of candidates confused individual with community.
- e)-Many candidates seemed to be confused between leaders and founders hence some very disjointed answers to the question. Also, many referred to Allah as founder/leader.

Question 2

- a)- Almost all candidates gave the correct response.
- b) -A large majority of candidates gained full marks, but a number thought it was at home or confused it with the saying of the shahadah before a person dies.
- c)- Weaker responses gave a mixture of various birth rituals rather than just concentrating upon Aqiqa.
- d)-This was fairly well answered by a majority of candidates
- e) - Some very interesting answers with candidates discussing arranged marriages, family traditions, and the role of love in the relationship.

Question 3

The candidates who attempted this question usually answered correctly.

- b)- Most candidates gave correct answers to both parts of the question.
 - c)- Most candidates gave correct answers to all three parts of the question.
 - d) – Generally fairly well answered. More candidates seemed to have a better knowledge of what Ahadith are than when this topic was last examined.
 - e) – A number of candidates clearly could not differentiate between holy books/ scripture as a concept and a physical book. Many seemed to think that if you have a version on the internet or if you are a hafiz then you do not need a holy book.
- Higher level responses looked into the spiritual and community need for scripture as well as touching on the role of it being God's words - literal or otherwise.

B579 Judaism 1 (Beliefs, Special Days, Divisions)

General Comments:

The overall performance of candidates this year was one of the best that examiners had witnessed. All involved in the process are to be commended for the way that candidates had been supported with subject knowledge and examination strategies. There were barely any examples of rubric errors this session. Very few candidates attempted all questions though some began a question before changing their mind. Candidates should read all parts of a question before deciding to undertake it. The least popular question was the question on Zionism and divisions of Judaism but it was well answered. There was no significant evidence of candidates having issues with their timing. A few had spent a little too long on the shorter answer questions. This had inevitably led to evaluative responses being rushed towards the end. The space available on the paper is designed to reflect the amount that a candidate might need to write to achieve full marks. The few candidates that chose to spend time devising complicated essay plans tended to find themselves pressed for time. Success in the evaluative responses is vital to overall examination success. Candidates should be encouraged to include personal opinion throughout their response and not just leave it to the final paragraph. Personal opinion and clear reference to Judaism are essential for candidates to reach the higher levels. Despite the pressure of the timed examination, most maintained an impressive standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar. That said, it is in the interest of candidates to ensure that their handwriting is legible and in a few cases this was not so. It is pleasing to report that fewer candidates are simply listing how different denominations or groups might interpret the issue at hand. This is rarely a good approach and tends to rely on a significant degree of stereotyping. Some candidates tended to confuse the teachings and beliefs of Judaism with those of Christianity and Islam. That said, these can be used as a means of comparison in a part e response. In those questions where a specific number of responses are requested, candidates should not provide an extensive list in the hope that some might be correct. Examiners have been asked to only credit the first responses given.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

1a) As might be expected, the vast majority of students were able to identify the number of gods worshipped by Jews. Examiners accepted 'monotheism' as a valid response.

1b) Once again, candidates tended to accurately identify the covenants. The majority selected Abraham and Moses, though other acceptable answers were given.

1c) This question provoked a wide variety of responses. Many candidates cited examples from the Ten Commandments. Others referred to familiar areas like the food laws, ritual dress and Shabbat. Wording did not have to explicitly echo the phrasing of the Torah in order to access full marks.

1d) Candidates' success in this area depended on how carefully they had read the question. Some simply described Jewish Messianic beliefs without reference to the impact on the life of a Jew. The best responses explained some of the specific duties and traditions like Sabbath observance and rituals during the Passover. They went on to discuss ideas about mitzvot observance, faith, hope and reassurance about life after death.

1e) This response asked candidates to evaluate the extent to which religious belief impacted on an ability to maintain friendly relations with others. Responses tended to be well balanced and personal opinion was nearly always apparent. There was a tendency for some candidates to omit clear reference to Judaism and rather to discuss the issue in more general terms. Examiners credited those candidates who interpreted the stimulus as referring to issues between different Jewish groups or within the wider non-Jewish community. Some looked back to the Holocaust as a reason why Jews should or should not interact with other groups.

Question No. 2

2a) Most candidates identified Saturday as the day on which the Sabbath ends. Some candidates identified Friday, though it is unclear whether this was down to ignorance or a failure to read the question properly.

2b) This question seemed to provide few problems for candidates and was generally very well answered. A range of different festivals were identified and full marks were the norm. The High Holy Days and the Pilgrim Festivals were most commonly identified.

2c) The question dealing with role of a congregation in worship elicited a range of responses from candidates. Some gave a list of activities such as praying and listening to the Torah. Others tended to focus solely on praying and made a range of points about the process, such as the need for a minyan. This question asked for a description though many candidates provided an explanation of the importance of communal worship instead.

2d) Candidates clearly had a good knowledge of the different activities that take place in the home during Shabbat. The best responses included an account of their significance. Others were able to explain the importance of the home in passing on tradition, welcoming other members of the community and representing aspects of Temple worship. Less successful responses simply explained the importance of Shabbat in general, without referring to the home. Some were just descriptive or confused the Sabbath with other festivals.

2e) The stimulus was intended to echo “More than the Jewish People have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jews.” (Ahad Ha’am). It provoked some well-balanced responses that explored the topic from different perspectives. Some focused on the difficulties of keeping Shabbat in the modern world, whilst others examined other aspects of Judaism that might perform a similar function to a day of rest. Personal opinion was often left to the end of the discussion - however, better responses integrated the candidates’ own views throughout. Clearly there was always likely to be clear reference to Judaism in this question, which is essential to reach the higher levels.

Question No. 3

3a) Whilst many identified 1948 as the correct answer, there were a wide range of other suggestions indicating some degree of confusion amongst the cohort.

3b)- This question was well answered. Many candidates made reference to certain sacred texts; others suggested key people within the Jewish community such as the rabbi and the Beth Din. Both approaches were, of course, credited.

3c) Candidates also performed well on this question about Zionism. They made a number of valid suggestions including the idea of The Promised Land and the covenant with Abraham. Others made valid links with the Shoah and the need to avoid persecution. There were also appropriate answers relating to the Messiah and The Messianic Age.

3d) Most candidates had a clear understanding of the distinctive features of Reform belief and practice. This enabled many of them to identify some of the issues that might provoke disagreement with other Jewish groups, in particular from a more Orthodox perspective. Attitudes towards gender and styles of worship were often referred to, as were beliefs about the divine authorship of the Torah and the impact that this has on observance. Some candidates also explained how different beliefs about the Messiah might lead to disagreement.

3e) Not all candidates who attempted this question had a clear understanding of the distinctive nature of Hasidism. Many simply interpreted Hasidism as being Orthodoxy. This approach was obviously credited to some extent but the best answers were more specific and were rewarded accordingly. This included references to joy in worship and the use of Kabbalism to get closer to G-d. Very few candidates omitted a personal opinion, either throughout, or at the end of the response. Clearly it would be almost impossible to tackle the question without making reference to Judaism in the process.

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

General Comments:

Candidates are to be congratulated for the exemplary way in which the large majority of them tackled this paper. Clearly the revision strategies and examination techniques that they had employed were successful and will hopefully be rewarded. Examiners reported very few examples of rubric errors this session, although a small number of candidates did attempt all the questions. In these cases, the best responses were rewarded but valuable time was obviously lost. Candidates should read all parts of a question before deciding to undertake it. The least popular question was that dealing with sacred writings though it was not badly answered. It is not clear whether its unpopularity was due to the content or its position on the paper. Despite many candidates writing a substantial amount, there were no obvious issues with timing. Part a responses generally do not require candidates to write more than a sentence or phrase. Candidates should always be guided by the amount of space available to them as it is designed to reflect the amount of salient information needed to achieve full marks. Whilst a very brief outline was sometimes of value, candidates should not spend time creating very detailed essay plans for part e responses. Good use was often made of the additional space at the back of the booklet and examiners always check to see if this has been used. It is crucial that candidates devote adequate time and effort to part e responses. This must always involve a personal response and explicit reference to Judaism if an answer is to be classed as competent or better. Very few concerns were reported with spelling, punctuation or grammar. Candidates are not expected to achieve perfection in these respects but illegible handwriting can sometimes be an issue. Candidates do not always find it easy to differentiate between denominations. Evaluative responses that are based on these groups and their supposed attitudes tend to be unsuccessful. As ever, a small number of candidates confused Judaism with other Abrahamic faiths. Candidates should not list more than the requested number of responses and expect all to be considered. Examiners only mark the required number and disregard the rest.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

1a) Almost all candidates were able to identify the kippah as a religious head covering or skull cap. Very few alternative responses were given.

1b) A range of different responses were provided to the question. Some candidates described general purposes of prayer like building community cohesion. Other candidates identified more specific functions like adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.

1c) Candidates found the question about the role of the congregation somewhat challenging. They often identified the importance of the minyan but then struggled to get beyond that. Some returned to the general purposes of worship but the best responses made reference to specifics like listening to the Torah or reciting prayers.

1d) The question on ritual dress elicited a range of responses. The strongest answers explained the importance of specific items of dress such as the tephillin and the tallit. They also included more general purposes of ritual dress relating to a Jewish identity, tradition and an aid to worship. Examiners credited references to the sheitl and modesty rules. Inevitably the best responses included a mixture of approaches.

1e) The evaluation question dealing with worshipping G-d was accessible to most candidates, regardless of ability. Most remembered to make a clear and explicit reference to Judaism. They often used the different categories of Mitzvot to good effect, sometimes citing the Ten Commandments as examples. Personal opinion was nearly always apparent though there was no consensus as to the validity of the stimulus quotation. Candidates discussed whether all observance might be seen as an act of worship. Some debated whether a Jew's duty towards other people should have precedence over their duty to G-d, or whether there was any distinction between the two.

Question No. 2

2a) One mark questions often require definitions but this proved quite challenging for candidates. Examiners accepted ideas relating to tradition, custom or ceremony. Some candidates thought that 'ritual' amounted to a religious belief.

2b) This question regarding food considered treif was very well answered. Some candidates simply named animals that may not be eaten which was, perhaps, the expected approach. However, others provided basic descriptions such as 'without cloven hooves' and these were also credited by examiners.

2c) The question regarding Bat Mitzvah was not a problem for those who read the question carefully. A range of responses were provided and rewarded with marks. These included references to speeches, blessings and reading a sacred text. Some candidates wrote about a boy's experience instead and this was not accepted. If no gender was specified, marks were awarded when relevant.

2d) Weaker responses spent too much time describing the food laws, rather than explaining their significance for the Jewish communities. Better responses explained how the food laws help to establish a unique identity for the Jewish people. Many went on to explore how the food laws are a test of faith and an important part of the covenant. They also explained how they enhance the significance of the home as a place of religious observance. Some also discussed health and animal welfare issues.

2e) This question could be interpreted in two ways. Some candidates discussed the merits of Jews prioritising their own denomination or group over Jews of other beliefs and customs. Others wrote about Jewish relations with the wider Gentile community. Both approaches were equally valid and both were rewarded as such by examiners. Weaker responses simply looked at the economic implications of a Jew caring for others. Some interesting arguments considered whether the historical persecution of the Jews afforded them justification for a more introspective approach to caring for others.

Question No. 3

3a) There were a wide variety of definitions of 'Torah' provided and accepted as valid. Some candidates referred to the physical Torah which was credited. Others mentioned the five books of Moses or concepts like books of the Law or instruction.

3b) In general, candidates were well informed on the use of the Talmud. Many were able to make connections to the written Torah. There was an awareness of how the Talmud adds clarification to certain Mitzvot and reflects the learning of the sages down through the generations. The divine origin of the Talmud was often stated and rewarded.

3c) The question concerning the use of the Tenakh was often tackled skilfully. The candidates often simply referred to the way that Jews treat the Torah with respect. This was credited if the Torah was specified in the response, up to full marks. The strongest answers referred to the use of the Haftarah and the study of the Tenakh in the home. Marks were awarded to candidates who described the treatment of the physical document as well as the way Jews act in accordance with its teachings.

3d) This question gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the different attitudes towards the divine authorship of the Tenakh. Many sought to explain the views held by different groups, such as the Orthodox and the Reform movements. Other candidates were able to explain how Jews might differ in the value that they might place on the different parts of the Tenakh, maybe not holding them all in equal esteem. It was preferable that candidates showed an awareness that the question was not simply about the Torah.

3e) This final question returned specifically to the Torah. It was sufficiently general for candidates to approach it in a number of ways as long as divergent views, personal opinion and an awareness of Judaism were all apparent. The most common response saw candidates weigh up the merits of the different views of the divine authorship of the Torah, perhaps as reflected in the beliefs of different denominations. Other candidates discussed certain mitzvot that could be considered out of date or no longer relevant. In particular, candidates referred to the mitzvot relating to the worship in the Temple.

B581 Sikhism 1 (Beliefs, Special Days, Divisions

General Comments:

Candidates demonstrate that they have been prepared for the examination and clearly the majority have a sound knowledge of the Sikh faith. In some cases this is more detailed than in others, but there are few examples where candidates confuse the Sikh faith with other faiths. All questions were accessible to the majority of candidates with only a couple proving more challenging due to misunderstandings.

Candidates on the whole could give definitions of key terms and were familiar with specialist terminology.

There is still evidence that some candidates have been encouraged to write down all they know about a particular topic in the hope that this will give them access to high marks. This was particularly evident in Question 2. However, these candidates often fail to show an understanding of the issues raised in the questions –especially in part e responses, and therefore limit the marks they can be awarded as they do not use their knowledge to demonstrate understanding and evaluation.

It is also necessary to stress that candidates benefit from reading the questions and responding to what is required, rather than using semi-prepared responses based on questions from previous examinations.

There were few rubric errors and time did not seem to cause any problems

Comments on Individual Questions:

1a) Nearly all candidates answered this correctly.

1b) Surprisingly few candidates were able to correctly identify any of the 'Five Sikh Virtues' Those candidates who could identify one of The Five Sikh Virtues found it hard to match a correct example with the virtue given in the first part of the response.

1c) Most could state facts as required in the response but some candidates gave detailed descriptions which had to be 'unpacked' in order for marks to be awarded positively.

1d) Weaker responses only explained what the Five K's were whilst others were able to choose which of the 5 Ks they wanted to use as examples in order to show the meaning and symbolism of the items.

1e) There were some good quality responses to this question, with most candidates showing a clear understanding of the two terms and how they might be seen to be interrelated by many Sikhs. Some candidates were able to show an awareness of the Sikh view that neither one might be adequate for the development of a strong faith without the other. Many were able to use exemplars from the Gurus or from the Guru Granth to justify their responses.

Question No.2

2a) Most candidates answered this question correctly

2b) Most candidates answered this question correctly, a few candidates confusing Tegh Bahadur Dev Ji with another guru.

2c) Some candidates gave generic answers about attending a place of worship when the question wanted an answer about a specific place.

2d) Many candidates told the story of Guru Hargobind leaving prison but did not explain the importance to Sikhs, thus demonstrating the need to target responses to the question.

2e) There were some good quality answers to this question, with candidates showing an ability to consider the issues for Sikhs, although relatively few could cite examples from other faiths who were significant to the Sikh religion, which would have been an appropriate inclusion. Local and family members as role models were also considered by some candidates. A number were able to consider that there were alternative elements to the development of faith for Sikhs.

Question No.3

3a) Some candidates incorrectly put Guru Gobind Singh and did not seem to recognise that the question did not specify 'human guru'. Therefore they were not credited for their response.

3b) Some incorrect responses. Candidate responses to questions on this area on the specification are traditionally varied; however most candidates were able to state two simple facts as required. A number of candidates were wildly inaccurate.

3c) Some candidates confused the Rahit Maryada with the Mul Mantra.

3d) There were some good responses to this question with many candidates demonstrating an understanding of Sikh beliefs about equality, whilst recognising that theory is not always in line with practice.

3e) There were some good responses to this question, with clear understanding of the issues in contemporary Sikhism regarding the issue of human gurus and the 'final' guru as seen by mainstream followers. Some coherent arguments were demonstrated with a good understanding of the positive and negative attitudes held by different believers.

B582 Sikhism 2 (Worship, Community and

General Comments:

Candidates demonstrate that they have been prepared for the examination and clearly the majority have a sound knowledge of the Sikh faith. In some cases this is more detailed than in others, but there are few examples where candidates confuse the Sikh faith with other faiths. All questions were accessible to the majority of candidates with only a couple proving more challenging due to misunderstandings. Candidates on the whole could give definitions of key terms and were familiar with specialist terminology.

There is still evidence that some candidates have been encouraged to write down all they know about a particular topic in the hope that this will give them access to high marks. However, these candidates often fail to show an understanding of the issues raised in the questions –especially in part e responses, and therefore limit the marks they can be awarded as they do not use their knowledge to demonstrate understanding and evaluation.

It is also necessary to stress that candidates benefit from reading the questions and responding to what is required, rather than using semi-prepared responses based on questions from previous examinations.

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

There were few rubric errors and time did not seem to cause any problems.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.1

1a) Most candidates answered this correctly, although some described it rather than naming the symbol, suggesting that some candidates saw the words 'nishan sahib' rather than the word 'symbol' and simply wrote what they knew.

1b) The majority of candidates answered this correctly but some thought that a ragi read the Guru Granth Sahib or gave out karah parshad whilst others wrote down almost they thought happened in the gurdwara. As candidates are credited for the first two responses, some missed gaining marks as they listed things not done by a ragi before things a ragi might do.

1c) Almost all candidates who chose this question achieved full marks, choosing from the wide range of possible responses.

1d) Few candidates achieved full marks on this question as most wrote only about the ingredients and how it is distributed but did not explain how it might help a Sikh to learn about their faith.

1e) Candidates answered this question well and were well aware of the importance of langar for practicing sewa and could explain this clearly, considering a variety of points in favour of the stimulus as well as some in contradiction of it. A few candidates chose to write all they knew about the langar, which inevitably meant they were limited in the marks awarded as they did not tackle the issue raised.

Question No.2

2a) Nearly all candidates answered this correctly.

2b) A variety of responses with most identifying relevant points.

2c) Most candidates were able to state three things that took place during the ceremony, with some using the same response broken into three parts – making amrit, stirring amrit, sharing amrit for example, rather than three different elements of the ceremony.

2d) Most candidates answered this question well, with weaker responses simply listing what takes place rather than explaining how the events might be seen to reflect beliefs.

2e) Most candidates interpreted 'marriage' to mean simply 'wedding ceremony' and answered accordingly, thus limiting the level awarded, but a few higher quality answers referred to marriage in the fuller context and candidates were able to discuss the issues raised.

Question No.3

3a) Most candidates answered this question correctly.

3b) Most candidates answered this question correctly but some gave examples of festivals when the question clearly stated 'ceremonies'.

3c) Most candidates explained what the Dasam Granth was but few clearly explained how it might be used by a Sikh.

3d) This question was answered well by many candidates but some confused the Mul Mantra with the Rahit Maryada, and thus were not credited at a satisfactory or higher level.

3e) Most candidates answered this question well and included some good quality arguments, considering how a Holy Book can be used as a practical and spiritual guide, as well as discussing whether a Holy Book becomes outdated and is thus not useful as a guide. Some candidates also considered what the result might be for the faith if there were no Holy Book. All responses demonstrated an understanding at some level of the importance and relevance of the Holy Book for Sikhs.

B583 Christian Scriptures 1 (Mark)

General Comments:

The majority of candidates recognised the set texts from the Gospel of Mark readily and were able to access the questions satisfactorily and demonstrate their knowledge of the Gospel material as well as provide comment, analysis and discussion as required.

All questions were attempted fairly equally and there does not seem to have been an especially popular question. Candidates used additional paper where necessary and were mostly helpful in indicating that they had continued their answers elsewhere in their answer booklets. Many used extra booklets where it might have been easier to have used the additional pages in the main answer book.

Part (a-c) questions generally answered well and candidates were able to give the key information although some were disadvantaged by not having clear knowledge of the text or confusing it with another section of the Gospel.

Answers to (d) were strong in the main and candidates were able to provide explanation and demonstrate understanding of the questions.

Responses to (e) demonstrated a general ability to recognise the issues and to present at least reasonably balanced discursive accounts and reactions. It was clear to see where Centres had taught candidates to approach these answers in well-planned and systematic ways (sometimes expressed in a draft graphical plan based on a mnemonic device). These candidates were often able to demonstrate not only a range of views supported by justified arguments and discussion but also some reflective personal response to the topic of the question. The single most important and valuable suggestion to make is that of encouraging candidates to ensure that they most clearly demonstrate their own personal judgements and responses to the subject matter of (e) questions rather than just itemising the opposing arguments. It was pleasing to see some candidates making wider use of Mark's Gospel in their discussion answers, drawing on examples and comparisons with other parts of the Gospel text. It was also, good to see candidates taking more broad-based and analytical approaches to these AO2 responses and this was particularly the case with Q.1(e) and Q.2(e).

In general, the handwriting of candidates was clear and easily read while levels of spelling and grammar were high, including the spelling of specialist words. Very few rubric errors were made and the vast majority of candidates selected two questions as asked and concentrated on answering them fully and seem to have had sufficient time to answer the questions required.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

1a) "Asked Jesus to help" was a popular (although incorrect answer).

1b) Most candidates recognised the story and obtained marks on this question.

1c) Some candidates confused this with the story of Legion in Mark 5.

1d) Most candidates were able to link 'faith' with reward but did not always relate this to the particular details of the story and so their responses were generic – 'You need faith to be healed'. The better answers discussed Jesus words, "O faithless generation", the father grappling with his doubts or the teaching about prayer/faith at the end of the passage.

1e) The best responses took the lead from the words ‘people today’ and related their answers to the modern world with creditable discussions about the nature of evil and ways in which people might be considered ‘powerless’ in the face of evil. Some wrote interestingly, interpreting evil in the sense of ‘demonic forces’ affecting people today and others interpreted ‘evil’ in the sense of HIV, war or abuse. Some presented creditable discussions of the relevance of the term ‘evil’ to modern people, sometimes questioning its reality or usefulness as a concept.

Question No. 2

2a) Some candidates confused ‘Temple’ with ‘synagogue’.

2b) Candidates identified ‘Pharisees’ as having been present in this story very readily but comparatively few were able to name ‘Herodians’.

2c) Those who knew the story were credited for a variety of paraphrases around Jesus’ words on the Sabbath though some lost focus by mistakenly concentrating on other stories such as the account of the disciples in the cornfield. The best responses concentrated on Jesus’ words and actions in this particular story of the man with the withered/shriveled hand.

2d) The best responses centred on the central points about this being a ‘sabbath healing’. Many candidates creditably commented on the confrontational aspect of the story and ways in which Jesus’ enemies were trying to provoke a confrontation.

2e) Candidates answered this with a variety of approaches, all valid. Some related their answers to the particular circumstances of Jesus’ ministry, for example the extent to which Jesus was a figure of authority towards his followers and disciples or discussing ways in which Jesus may have represented a threat to the authority figures of his day like the Jewish religious leaders or the Roman military authorities. Others dealt with wider questions, for example, the obligation to obey questionable or morally dubious authority figures in the world today and many of these candidates presented interesting discussion of contemporary examples to support their answers.

Question No. 3

3a) The answer favoured by most candidates was “Friday” as the day when Jesus was buried according to Mark’s Gospel.

3b) Some candidates referred to Pilate’s ‘handwashing’, a detail from another Gospel.

3c) The identification of Joseph as a ‘believer’ or ‘follower of Jesus’ was common and creditable. Because some candidates thought that this was a question about Joseph as Jesus’ father they were not able to gain marks on this question.

3d) Some candidates answered this well, referring to one or more of the following: Joseph, Pilate, Old Testament prophecies, the white linen, the rock, the significance of the women, etc. Some dwelt overmuch on the resurrection and would have done better to have concentrated on the details of the burial account.

3e) This was the most popular and best answered of the AO2 responses. Most candidates tried to make a judgement and the better ones gave good examples from the New Testament and related Jesus' teachings or miracles to today's world. Most candidates showed an understanding of the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus in Christian belief but some limited their response to making one point only and not developing to include other aspects.

B584 Christian Scriptures 2 (Luke)

General Comments:

Most candidates answered questions 1 and 3. These two questions were in fact ones which were best answered and candidates were more successful in more accurately recognising those accounts, were able to demonstrate accurate knowledge of them and were better able to explain the implications of those accounts for Christian belief and practice. Possibly the narrative style and nature of those passages in Luke's Gospel were more memorable for candidates rather than the more abstract nature of the teachings in the question about the Cost of Discipleship. However, some candidates were conversant with the text of Luke 14:25-33 (The cost of being a disciple) and were able to demonstrate knowledge of the details of Jesus' teaching and explain Christian responses to it.

The majority of candidates responded well to the paper which gave them access to the full range of marks. Answers for parts (a-c) were answered generally well and centres seem to have prepared candidates very well in helping them to have a good working knowledge of these narrative accounts of the Gospel of Luke.

For part (d) it was noticeable that candidates were advantaged by reading the questions carefully before responding. Q.1(d) was quite open-ended and general in the understanding of Christian teachings it invited candidates to comment on. On the other hand, Q.3d invited them to give an explanation of one particular Gospel account. Candidate who noticed this distinction were more likely to be more successful.

Candidates approached the part (e) sections with due energy and commitment of time, noting the mark allocation and writing developed answers which in general recognised the issues at stake and were presented in a structured format and which explored different points of view supported by reasoning and discussion as well as exploring a Christian context for their discussion. Candidates could be helpfully advised, however, to more consciously and formally follow the requirements of the rubric to, "include... a personal viewpoint". Examiners noted that all too often otherwise perceptive and excellent responses did not include a clear and developed expression of a personal conviction supported by reasons. Those candidates who did this were far more likely to gain the higher marks.

In general, the handwriting of candidates was clear and easy to read while standards of spelling and grammar were high, including the spelling of specialist words.

Very few rubric errors were made and the vast majority of candidates selected two questions as asked and concentrated on answering them fully and seem to have had sufficient time to answer the questions required.

Comments on Individual Questions:

1a) Mostly well answered with most candidates recognising that the Pharisees objected to Jesus' association with 'sinners'.

1b) Less well answered because many candidates named 'disciples, scribes, Pharisees' rather than 'sinners/ tax collectors' as being present on this occasion.

1c) This was mostly very well answered and most candidates showed at good knowledge of this particular parable about the Lost Sheep. Most got the full three marks.

1d) Although many were able to link their answers to the story of the Lost Sheep it was good to see candidates referring beyond that story to explain about Jesus' teaching about 'the Lost' with explanation of Luke's theme of Universal Salvation. Some made particularly good use of the story of Zacchaeus and of others who needed to repent.

1e) Some candidates talked about whether everyone would receive salvation and the difference between deserving it and needing it. More developed answers often gave consideration to why some people might deserve salvation and to the meaning concept of salvation in Luke and in Christianity. (There was sometimes discussion here of Zacchaeus again, also of the Wide and Narrow Gate and often the Parable of the Banquet.) A number of candidates gave overmuch attention to the related area of 'forgiveness' and this did not help them in retaining focus on this particular question on whether everyone deserved salvation. Some candidates explored the theological argument about divine grace and whether any person could really be said to 'deserve' salvation. Some otherwise excellent and interesting answers to this question did not offer any kind of personal response or reflection on the topic and so could not be awarded the higher marks.

Question No. 2

2a) Many candidates wrongly gave 'the disciples' as the answer.

2b) Those who knew the account did well and tended to get both marks. However, most who attempted the question did not know this account in good detail.

2c) Again, those who knew this text gave very good accounts of the story of the king preparing to go to war but this section was not answered well by those who attempted it.

2d) Similarly, if candidates had the correct Lukan account in mind they were able to give a good explanation of the responses that Christians today might make to Jesus' warnings and advice about the challenges facing his followers. Some gave examples of Christians such as Jackie Pullinger or Mother Teresa to develop their explanations.

2e) This was often well answered and seemed to be easy for candidates to access. Some wrote about the Disciples in the Gospel accounts, discussing the roles that Jesus had assigned them and the expectation he had of them. Some candidates discussed the stories of particular disciples such as Peter or Judas and were able to present evidence and arguments about ways in which they had either lived up to Jesus' expectations or failed to do so. Others moved the focus onto followers of Jesus today and the difficulties or challenges of Christian living and this was also a valid way of answering this question.

Question No. 3

3a) Most candidates were able to say that the leper had asked Jesus for healing or to be made clean.

3b) Most candidates were able to gain at least some credit by describing Jesus' actions in this story and showed good knowledge of the story.

3c) There was a little confusion in that some candidates said that the man had been told to 'tell everyone about the healing', thereby reversing the details of the account. Many, however, correctly got the requirement to visit a priest or to make an offering.

3d) Most were able to comment on the situation that lepers found themselves in and how and why they were outcast. Some gave more limited answers about how Jesus treated all people as equals without much further explanation. Some very good answers explained Christian ideas

about equality in more detailed ways, sometimes even referring to Paul's letters and Galatians 3:26-28. Many candidates noted the way in which Jesus had come into physical contact with the leper and showed remarkable concern for him even though most people would have been frightened of approaching such a person.

3e) The best answers discussed those groups of people who might be considered to be 'outcasts' today. This was wide and varied in interpretation, stretching from 'prostitutes', 'refugees' to 'the homeless'. Some candidates did not recognise that any people can be recognised as outcasts today or judged that their status may be 'their own fault' or the 'responsibility of the government'. Some of the best answers made good reference to Luke's accounts like the story of Zacchaeus, of the rich man and Lazarus or to Jesus' parable of the Banquet.

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. It was very pleasing to see that part (e) answers were, in the main, answered well and that the comments raised in last year's report for B585 have been actioned; many answers demonstrated supported personal response and a range of points of view supported by discussion.

All questions were attempted with question 2 being 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 however, some candidates did not gain marks for some questions due to either no knowledge of the set text or misreading the question. 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. Many 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.

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 was very good; candidates coped very well with the exam paper and had the opportunity to demonstrate their depth and breadth of knowledge.

Comments on individual questions

Question No. 1

1a) The majority of candidates answered this accurately. Some gave the answer 'Bereishit' which was marked as incorrect.

1b) Only a handful of candidates were able to answer this correctly and show knowledge of the set text (2:9). As the question asked candidates to 'name the two trees', the answer sought was 'Tree of Life' and 'Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad' as the trees which were explicitly named within the set text.

1c) This question resulted in mixed responses by the candidates. There were some excellent answers to this question which showed a detailed understanding of the set text; candidates were able to discuss fluidly the second day of creation and were confident in their use of terminology. Some answers were too simplistic or showed confusion over the days of creation; some said that G-d saw that this day was 'good' which is incorrect.

1d) This question resulted in mixed responses by candidates. Some candidates gave very detailed answers synthesising their knowledge of the set text with the wider ethical issue. Some candidates, although showing detailed knowledge of the law surrounding abortion, were not able to score highly due to a limited focus on the set text. Some answers did not focus on Genesis but other textual sources; where candidates used these sources to compare and contrast with Genesis the answers were, in the main, marked highly however, if candidates did not refer to Genesis then their answers were marked as weak/satisfactory due to limited focus on the set question. The best answers were those which discussed the key features of the set text – sanctity of life, the command for man to 'go forth and multiply', and that only G-d can give and take life – and used these themes to construct an answer focused on the modern day ethical issue of abortion. Many answers gave a focused description of 'sanctity of life' often supported within an example. Some candidates were able to discuss the difference between 'sanctity' of life and 'quality' of life' and here drew upon their learning on the legal status of abortion. 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 just one aspect of the text (sanctity of life) and explaining the importance of this in the abortion debate. Better responses improved upon this with explanation that linked to key concepts such as ethical monotheism, quality of life and the command to have children, so showing a full and detailed understanding of the set text and the contemporary ethical issue of abortion.

1e) Responses to this question were, in the main, very good. Some answers showed a very high ability to engage with the question and candidates discussed fluidly and confidently creation in terms of the Biblical account and scientific theories such as the Big Bang, evolution and Red Shift. Such candidates were also able to discuss the question from various viewpoints and where able to offer clear understanding of different religious and secular responses. The best answers were those which were able to evaluate critically where science and religion may, or may not, overlap and the impact this has on understanding the target question. Arguments which focused on the biblical text in the main drew upon two contrasting viewpoints, that on the one hand biblical texts must be seen as infallible and sacred, and on the other, that the creation account could be seen as 'myth'. Some answers would have been improved by greater awareness of the 'other side' of the argument; some answers dismissed science and a more liberal interpretation of biblical literature as 'wrong' and were therefore limited in their ability to show different supported points of view. As such, some judgements were frequently made without supporting reasons which limited the level of response the candidate could obtain. Again, answers could have been improved with clear indication of appropriate personal response which was fully supported and justified. Overall answers to this question were very good and were pleasing to read.

Question No. 2

2a) Most candidates answered this correctly. Some candidates showed some confusion responding as if the trigger word read 'incest'; such answers were marked as incorrect.

2bi) Most candidates answered this correctly and showed a detailed understanding of the set text.

2bii) As 2 (bi), most candidates answered this correctly giving suitable examples.

2c) There were some excellent answers to this question which showed a detailed understanding of the set text. Some candidates clearly misread the question and provided answers based on 'human-human' relationships.

2d) Responses varied here. Some candidates appeared to not understand the question focus 'Business Ethics' and/or were unprepared. Satisfactory responses concentrated on describing some of the key commandments in Exodus 20, such as 'Do not lie' and 'Do not bear false witness' and explaining how these can be applied to business. Better responses improved upon this with good explanations of why these aspects are important to Judaism, and wider society today. It was disappointing that very few answers showed specific and deeper knowledge of this area of the specification; as the mark scheme suggests candidates could have discussed modern business practice such as working hours, worker treatment and monetary issues. Some candidates attempted to re-use material from previous questions, focusing on the commandment of 'Do not commit adultery' which was presented in question 2a and applying this to business; these answers were, despite being rather creative, in the main unsuccessful.

2e) A number of responses made an excellent or very good attempt to draw distinctions and comparisons between the two sides of the argument. Many candidates were able to talk at length about the continuing importance of the Ten Commandments for Judaism and analyse how the mitzvot are the foundation of Jewish life. The majority of candidates were able to also argue that the Ten Commandments are outdated, and were able to discuss confidently and maturely the rationale for this; the best responses were able to discuss confidently secular and religious law and the interplay between them. 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 which showed mature and detailed argument.

Question No. 3

3a) Many candidates were able to answer this correctly showing knowledge of the set text.

3b) Many candidates were unable to answer this question correctly showing a limited understanding of chapter 2 of the set text. Despite this, there were some candidates who were able to quote the text showing a high level of interaction with the specification, and others who were able to paraphrase the images that Jonah uses and who also scored full marks for this question. As such performance on this question varied.

3c) Responses varied here. Some were able to accurately answer the question and focused on Jonah, others misread the question and discussed actions by other 'characters' within the narrative. Candidates should be reminded to read the question carefully in order to answer the set question.

3d) 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 aspects of prayer. Better answers were those where their work followed 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 different individuals and aspects of prayer and in turn what this teaches about G-d. There were some very pleasing answers to this question.

3 e) Again, there were some very pleasing responses to this question which demonstrated a high level of ability to discuss confidently, and fluidly, aspects of the text which demonstrate, or do not demonstrate, Jonah as a 'role model'. Many answers were also able to evaluate what is meant by 'good' and for 'whom'. Judgements were frequently made with clear supporting evidence and reasoning and there was in the main, clear indication of appropriate personal response which was fully supported and justified. The majority of answers to this question were pleasing and showed a high level of ability coupled with detailed understanding of the set text including wider narrative criticism.

B586 Jewish Scriptures (Talmud)

General Comments:

Many candidates responded well to the demands of the paper; the questions provided opportunities for differentiation and a full range of marks was achieved. In general, candidates were well prepared for the exam however, some candidates would have performed better with a greater understanding of the assessment objectives for part (d) and part (e) questions. Historically candidates have performed less successfully on this paper compared to the corresponding Judaism unit B585, however, this year it was felt that performance showed a move towards greater parity. In the main, the knowledge shown within the candidate answers was very good; candidates coped very well with the exam paper and had the opportunity to demonstrate their depth and breadth of knowledge. Many candidates performed very well given that the specification is now nearing its end and the scope of questions is more limited.

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 offered one-sided and limited argument and were unable to 'step outside' of their own faith understanding to offer a different or alternative perspective. 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.

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 made errors in the shorter and lower mark answers despite showing a high level of ability and knowledge in the part (d) and part (e) answers.

All questions were attempted with question 1 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. Most candidates had time to finish the paper and there were few rubric errors.

Comments on individual questions:

Question 1

1a) The majority answered this accurately showing detailed awareness of the set text.

1b) The question was seeking the response 'doorposts of house' and 'gates'; Deuteronomy 6:9 commands the Shema be 'written' here. However, answers which referenced 'tefillin' or the placement of tefillin were accepted, as was 'mezuzah'. Many candidates, as such, answered this correctly.

1c) Most candidates answered this correctly; with many scoring full marks. Some answers were limited and did not make reference to the text of the Shema and/or what this says about the Exodus. Centres are reminded that this is a textual paper and as such candidates should, where possible, make direct reference to the set text to exemplify their answer.

1d) Some candidates answered this question very well and demonstrated a detailed understanding of the set text and how this might influence the contemporary issue of education. The highest level responses showed a detailed understanding of how the command in Deuteronomy 11:19 'when you are sitting in the house or when you are walking and when you lie down and rise' may be interpreted; many answers argued that teaching the Shema and the ideas presented within it, is core to everyday life. Many answers discussed Jewish education by family members, the Jewish community and by state schooling and how these may exemplify the command within the Shema. The best responses were where candidates 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. Moreover, some candidates made no reference to, or appeared to not be aware of, the set text being examined.

1e) Responses to this question were very pleasing. Some answers showed a very high ability to engage with the question and candidates discussed fluidly and confidently religious clothing and prayer. Such candidates were also able to discuss the question from various angles and were able to offer clear understanding of different religious responses. The arguments which showed the most sophistication were the ones which not only explored the relevance, or not, of religious clothing for prayer through clear examples, but which also drew upon wider contemporary issues. There were some very good answers which discussed on the one hand how items of religious clothing for prayer may be expensive and so cause social divide, may be viewed as unpractical or sexist or could promote religious intolerance, and on the other hand, discussed in a sophisticated way how commandments from G-d are sacrosanct and should not be questioned. Highly sophisticated arguments also drew parallels to other world religions and prayer clothing (or lack of) for supporting argument. Some answers would have been improved by greater awareness of the other side of the argument; 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.

Question 2

2a) Many candidates answered this question correctly.

2b) Many candidates answered this question correctly and showed a detailed awareness of the set text.

2c) Responses varied here. Despite many candidates gaining full marks on 2 (b) they were unable to give three accurate descriptions from the text as to how G-d is described (King, Faithful Compassionate, Healer). There were, however, some excellent answers to this question which showed a detailed understanding of the concept of Amidah paragraph 8.

2d) Satisfactory responses concentrated on describing how a Jewish person may depend on G-d in their everyday life. Some candidates did not make reference to the set text that this question was assessing and as a result were unable to achieve a Level 3 response due to a lack of content and explanation. Better responses described the nuances of dependence on G-d and explained how G-d meets both the spiritual and physical needs of his people. Many candidates explained how paragraph 8 focus on healing and how healing is brought about by G-d; some candidates discussed the medical profession and how they depend on G-d for their skills and knowledge. There were some good answers to the question which showed depth and breadth of response.

2e) Performance varied here. Many candidates argued that it is necessary to pray for those who are sick in order to show compassion for those that are ill. Some candidates gave lengthy argument about the role of the medical profession and how 'doctors' may be seen as working in 'partnership with G-d' due to their G-d given skills. Some discussed how prayer is futile and argued that the ways of G-d cannot be known to man, or that belief in G-d is no longer relevant for some in today's society. Good answers really grappled with the question at a high level and where able to discuss confidently, and fluidly, the question demands. Again, judgements were frequently made without supporting reasons which limited the level of response the candidates could obtain; answers could have been improved with clear indication of appropriate personal response which was fully supported and justified.

Question 3

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

3bi) Most candidates showed an excellent awareness of the text and were able to answer this question correctly.

3bii) Some candidates were able to answer part (i) correctly but showed confusion here and referenced the land which the people were taken to.

3c) Responses varied here. Some candidates were able to successfully give 3 points of addition from the supplementary text added at Purim and Hanukkah, such as thanking G-d for miracles, thanking G-d for redemption, and thanking G-d for mighty deeds etc. Candidates who stated that inserted text(s) discussed the 'Days of Mattisyahu' and the 'Days of Mordechai' were also credited. Despite the requirement that the answers should be within the target language of the exam paper, answers which were in Hebrew or a form of transliteration and could be easily identified as from the additional text were also credited. It was disappointing that some candidates did not know the text here or made answering the question unnecessarily complicated. As the report of last year, centres are reminded that the specification for B586 does not require, or expect, candidates to record answers in any language other than English.

3d) Satisfactory responses concentrated on describing the festival of Hanukkah and explaining some of the 'key aspects' of this festival; these answers some of which were very good could not reach a Level 3 response as they often ignored the focus of the question 'importance'. Better responses improved upon this by focusing in on the question demands and explaining why this festival is still important to Judaism today. The highest level responses showed a detailed understanding of the different nuances of 'importance' and how Hanukkah is a festival which remembers the cleansing of the temple for worship to G-d and the fighting spirit and attitude of the Jewish people who were downtrodden. The better answers where from those candidates who 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) within each paragraph of their answer. There were some very pleasing answers to this question and some candidates showed an excellent knowledge of the historical roots of this festival.

3e) 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 fluidly in favour of the question and were also able to discuss the counter argument regarding the importance of, and emphasis on, the Land of Israel for Judaism today. Many candidates were able to discuss confidently aspects such as the historical context of the Land of Israel from Biblical times through to 1948 and beyond, Zionism and how different denominations within Judaism view the Land, and how the 'Land' may or may not be seen as integral to modern day Jewish self-understanding. On the whole there were some pleasing answers to this question.

B589 Perspectives on World Religions

General Comments:

The paper proved accessible to most candidates and the vast majority were able to fulfil the demands of the paper within the allocated time. There were few rubric infringements reported by examiners. There was some evidence of candidates failing to address the questions as set. Key words seemed to trigger a response to a similar question which had not been asked. Whilst the principles of salvage and positive awarding are always applied, some of these responses could be given little, if any credit.

Many candidates offered clear and appropriate responses to the questions in parts a) to c) of each section where short answers or even a one word response are required. Some candidates gave unnecessarily extended responses to these sections however, especially to part c) of the question. This must have affected their time management. Some candidates offered several responses where one or two were required. Centres should be aware that responses will be credited in the order in which they are written, hence when only one is required, only the first response will be marked and any other responses, even if they are correct, will be ignored.

In part d), where candidates are required to demonstrate their understanding of an issue, many candidates offered responses which demonstrated a sound grasp of the significance of the issue for the religion of their choice. 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 which 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. Many of the best responses however, showed the personal response as series of comments, weighing the various arguments and woven into the discussion as a whole, demonstrating engagement with the issue in the stimulus. Many candidates, as required by the rubric, considered the issue in the stimulus with clear reference to the religion of their choice. On occasion, candidates' knowledge unfortunately dominated the response to the detriment of the argument and the response had more the character of a response to part d) rather than a discussion or evaluation. There was also some evidence of candidates starting well with a good focus on the issue in the stimulus but then veering off in a different direction within the same topic and coming to a conclusion which had little to do with the original discussion.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A: Responsibility for the Planet

a) This proved a very accessible question. A caring attitude towards animals was a common response.

b i) The theory of evolution and the big bang were frequently offered.

(ii) Responses often referred correctly to creation by the divine. In the case of Buddhism, the lack of interest in questions about origins was accepted as an appropriate response.

c) The use of bold to highlight that a description of only **one** thing which a believer might do in response to environmental issues was required was intended to help candidates to restrict their responses, as only 3 marks are available for this part of the question. Some candidates offered

three ‘things’ whilst others wrote at much greater length than required. Candidates offering more than one ‘thing’ were marked on the first ‘thing’ they expressed. Centres might find it helpful to stress to candidates that these questions are effectively point marked, according to this instruction: ‘Marks should be awarded for a statement supported by any combination of development and exemplification.’ Some responses focused on why believers might want to help preserve the environment rather than on how they could do it. Marks were only awarded for how not why.

d) This question enabled candidates to express their understanding of why believers might feel they had a responsibility towards the planet. The best responses referred to the ideas of stewardship, dominion and duty of humans to preserve the planet for future generations. The significance of the first precept for Buddhists and creation by Allah were features of responses for those religions.

e) The stimulus provoked many excellent, well-argued responses which considered several aspects of the issue and a personal response in relation to the religion chosen. Many responses focused on human life versus animal life, whilst others took a broader view and considered the relationship between humans and all forms of life on earth. Some responses focused too much on views about animal rights. Many responses demonstrated a good level of knowledge of religious teachings about these issues and used the information effectively in the discussion.

Section B: War, Peace and Human Rights

a) Although there was a wide range of responses most gave a sufficiently clear account of the meaning of the term ‘war’.

b) This proved an accessible question with most candidates offering two human rights. The right to education and freedom of speech were commonly offered.

c) The use of bold to highlight that only **one** reason was required was intended to help candidates to restrict their responses, as only 3 marks are available for this part of the question. Candidates offering more than one reason were marked on the first reason they described. The comment above concerning part c) in section A is appropriate here as well. Many good responses focused on a teaching such as ‘turn the other cheek’ or ahimsa and then provided further explanation and development of the teaching.

d) Most candidates were able to link successfully the importance of human rights to the beliefs of their chosen religion. Many responses referred to the idea of equality which underpins the UDHR and which is shared by religions that believe all humans to be equal before God. Some responses consisted of a statement of a human right and an explanation of the importance of that particular right for believers. As the question had asked why human rights generally, rather than individual rights might be important to believers, these responses, although judged as good in many cases, could not be awarded the higher mark at Level 3.

e) Responses referred to ideas such as the Just War to show that it was appropriate for believers to say their god was on their side because the cause was a good one and therefore their god would support it. Many responses presented an opposing view that drew attention to the command not to kill and the fact that war does not fit with key religious teachings about loving kindness, care for others and resisting evil. War therefore could never be something a loving god would support. Some responses became side tracked into a discussion about Just War Theory and lost the focus of the stimulus. Candidates need to refer back to the issue in the stimulus as they write their response to ensure they are keeping to that issue and not another which a key word has triggered in the mind of the candidate.

Section C: Prejudice and Equality

a) Questions were specific for each religion for this part in order to ensure appropriate specification coverage over the life of the specification. Most candidates offered a correct response although 'Ecumenism' was unfamiliar to some candidates who were otherwise able to respond well to the other parts of the question.

b) A frequent error in this part of the question was to give two examples of prejudice or discrimination, rather than causes.

c) The majority of responses successfully linked an appropriate teaching with an explanation and further development.

d) Many responses just described attitudes without any explanation as to why believers might have these attitudes. Whilst these responses could reach Level 2, for the highest marks candidates needed to explain why not all believers associated with a particular religion held the same view towards other religions. There were however some excellent responses which, for example, explained with reference to appropriate supporting beliefs why Christians differed so much in their attitudes to other religions,

e) The word fight led some candidates to veer off in the direction of a discussion about non-violent versus violent protest, losing the focus on gender equality as a result. Some credit could be given to these responses but better responses drew on attitudes within the religion chosen to support or reject the stimulus. Some responses pointed out that many religions still had a long way to go to demonstrate gender equality in their organisation and practice, and therefore would be best kept away from the fight for gender equality.

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