

GCSE

Religious Studies A (World Religion(s))

General Certificate of Education **J620**

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

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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

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

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

General Comments:

The paper achieved full differentiation with the full range of marks being used. The part e questions were all successful in that they were accessible to the weakest candidates at the basic level while allowing the most able candidates the scope to develop their responses fully and access the highest level. Questions were accessible in that there was minimal loss of marks due to incorrect reading or interpretation of the questions. Whilst there was evidence at the weaker end of superficial understanding of Buddhist teaching there was also strong evidence of excellent teaching and understanding. There was a significant increase this year in the proportion of candidates who showed a mature and sophisticated understanding of Buddhist teaching and were able to apply it appropriately to the specific questions being asked. The most successful candidates used a selection of key terms as part of their short and longer responses. These were, for the most part, used accurately and with confidence. Many candidates are clearly being taught to address the significance of part e questions in a sentence at the beginning. Not all candidates are entirely successful with this but some do so very well indeed

As usual, the majority of candidates attempted questions 1 and 2. Where candidates did attempt question 3, however, there was a significant improvement in performance on previous years, with most candidates providing thoughtful and well-informed discussions in part e questions and displaying strong subject knowledge through all parts of the question.

The majority of candidates were able to achieve full or near to full marks in parts a-c showing a good grounding in basic Buddhist religious knowledge. Where full marks were not achieved the most common reasons for this are detailed below.

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

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

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1: Beliefs

- a) The majority of students gained the mark on this question, understanding the need to explain the nature of the 'cycle' of samsara. Responses that defined samsara as the natural or material world, or the world of suffering were also credited as they demonstrated a genuine understanding of the term in a Buddhist context.
- b) The majority of responses addressed the four sights or the enlightenment of the Buddha. Some candidates focussed on the birth or death of the Buddha, which were not considered sufficient in themselves since everyone is born and dies. In order to be credited these responses also had to contain some specific reference to the life of the Buddha, such as the miracles accompanying his birth or the circumstances of his death or reference to his last message to his followers. It was not considered sufficient to state where the Buddha was born or where he died.

- c) This was a straightforward question with most candidates achieving full marks with no difficulty. Either Pali or English responses were credited and sentences that described the Universal Truths without actually using the terms were acceptable. Many candidates wrote far more than was required for this question. Where candidates failed to achieve the mark it was because they confused the Universal Truths with the Three Poisons or the Three Jewels/Refuges.
- d) This question achieved excellent differentiation. Weaker responses were able to describe the Noble Eightfold path in some detail meaning that most achieved at least the bottom of level 2. The focus of the question ensured that only more able responses were able to access level 3 by addressing the 'importance' of the Noble Eightfold Path, demonstrating a deeper understanding of Buddhist teaching, which many did extremely well.
- e) The topic of enlightenment is an integral part of the Buddhist faith. Candidates answered this well when they showed a clear understanding of the arguments between faith and science and also the differences between the different schools of Buddhism. Some candidates demonstrated a remarkable level of philosophical understanding and reasoning in their discussion. Many were able to tackle the question from the assumption that enlightenment is ineffable and means different things to different people. Weaker responses were able to compare Buddhist beliefs with atheistic or Christian beliefs about the afterlife and so access at least level 2 marks. There were some particularly impressive responses to this question which showed a command of Buddhist teaching and genuine understanding.

Question No. 2: Special Days

- a) Most candidates gained the mark here without difficulty. There had to be some acknowledgement of the religious or spiritual nature of the journey to access the mark so 'a special journey' was not sufficient, and a minority of candidates failed to access the mark because of this.
- b) Most candidates were able to access these marks. Some responses were very specific whilst others were, by the nature of the question, quite generic. Any correct response that demonstrated an understanding of the question was credited.
- c) Most candidates gained full marks here. Most were able to state what happened at Bodh Gaya and develop this by demonstrating its significance or why Buddhists might go there. A minority of weaker responses attempted to construct an answer around the assumption that Bodh Gaya was a person.
- d) This question achieved very good differentiation. Almost all candidates were able to say something about what Wesak is and what Buddhists might do at this time so attaining level 1 or 2. The most able were able to access the top level by focussing on the importance of Wesak. Some did this very well indeed, looking at ideas such as motivation in the quest for enlightenment.
- e) There was significant variation in the quality of responses to this question. The strongest responses explored the original purpose of the Rain Retreats and questioned if they were significant in modern times and in all parts of the world. Many candidates restricted themselves to the top of level 3 as they gave arguments for and against the statement quite successfully but did not enter into any genuine discussion or evaluation. Many weaker responses gave a generic answer based on festivals in general and clearly had no real understanding of what the Rain Retreats are. Some thought it was a place of pilgrimage.

Question No. 3 Divisions and Interpretations.

- a) Almost all candidates who attempted this question gained the marks without difficulty.
- b) Once again, this question posed no problems with virtually all candidates who attempted it gaining the mark.
- c) Most candidates recognised and could describe the Six Perfections developing this with reference to their significance.
- d) This question elicited some of the weakest responses as some candidates described generic Buddhist belief without making specific reference to the specific school. This limited them to marks in level 1. Those who did answer this question well showed a good understanding of the cultural aspects and the perceived need for change and how this is linked to the central philosophy of Buddhism. Many made reference to engaged Buddhism and ethical business as a focus.
- (e) Most candidates answered this question well. There were a number of valid approaches to this question with many comparing schools of Buddhism and looking at their philosophies with a view to the original philosophy and teaching of the Buddha. There was some good discussion which showed deep understanding of the question and its significance.

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

General Comments:

The paper achieved full differentiation with the full range of marks being used. The part e questions were mostly successful in that they were accessible at a basic level whilst still having scope to fully reward developed responses which then accessed the highest level. Questions were accessible in that there was minimal loss of marks due to incorrect reading or interpretation of the questions. Whilst there was evidence at the weaker end of achievement of superficial understanding of Buddhist teaching, there was also strong evidence of excellent teaching and understanding. There was a significant increase this year in the proportion of candidates who showed a mature and sophisticated understanding of Buddhist teaching and were able to apply it appropriately to the specific questions being asked. The most successful responses used a selection of key terms. These were, for the most part, used accurately and with confidence. Most papers seen this year were of a high quality, demonstrating an impressive command of the specification.

As usual, the majority of candidates attempted questions 1 and 2. Where candidates did attempt question 3, however, there was a significant improvement on previous years with most candidates providing thoughtful and well-informed discussions in part e questions and displaying strong subject knowledge through all parts of the question.

The majority of candidates were able to achieve full or near to full marks in parts a-c showing a good grounding in basic Buddhist religious knowledge. Where full marks were not achieved the most common reasons for this are detailed below.

Some candidates are still limiting themselves in part e questions because they are not writing enough to access the higher levels. Some centres appear to have provided their candidates with a 'writing frame' which can be helpful but which needs to be applied carefully. In order to access the top level it is necessary to include both good religious knowledge and evaluation. Including viewpoints from other religions is only useful when it genuinely adds to the discussion. Some candidates are restricting themselves to level 3 by laying out their responses in arguments for and against the statement with paragraphs on what a Buddhist might say, what a Buddhist from a different school might say, what a Christian might say (with varying relevance) and what the candidate believes. This can have the effect of limiting the potential for discussion and evaluation of the arguments presented.

In contrast, many candidates are clearly being taught to address the significance of part e questions in a sentence at the beginning. Not all candidates are entirely successful with this but some do so very well indeed and it is an appropriate strategy.

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

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1: Worship

- a) Most candidates gained this mark without difficulty. An etymological definition ('resting place') was acceptable. Where candidates did not gain the mark it tended to be because they did not specify that a Vihara is a monastery but identified it with a generic place of worship.

- b) Most candidates did well with this straightforward question. Some lost marks by stating offerings rather than artefacts. A few gave responses such as 'bones', which were not felt to be specific enough, although if these were specified as belonging to Buddhist teachers the response was creditable.
- c) Many candidates performed well in this question gaining full marks. Different types of meditation were described, as were positions and methods. Some candidates lost marks by describing where rather than how meditation might be performed or by simply naming different types of meditation. It was not necessary for candidates to concentrate on more than one type of meditation in order to access full marks.
- d) This was answered well by a minority of candidates. The majority seemed to find the non-specific nature of the word 'symbols' a challenge, with many candidates talking generally about symbols without naming any, describing any or using any as examples to exemplify a point being made. A significant number of candidates shifted the focus of the question to objects used in puja or as aids to worship, with some then forgetting to draw out the symbolism. Where candidates did answer this question well they focussed on how symbols helped Buddhists to understand or focus on Buddhist teachings or to achieve an appropriate frame of mind.
- e) Most candidates performed well on this question, offering thoughtful arguments both for and against the statement. Somewhat surprisingly no candidates discussed the ceremony of puja itself and some strayed into a discussion of festivals or even pilgrimage rather than focussing on worship. Most looked at the emotional benefits of collective worship balanced against possible distraction and contrasted this with freedom of expression and convenience in private worship. Many candidates achieved level 3 by offering arguments for and against the statement along with a personal view. Comparatively few made the leap from this to a full interactive discussion of the issue with an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments and an evaluation that addressed the significance of the issue, which would give them access to level 4.

Question No. 2: Community and Family

- a) Candidates either knew the meaning of this term or they did not. The majority of candidates achieved the mark on this question.
- b) Almost all candidates achieved the mark on this question, as most jobs were creditable. Those that did not gain the mark either gave a generic example of types of job that would be acceptable rather than specific examples, or they misread the question and gave examples of jobs that would not be acceptable for a Buddhist.
- c) Many candidates performed well on this question. However, a fair number of candidates offered answers that might apply to any Buddhist occasion such as meditation, reading of scriptures, offering alms to monks etc. rather than offering answers which were specific to ordination.
- d) Some candidates performed well on this question, describing Buddhist teaching on the family and drawing in reference to the Sangha and the life of the Buddha. A number of candidates gave very generalised answers about the importance of the family without specific reference to Buddhism, which limited the mark they were able to receive to level 1.
- e) Most candidates answered this question well, drawing in a wide range of ideas including Buddhist teachings, the life of the Buddha and the relationship between the monastic and lay Sangha. Where candidates did not attain the top level it was because they tended to list arguments rather than discuss and critically evaluate them.

Question No. 3 Sacred Writings

- a) Most candidates who attempted this question gained the marks. Those that did not tended to offer the Pali Canon as a response.
- b) Most candidates gained these marks. Those that did not quoted generic Buddhist teachings as an 'educated guess'.
- c) Most candidates did well here, offering suggestions such as meditating on it, learning from it, reciting it to gain merit and discussing it.
- d) Many candidates did well on this question although a significant minority lost marks because they did not read the question carefully and explored how, rather than why, Buddhists might show respect to the scriptures.
- e) Candidates answered this quite well, although some discussed the question in general terms rather than by making reference to specific scriptures. The strongest responses offered thoughtful ideas, drawing in a range of ideas from the Theravada and Mahayana traditions and offering sound scriptural examples in support. Many noted that the Pali Canon is compiled of different texts and so is not a single scripture. Some candidates missed the thrust of the question and resorted to arguments based on the idea that no-one should be forced to do something they don't want to rather than focusing on the issues raised by the question. There were some outstanding responses to this question.

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

General Comments:

Overall, candidates were able to access the paper successfully and there was good range of marks.

While questions 1 and 2 were the most popular, there were a greater number of candidates answering question 3 than previously; this was very reassuring and shows that Centres and candidates are becoming more confident with this section of the syllabus. Indeed, the majority of candidates were well prepared for the examination and the subject appears to have been well taught.

Depth and breadth of knowledge was evident in the responses and candidates are becoming more skilled at answering (e) parts of questions. However, a significant number of candidates did not achieve the level they might have done in (e) because the personal statement was weak and/or very brief.

There were virtually no rubric errors with only a very small number of candidates answering all three questions. Those candidates who did answer all three questions usually achieved a lower overall mark as they had insufficient time to answer each question fully.

The vast majority of candidates managed their time well and there was little evidence of failing to finish the paper.

One concern that remains from previous years is that a significant number of the responses were barely legible. Examiners can only assess what they can read.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

- (a) Many candidates answered this question correctly however some responses were too generic or secular to achieve a mark as they failed to include the idea that sin was a failure to fulfil God's expectations or to "fall short" of the ideal. An impressive number of candidates included the term "hamartia" in the response.
- (b) Very few candidates were unable to achieve full marks for this question. There appeared to be a good understanding of the contents of the Apostles' Creed.
- (c) Many candidates achieved full marks for this question however many of the answers were very similar, giving reading the Bible, praying and going to church as the answers. Other slightly less obvious responses included charitable works and following Jesus'/Biblical teachings.
- (d) Although a significant number of candidates achieved level 3 marks in the question, many did not because they did not address why the Trinity was important but gave instead a description of what the Trinity is. Level 3 was achieved when candidates were able to explain how the Trinity helps Christians to understand the complex nature of God and the ways in which a Christian might encounter God.

- (e) This question did provide a range of responses and marks. Those who did not achieve higher levels failed to consider fully the continuing importance of the Ten Commandments and expressed opinions which suggested that, as most people did not obey them anymore, they must be unimportant. Some candidates also became too embroiled in discussing each commandment one by one, thus missing the overall emphasis of the question. Higher level responses looked at how the Ten Commandments can be applied to any time and place and how many laws are based on them. Also, many discussed how Jesus' two great commandments could be seen to either replace the Ten Commandments or complement and reinforce them.

Question No. 2

- (a) A large majority of candidates who answered this question did so correctly.
- (b) Disappointingly, many candidates did not gain full marks for this question and a significant number received no marks. Some misread or misunderstood (i) as when Lent begins and gave the answer as Ash Wednesday. For (ii), many candidates thought that Easter Sunday itself was part of Holy Week.
- (c) This question was generally well answered. Those who achieved full marks mentioned that it is the Christian day of worship and/or the weekly celebration of the resurrection and therefore a time to attend church, receive the Eucharist and/or take part in private worship. Some referred to the fact that it was the Christian day of rest and that some Christians might try to spend the day away from work with their family and friends. Higher level responses also included ideas such as time for spiritual development or doing charitable deeds.
- (d) This question was well-answered. Not only did many candidates refer to it as a time of spiritual preparation for Jesus' death and ultimate resurrection, they also referred to Jesus' temptation in the desert and how Christians try to emulate Jesus' experience through fasting or abstaining during the period of Lent. They also considered the concept of temptation and how Christians strive to resist, just as Jesus did.
- (e) There were a number of good responses to the question. Candidates' knowledge and understanding of Pentecost and its importance has grown significantly over the last few years. There is a clear understanding of why Pentecost is important to Christians as both the birth of the Christian church and the coming of the Holy Spirit and all that this implies. Only a few candidates did not know what Pentecost was. A number of candidates included quite detailed accounts of the importance of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the spirit while others considered the implications for the growth of the Christian Church had the events of Pentecost not occurred. Overall, candidates responded well.

Question No. 3

- (a) Candidates answered this question well.
- (b) There were a variety of responses for this question but a significant number failed to achieve both marks. There appeared to be some lack of knowledge of the orthodox place of worship among some candidates.
- (c) Some answers were too generic to be credited. However a number of candidates did respond well and clearly understood the purpose of and the activities which take place in an ecumenical centre.

- (d) This question was answered quite well although quite a few candidates did confuse the Great Schism and the Reformation. Also, some candidates used more recent differences as a reason for the start of the Protestant church, for example, use of contraception and fertility treatment, suggesting they misread or misunderstood the question. Overall, however, the responses were generally satisfactory or good.

- (e) Some candidate responses were good for this question but many were competent or limited. Although candidates could see different points of view for the statement, they struggled to develop these points of view. In the same way, personal statements tended to be a repetition of the points of view stated previously. However, there were some good answers and some very astute personal statements. Those who achieved a higher level were able to understand the reasons for the differences and the implications of trying to bring the various groups together.

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

General Comments:

Overall, candidates were able to access the paper successfully and differentiation was achieved. It is clear that many centres had prepared their students well for the paper.

Questions 1 and 2 were the most popular; however responses for all three questions suggest that candidates have been well taught in the majority of cases.

Depth and breadth of knowledge was evident in the responses and candidates are becoming more skilled at answering (e) parts of questions. However, a significant number of candidates did not achieve the level they might have done in (e) because the personal statement was weak and/or very brief.

There were virtually no rubric errors with only a very small number of candidates answering all three questions. Those candidates who did answer all three questions usually achieved a lower overall mark as they had insufficient time to answer each question fully.

The vast majority of candidates managed their time well and there was little evidence of failing to finish the paper.

One concern that remains from previous years is that a significant number of the responses were barely legible. Examiners can only assess what they can read.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1

- (a) Candidates answered this question well, with the majority of candidates giving cross or crucifix as their answer.
- (b) This question was answered well in the majority of cases with a wide range of responses provided. Most candidates concentrated on church services and religious ceremonies but others mentioned counselling, guidance, community activities and so on.
- (c) This question was answered well. Candidates could describe in detail how a baptistery is used for baptism. Credit was given if the question was answered from the point of view of a baptistery in a church that practices a believer's baptism as well as a baptistery where a font is found and used for infant baptism.
- (d) Candidates appeared to know about and understand the purpose of iconostasis in a significant amount of detail. In higher level responses, both the practical and the theological significance of the iconostasis were discussed.
- (e) Candidates responded well to this question. Those who achieved higher levels looked beyond a simple comparison between God and friends and explained how a Christian's relationship with God is quite complicated and multi-faceted. However, the majority of candidates could offer various points of view and a sound personal statement.

Question No. 2

- (a) The majority of candidates offered a correct response, mostly Tearfund, Christian Aid or CAFOD. Red Cross or Oxfam featured in answers less than in previous sessions.
- (b) Quite a significant number of responses were quite generic and a number did not relate directly to Christianity as such. Good responses were able to give answers based on teachings in the Gospels.
- (c) Responses to this question varied significantly. There were many candidates who had studied this topic well and could give the reasons for marriage as expressed in the marriage service – some verbatim. However, other candidates gave quite vague and secular answers including marriage for financial purpose.
- (d) There were some good responses to this question. Good responses could explain importance of the promises and how marriage is life-long commitment between both the couple and between the couple and God. Weaker responses tended to describe what the promises were and thus did not answer the question as such.
- (e) There was a wide range of responses for this question. Weak and limited responses tended to focus on people who were Christian but did not attend church regularly therefore their answers tended to concentrate simply on the fact that they are still Christians and therefore should be allowed to marry in church. However, competent and good responses looked deeper into the question and discussed in addition whether or not non-Christians should be allowed to marry in a church. There were a number of very thoughtful personal statements for this question.

Question No. 3

- (a) A number of candidates answered this question correctly but a significant number did not, mainly because they named a book of the Old Testament rather than a type of literature.
- (b) The majority of candidates answered this question correctly but there was not much variety in the responses.
- (c) There was quite a range of answers for this question and it was felt that some candidates confused how Christians show respect for the Bible with how followers of other faiths show respect for their holy writings. However, the majority of candidates did achieve 2 or 3 marks for this question.
- (d) This question differentiated well. Candidates who achieved levels 3 and 4 were able to consider how the Bible was written and the Canon chosen, and discussed the place of the Apocrypha.
- (e) This question did provide a range of responses and marks. Higher level candidates were able to discuss the importance of the Bible and how it will always be a valuable text for Christians, providing both guidance, information and divine communication; they were also able to counter this with explaining how Christianity involves a lot more than simply following a religious text and discussed other reasons why Christianity would continue to thrive without the Bible.

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

General Comments:

On the whole candidates seem well prepared for the exam. There was a good level of knowledge and understanding shown by candidates. Candidates seem well prepared for the part d and e questions in particular. However, there are some gaps in candidates' basic knowledge of the Bible and its contents. This is particularly noticeable with the part a and b questions where a very specific response is required. Candidates would be well served by practicing writing concise definitions of key terms. This should stop candidates from spending too long writing detailed explanations for one mark. For most a and b questions candidates need only a few words to get the marks. On the whole key technical terminology was spelt correctly except 'myrrh' which was almost never spelt correctly and had a wide and diverse range of spellings.

Weaker responses seemed to be able to access all of the questions and present some relevant material, which shows that centres had prepared them well for these questions. Stronger responses were able to engage in detail with the questions and demonstrate the full range of their knowledge and understanding. This was very encouraging to see as some candidates had very high levels of understanding and could articulate this clearly. In many cases the level of response was well above that expected at GCSE.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1a Candidates found it easy to name a saint.
- 1b Most knew persons of the Trinity – Father and Son most common with occasional Holy Spirit. Some lost marks by stating God as one.
- 1c The sins were usually taken from 10 Commandments. Some more modern examples such as racism. Occasionally candidates mentioned venial and mortal sins.
- 1d Most could articulate Judgement sufficient for 3 marks. Some described what happened after death rather than focusing on the question. Often candidates gave a 'range' of ideas rather than explaining any in depth. Several ideas explained in depth would attract higher marks.
- 1e Some gave good account of a range of passages – often quoted a Beatitude but were vague about how to apply them. While most cited a part of the Sermon on the Mount, some included passages that are not in it – even the 10 Commandments. Most candidates concentrated on no use vs some use. The idea of usefulness was tackled well and the better responses focused on examples of usefulness.
- 2a Mostly correct but some found it difficult to put it into a concise statement.
- 2b Mostly correct again. Some stated activities such as pray or go to mass but these could not be credited as they are activities that Roman Catholics do at any time of the year. Correct answers were those which stated something specifically associated with Advent.
- 2c Myrrh – interesting spellings. Hardly any 2 papers the same.
- 2d Some responses were very sophisticated including meaning of gift and the learned/gentile nature of visitors.
- 2e Open enough for all candidates to present relevant comments. There were some particularly good answers here. Many candidates thought that the rituals have a base in religious story/observance even if the secular world don't always know/ appreciate it.
- 3a Many found this difficult.
- 3b Many found this especially difficult. This does seem to be an area of the specification which causes problems for candidates.
- 3c The word 'worship' not always picked up by candidates. The marks were awarded to responses which compared worship not beliefs/ organisation.
- 3d There was a good range of responses and candidates chose a range of ideas and justified their choices well.
- 3e Many found this a challenging question and did not really get stuck into what is a very open ended question. The better responses focused on a few differences and discussed if they really mattered or whether there were bigger issues to be considered. For example, disagreement over the nature and role of the virgin mother should not distract from being loving towards others.

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

General Comments:

On the whole candidates seem well prepared for the exam. There was a good level of knowledge and understanding shown by candidates. There were some exceptional responses to parts d and e which went well beyond the level expected. Centres have obviously challenged candidates to think more deeply about the issues they have studied and question its value and importance in today's world.

Candidates seem well prepared for the part d and e questions in particular. However, there are some gaps in candidate's basic knowledge of the Bible and its contents. Some candidates have not fully addressed the questions and this has meant that they have not presented answers that attract the highest marks. This may be because some candidates found the questions difficult to interpret which left some missing highest level because they were unsure of what to write. Other candidates have not read the questions clearly and missed words out such as 'mass' from question 1c. This has led to some inaccurate responses.

Candidates would be well served by practicing writing concise definitions of key terms. This should stop candidates from spending too long writing detailed explanations for one mark. For most a and b questions candidates need only a few words to get the marks.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1 was the most popular and question 3 was the least popular.

- 1a Some struggled to describe this concisely but most got the right answer.
- 1b Most candidates got full marks.
- 1c Candidates seemed to struggle to understand the difference between “features” and “artefacts” with numerous average candidates losing marks due to this misunderstanding. Also the link to the “celebration of Mass” was missed by a number of candidates.
- 1d There were lots of good efforts but not all candidates gave specific detail - instead they gave a range of information. The better responses gave a range of views and developed each with some analysis.
- 1e There were some very good arguments with candidates discussing public vs private or worship vs good deeds which gave some good responses. Better responses seem to be more able to criticise each view and analyse the various arguments.
- 2a Candidates found it difficult to define funeral tightly and it often sounded more like a wake or service of remembrance and there was no consistent definition being given.
- 2b For part B the majority only got 1 mark for their response. Those that got 2 marks seemed to have addressed the question from the perspective of “what religious qualities might a person have to be chosen to be a godparent”, those that struggled were thinking about the function of the godparent rather than their characteristics.
- 2c There were some wild guesses although many knew what happens at Confirmation – many had a priest officiating though and accepted had the first communion because practice varies.
- 2d The term “rites of initiation” seem to confuse candidates. Most candidates answered in terms of sacraments of initiation, the more able minority realised the link to RCIA and were able to access higher marks.
- 2e Part E seemed to allow most candidates to access the appropriate level of response. But there was some confusion over the meaning of role of family in Church – some did see the family as ‘domestic church’. Some good discussions about the nature of the family in society today compared to the nature of the family within Roman Catholicism.
- 3a The numbers varied hugely and the majority of candidates did not know the answer.
- 3b The majority of candidates got full marks on part B. Although some named books rather than writers.
- 3c A minority of candidates got full marks on part C – most left the question blank. This is a small area of the specification but it is specifically mentioned and candidates should have some knowledge of the Apocrypha including the names of the various books.
- 3d Most candidates had not got a ready answer to this question and therefore were a little more reliant on behaviour rather than worship. There was however, a good range of answers but many were held back by forgetting to address their answer to “private worship”. Some good efforts but candidates did not always give specific detail or fully developed analysis.

- 3e There were lots of good arguments presented by candidates and responses were very thorough. There was a lot of good discussion of merits or otherwise of the Old Testament. This was the best answered question on the paper, with candidates really getting to grips with the issues.

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

General Comments:

The paper achieved full differentiation with the full range of marks being used. The part e questions were mostly successful in that they were accessible at a basic level while allowing scope for responses to develop fully and access the highest level. Questions were accessible in that there was minimal loss of marks due to incorrect reading or interpretation of the questions. Whilst there was evidence of superficial understanding of Hindu teaching there was also some evidence of excellent teaching and understanding. The most successful candidates used a selection of key terms. These were for the most part used accurately and with confidence.

As usual, the majority of candidates attempted questions 1 and 2. Where candidates did attempt question 3 however, there was an improvement on previous years with most candidates providing thoughtful and well-informed discussions in part e questions and displaying strong subject knowledge through all parts of the question.

Many candidates were able to achieve full or near to full marks in parts a-c showing a good grounding in basic Hindu religious knowledge. Where full marks were not achieved the most common reasons for this are detailed below.

Some candidates are still limiting themselves in part e questions because they are not writing enough to access the higher levels. Some centres appear to have provided their candidates with a 'writing frame' which can be helpful but which needs to be applied carefully. In order to access the top level it is necessary to include both good religious knowledge, and evaluation. Including viewpoints from other religions is only useful when it genuinely adds to the discussion. Some candidates are restricting themselves to level 3 by laying out their responses in arguments for and against the statement with paragraphs on what a Hindu might say, what a different Hindu might say, what a Christian might say (with varying relevance) and what the candidate believes. This can have the effect of limiting the potential for discussion and evaluation of the arguments presented.

In contrast, many candidates are clearly being taught to address the significance of part e questions in a sentence at the beginning. Not all candidates are entirely successful with this but some do so very well indeed and it is an appropriate strategy.

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

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1: Beliefs

- a) Most candidates gained the marks for this question. Responses included Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesh, Brahma. Avatars were credited.
- b) On the whole this was answered well. Responses included giving to charity, studying, respecting parents, following ahimsa. Some students misinterpreted the question and outlined what dharma was instead of giving examples. Some responses related specifically to varnashramadharma.

- c) This question was generally well answered, with the majority of candidates gaining full marks. The vast majority of candidates identified that samsara was dependent on karma and that liberation from samsara is achieved through moksha. A very small number of candidates confused samsara with samskaras.
- d) The vast majority of candidates answered this question well. The strongest responses focussed on the different conceptions of Brahman as personal or impersonal, saguna or nirguna; the belief that an individual atman is part of Brahman and the belief that everything is illusion and only Brahman has absolute reality. Many candidates also commented that Brahman is comprised of all deities, particularly the Trimurti. In all cases there was often little or no recognition that these beliefs are not common to all Hindus. A minority of candidates confused Brahman with Brahma and so were not able to access many marks.
- e) The majority of candidates identified ahimsa as the principle of non-violence although a worrying minority did not recognise the term and tried to give a generic response based on the assumption that it was some form of Hindu teaching. Some of these managed to achieve a mark in level 1. The stronger responses included the example of Gandhi and the idea of ahimsa as part of a Hindu's dharma although some were aware that this does not apply equally to all Hindus. Many candidates referred to the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, which seem to contradict teachings about ahimsa. Where candidates did not attain level 4 it was generally because they gave arguments for and against the statement but did not subject them to critical evaluation.

Question No. 2: Special Days

- a) Most candidates gained the mark here although many struggled with spelling. Any response that was recognisably correct was credited.
- b) This question was generally well answered with most showing a good level of understanding. Almost all candidates who attempted this question gained the marks. Most were aware of the belief that dying in Varanasi may lead to moksha.
- c) The great majority of candidates gained all three marks for this with the most common responses being the triumph of good over evil, the return of Rama and Sita from exile and the start of a new financial year. Candidates who failed to get all three marks either failed to offer three responses or misread the question and offered things that Hindus might do at Divali.
- d) Most candidates were able to describe what happens at Holi and were aware of the significance of the celebrations. Most candidates were able to access level 2 without difficulty. However, many candidates limited themselves by failing to address the issue of the importance or significance of Holi. The strongest responses talked about the importance of faith and devotion to Vishnu above all else, even family or discussed the transcending of the varna system.
- e) Some candidates missed the point of this question and wrote about whether all Hindu festivals should be the same rather than that each festival should be celebrated in the same way by all Hindus. This meant that candidates limited the marks they could receive. There were also a number of very generic responses that talked about freedom of choice but did not really get to grips with the question. Stronger responses discussed differences due to age, caste, ashrama and geographical location as well as the particular deities followed by an individual.

Question No. 3 Divisions and Interpretations

- a) All candidates that attempted this question answered correctly.
- b) All candidates who attempted this question achieved gained both marks. Responses included Shakti, Kali, Parvati. Goddesses more usually associated with the Vaisnava tradition and not always included in Shaktism were also credited as there are Hindus who regard them as aspects of the Goddess.
- c) Most candidates gained full marks on this question. Responses included Vishnu is the main God of the family, the avatars of Vishnu, Vishnu being the preserver god and personal religious experience.
- d) This was generally well answered. Many candidates described key beliefs about Shiva, which were credited, he appears in three forms, the River Ganges flowed from his hair when he stopped the River Ganga from flooding the world. Some higher achieving responses associated Shaivism with asceticism, deep meditation and overcoming illusions in society. There were some really outstanding responses here.
- e) There were some excellent responses to this question. Candidates were comfortable with writing a number of different arguments on both sides of the argument. There was also evidence of mature and sophisticated discussion and excellent understanding of Hindu teaching. Where candidates did not achieve level four it was because they gave arguments on each side but did not go on to discuss these further or evaluate them.

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

General Comments:

The paper achieved full differentiation with the full range of marks being used. The part e questions were mostly successful in that they were accessible at a basic level while allowing scope for response to develop and access the highest level. Questions were accessible in that there was minimal loss of marks due to incorrect reading or interpretation of the questions. Whilst there was evidence of superficial understanding of Hindu teaching there was also some evidence of excellent teaching and understanding. The most successful responses used a selection of key terms. These were, for the most part, used accurately and with confidence.

As usual, the majority of candidates attempted questions 1 and 2. Where candidates did attempt question 3, however, there was an improvement on previous years with most candidates providing thoughtful and well-informed discussions in part e questions and displaying strong subject knowledge through all parts of the question.

Many candidates were able to achieve full or near to full marks in parts a-c showing a good grounding in basic Hindu religious knowledge. Where full marks were not achieved the most common reasons for this are detailed below.

Some candidates are still limiting themselves in part e questions because they are not writing enough to access the higher levels. Some centres appear to have provided their candidates with a 'writing frame' which can be helpful but which needs to be applied carefully. In order to access the top level it is necessary to include both good religious knowledge, and evaluation. Including viewpoints from other religions is only useful when it genuinely adds to the discussion. Some candidates are restricting themselves to level 3 by laying out their responses in arguments for and against the statement with paragraphs on what a Hindu might say, what a different Hindu might say, what a Christian might say (with varying relevance) and what the candidate believes. This can have the effect of limiting the potential for discussion and evaluation of the arguments presented.

In contrast, many candidates are clearly being taught to address the significance of part e questions in a sentence at the beginning. Not all candidates are entirely successful with this but some do so very well indeed and it is an appropriate strategy.

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

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1: Worship

- a) Some candidates found it difficult to give a definition of Arti. Good answers included the offering of light to the Divine, the Welcoming ceremony, and the blessing of the worshippers using a lighted lamp. Some responses were not specific enough to gain the mark, for example 'worship' with no further explanation.
- b) This was answered well. Responses included in order to achieve moksha, to achieve mental discipline, to dispel maya and to follow Shiva's example. Many candidates were aware of a particular relationship between Shiva and meditation. There were a number of very generic responses such as 'to relax', which were credited. Some candidates giving

this sort of response limited their marks by describing the same reason more than once in different words.

- c) This question was well answered, with the majority of candidates gaining full marks. Answers included for puja, celebrating festivals, Sanskrit lessons, community centre, and rites of passage. Again, some candidates effectively gave the same response more than once, which limited what they could achieve.
- d) The vast majority of candidates answered this question well. Good responses included the murti providing a focus for worship and prayer, a representation of Brahman making it easier to feel a personal connection to Brahman and to remind Hindus of the qualities of God. Weaker responses described murti puja but did not then go on to explain the ways in which this could be of help to Hindus or how they might benefit from it. Some of the high level responses also touched on why certain Hindus might reject murti puja altogether.
- e) This was generally well answered, although some candidates lacked religious content in their arguments. Good responses included the argument that prayer could be seen as more important because it is a direct connection/communication with God. Others wrote that prayer could be done as part of a group or community. Against this statement, candidates wrote that meditation allows Hindus to connect with the divine or their inner self on a more personal level. Some candidates showed a maturity of understanding and high-level reasoning, producing some excellent responses. Others focussed on prayer or meditation and so did not really address the question and tended to be limited to level 2. Some candidates effectively discussed the difference between private and public worship and did not display a clear understanding of the difference between prayer and meditation. Many made the point that it is meditation that leads directly to moksha.

Question No. 2: Community and Family

- a) The majority of candidates got this right – Mundan.
- b) This was a straightforward question and virtually all candidates who attempted it achieved full marks.
- c) Most candidates achieved full marks on this question without difficulty, linking karma to concepts such as samsara and moksha accurately and confidently.
- d) On the whole this question was generally answered well, with candidates identifying how different samskaras reflect Hindu beliefs. Many worked through two or three examples of samskaras and then linked each was to specific Hindu beliefs, which was a strategy that worked well. Some weaker responses described one or two samsakaras but did not then go on to make the link with Hindu beliefs.
- e) Many candidates answered this well, giving supported arguments for and against the statement. Some struggled with the meaning of 'elaborate' although most gave a creditable response. One or two discussed the necessity of marriage, completely missing the point of the question. A significant minority of candidates limited themselves by giving generic responses to the question that made little or no reference to Hindu teachings or beliefs. These were limited to level 1 or 2.

Question No. 3 Sacred Writings

- a) Most candidates that attempted this question answered correctly – The Bhagavad Gita.
- b) Most candidates who attempted this question gained both marks. The most popular responses, not surprisingly, were Krishna and Arjuna. Those who did not gain the marks had generally confused the Mahabharata with the Ramayana.
- c) Most candidates gained full marks on this question. Responses included they are sruti texts, they are the oldest Hindu sacred writings, they hold the most authority and they can help Hindus achieve Moksha.
- d) This was generally well answered. Many candidates gave three or four reasons why the Upanishads were important texts. Answers included key philosophical teachings, limited to the top three varnas, the importance to those in the student ashrama. Most responses demonstrated very good levels of understanding.
- e) This was generally well answered with many candidates entering into a high-level discussion that demonstrated excellent understanding and a full appreciation of the significance of the issues addressed by the question. Again, the vast majority of candidates were comfortable with writing a number of different arguments on both sides of the argument and the strongest responses evaluated these effectively. A small minority got the terms sruti and smrti the wrong way round.

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

General Comments

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

All candidates were able to respond to the (e) part of the questions, though with varying degrees of success. Some were answered well with insight and understanding of the relevant issues. However, often the responses were rather confused and sometimes formulaic. Most candidates answered parts a-c fairly accurately across all questions although some candidates tended to give answers that were often vague and general rather than specific and focussed.

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

Question 1

- a) Most candidates answered this part accurately.
- b) Candidates were able to gain two marks for correctly answering who spoke to Muhammad and what was said. A common error was to substitute the word 'angel' for 'Jibrail'.
- c) Many candidates gained full marks on this part.
- d) Candidates had generally addressed the question with thought and provided relevant answers.
- e) The best responses addressed the stimulus and considered all aspects of the topic in a relevant way supported by good references to belief.

Question 2

- a) The majority of candidates answered this part successfully.
- b) Good answers correctly identified when Muslims perform Hajj and which city Muslims visit. Where candidates did not get marks it was because they confused Hajj with Ramadan.
- c) Many candidates gave clear answers to how Muslims should dress whilst on Hajj and gained the full three marks. However, inaccuracies relating to the number of white sheets worn and the veiling of women caused candidates to lose marks.
- d) This part differentiated well. To get all the marks candidates needed to mention sacrifice as a major factor in celebrating Id-ul-adha.

- e) Good responses included a description of several positive and negative aspects of both pilgrimage and festivals and were able to provide a structured answer with a conclusion based on their own analysis of the major points.

Question 3

- a) Almost all candidates provided an accurate answer to this part.
- b) Almost all candidates provided accurate answers to this part.
- c) The question was answered well with many candidates focussing on 'wudu'.
- d) Candidates gave accurate information and many reached the top of Level 2.
- e) Many candidates focussed on the stimulus and gave good answers. Many excellent responses contained detailed arguments about the differences, focussing mainly on the Sunni/Shia split.

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

General Comments.

Overall the questions provided a wide range of responses. The most popular questions were 1 and 2. There were very few rubric errors, and where there were candidates realised and crossed out the answers they did not want marked. More candidates than in previous years used additional answer booklets.

Most candidates were able to complete the paper in the time allowed.

The lines allocated are an indication of how much writing is expected for an appropriate response particularly in parts a), b) and c), but a few candidates continue to write far more than is necessary to gain full marks.

All candidates were able to respond to parts d) and e). Basic knowledge of the topics is always important as is the use of relevant information and correct terminology. Some answers to the e) part of a question displayed insight and understanding with good evaluation skills, however those who relied on the simple format of 'I agree/disagree' were restricted in their access to the higher marks. For the d) part of the questions it is necessary for candidates, in order to gain marks, to respond fully to the questions set.

Question 1

- a) For the most part, answers to this part were correct.
- b) Responses to this part were generally accurate with many candidates giving exemplification to the chosen features of the mosque.
- c) Very few candidates failed to obtain the full marks.
- d) Answers to this part gave both practical considerations of private prayer and the spiritual and religious importance of it.
- e) To gain marks for this part, candidates needed to engage with the stimulus. Many excellent responses contained detailed arguments on either side of the debate. Others needed to develop more detailed balanced arguments in order to achieve high marks.

Question 2

- a) Most candidates answered this part correctly.
- b) Many accurate answers were found, but there were also many instances where candidates failed to gain credit because they gave answers that did not rely on the prescribed list of those who are eligible to receive Zakat, but rather those that the candidate thought should receive it.
- c) Candidates provided some very good answers, and some wrote a considerable amount – more than was necessary for a part c) answer.

- d) Many candidates did not focus on the question which was about funeral rites, and wrote about what happens prior to the death of an individual, which showed a lack of understanding of the term.
- e) There were some very good answers to this part. However, some candidates focussed on the concept of 'religious' and ignored the community aspect altogether.

Question 3

- a) Correctly answered by many.
- b) To gain marks for this question candidates needed to give accurate answers for both the month and the year in which Muhammad received his first revelation.
- c) This was a challenging question required specific knowledge. Candidates need to focus on 'sacred hadith' as distinct to ahadith.
- d) To gain marks for this question candidates needed to explain *why*, rather than how.
- e) This part elicited some good answers with many candidates displaying a good grasp of the importance of the Qur'an to Muslims in their everyday life.

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

General Comments

Many candidates, once again, demonstrated a considerable knowledge and understanding of the subject. They had usually been very well prepared for the examination by their teachers. The number of rubric errors remains very small. A small number of candidates attempted all questions. Obviously this has a significant negative impact on the overall mark. Of the three questions, the least popular option was on different Jewish groups although this might simply be a reflection of the order rather than the difficulty of the questions. Most candidates made good use of the available time. A very small minority seem to have run out of time. Others might clearly have written in far more detail. Candidates are welcome to use the space at the end of the lined areas following part d and e responses. The space provided is a useful guide as to how much needs to be written in order to secure full marks. Evaluative responses were approached without excessive planning which was pleasing. The stronger responses were discussions, rather than simple lists of arguments 'for' and 'against' the given quotation. Sometimes very thoughtful responses omitted reference to the candidate's personal opinion. Candidates do need to make their view apparent. They also must make clear reference to Judaism in their answer. Standards of written communication were generally good, though the hand writing of some proved to be quite challenging. Examiners can only assess what they can read. There are still some candidates being encouraged to approach discussions by setting out the views of different Jewish groups or divisions. This rarely works as the denominations are usually misrepresented and stereotyped in the process. Occasionally candidates confuse Judaism with other faiths. This was especially apparent on the questions about the Messiah when some ideas were clearly Christian in origin. In questions where two or three specific responses are asked for, candidates should beware of adding extra answers because the first two or three are the only ones credited. This also applies if more than one answer is written on a line.

Individual Questions

- 1.a** Many candidates gave the correct response. A variety of definitions were credited. Examiners did not award marks for 'promise' unless there was an indication that it was two-sided.
- 1.b** In general, candidates identified Mount Sinai and the escape from Egypt. Marks were awarded for generalised responses identifying the desert and for alternative allusions to the Hebrews in Egypt.
- 1.c** This question dealing with the Messiah occasionally led to confusion with Christianity. That said, many candidates identified the rebuilding of the Temple, the ingathering of the exiles, universal peace and so on. These were all obviously credited. Candidates should beware of providing additional answers to those asked for.
- 1.d** There was obviously a wide variety of responses to this question and all of these were credited. A lot of answers focussed on Shabbat, kosher food and certain festivals. This was obviously all credited but the better answers tended to consider some of the positive implications of the demands of the Torah rather than just the restrictions. Answers that just looked at the theoretical demands of the Torah without citing the impact on the lifestyle of Jews were not awarded the higher marks.

- 1.e** There were many impressive responses addressing the relative importance of the covenants with Abraham and Moses. Many candidates concluded that neither could be considered more important. The argument was that they were essentially indivisible. They generally weighed up the significance of the Promised Land and circumcision versus the mitzvot. Candidates sometimes included reference to other events in the lives of both figures. Obviously clear reference to Judaism was almost guaranteed but some candidates omitted to include their own opinion. This does not need to be tacked onto the end of the response but does need to be apparent at some point.
- 2.a** Whilst many candidates correctly identified Jerusalem, a significant number suggested 'Israel' and a few, 'Mecca'.
- 2.b** Although the asking of the four questions and the hunt for the chametz were often identified and credited, some candidates also received marks for more general Pesach activities like eating the Seder. Very general responses like 'praying' were not credited.
- 2.c** This question was very well answered. Some candidates took time to explain the meanings of the symbolic foods but this was not necessary for full marks. Examiners credited the lamb bone and the salted water as 'foods'. Hebrew and English terms were both credited.
- 2.d** A small number of candidates had confused Pesach with other festivals. Most candidates clearly recognised the significance of the festival. They were credited for discussing the importance of the festival in bringing the family and community together. Good reference was made to the significance of the events remembered by Pesach. In addition, more able candidates linked the festival to the Jewish experience of the Holocaust and discussed similarities and differences between the two events.
- 2.e** Candidates seemed to find this discussion topic very accessible. They also had little difficulty linking it to Judaism. Many continued to discuss Pesach whilst others referred to the importance of other important events in the development of the faith. Candidates also considered the importance of religious thought about the future. Specifically, good use was made of Jewish Messianic belief and the festival of Rosh Hashanah when Jews look forwards to the coming year. Others considered the importance of living in the present. This question provided a valid opportunity to demonstrate an accurate understanding of Orthodox and Progressive perspectives.
- 3.a** Several different responses were accepted here, including rabbi, Torah and Talmud. Very few candidates failed to secure a mark on this question.
- 3.b** Candidates were often less successful on this question. The main point of confusion seemed to surround what constituted 'Progressive' in this context. Many candidates referred to orthodoxy or neo orthodoxy. The most common responses were Liberal and Reform.
- 3.c** There was some confusion on this question. Candidates often gave answers that might have applied to any Jewish group such as belief in G-d. The best responses sometimes included reference to the divine authorship of the Torah, the nature of the Messianic Age and the resurrection of the body.
- 3.d** The very weakest responses persisted in their belief that Orthodox Jews are Progressive. On that basis it was very difficult for them to achieve many marks at all. Other candidates tended to make very general responses suggesting that Progressive Jews are relaxed about their faith and struggled to suggest positive reasons why a Jew might choose that path. The best answers alluded to gender issues, the nature of the Torah, different mitzvot and integration.

- 3.e** This question was designed to possibly explore Progressive views about the relative merits of different types of mitzvot. Very few candidates made that connection but many went on to produce good responses that considered different points of view and included an individual opinion. Some responses had limited reference to Judaism. There were good discussions about the impact of moral behaviour on others and the negative effect that religion can occasionally have on society. Many candidates concluded that moral belief and actions were often based on a religious belief.

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

General Comments

Candidates have been, as ever, very well prepared for the examination. They are to be congratulated for their commitment and effort. Likewise, centres have taught and prepared most students in an exemplary manner. There were relatively few rubric errors this year. A tiny minority of candidates seemed to assume that they should answer every question though others began a question before abandoning it for another. It is clearly helpful if candidates read through a question in its entirety before answering it. A range of different abilities, faith backgrounds and outlooks were apparent. Timing remains an issue for some. Candidates would benefit from spending time in proportion to the number of minutes available. Examiners saw some rather long responses to part c questions when only a few words would have secured full marks. It is important that candidates do not lose too much time on the evaluation response as it is worth half the marks available. Many candidates now enter into a proper discussion of the quotation, rather than simply listing a series of arguments in support and against. Those that omit any reference to Judaism cannot achieve above a 'limited' response. The same goes for those who do not include any explicit personal opinion. It is in a candidate's interest to signpost this clearly. Sadly, some candidates still address the topic by producing a stereotyped and ill-informed list of Jewish responses based on the different groups and denominations. This approach rarely works well. There was occasional confusion with other Abrahamic faiths on some questions. It was once again the case that the third question on sacred texts was the least popular option. It is not clear whether this was due to the order or uncertainty about the nature of the Neviim. Whilst acknowledging the time constraints and pressure, examiners were concerned about the number of candidates whose handwriting was, in part, illegible.

Individual Questions

- 1.a** Initially it had been expected that candidates would provide 'meeting place' as the answer. However the lack of a requirement for a precise definition was acknowledged, and as such any reference to a place of worship was accepted.
- 1.b** This question was well answered. It is important to note that examiners credited both English and Hebrew terminology. Candidates provided a range of responses, most commonly the ark and the bimah.
- 1.c** This question only required very general responses such as prayer and sermon. Some candidates provided more specific answers such as the Shema and amidah. The three prayer times were not accepted as part of a service though they appeared quite regularly. The reason for this confusion was not apparent to examiners.
- 1.d** Candidates tended to respond well to this question. Some mostly focused on its role as a place of worship and talked about how this might impact on the community. Other structured their responses around the synagogue as a place of meeting, prayer and study. This approach seemed to lead to detailed and informed answers that appreciated the wider role of the building within the community. It allowed candidates to explore its social, educational and pastoral functions as well as its use in worship.
- 1.e** Candidates approached this answer in many different ways. Some saw it as an opportunity to discuss the separation of the genders in the Orthodox tradition. Others explored whether Orthodox and Progressive Jews could all successfully worship together.

Candidates sometimes discussed the impracticalities of the idea and dismissed it rather quickly. All approaches led to informed and well written responses. There was, as ever, misrepresentation of certain Jewish groups but most candidates made their own views clear and had obvious references to Judaism throughout. Personal opinion was sometimes included throughout the discussion but more commonly just included at the end.

- 2.a** Some candidates confused Brit Milah with Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah and obviously this impacted on the next three responses. Many identified the correct answer though some were confused about the number of days.
- 2.b** Most who recognised Brit Milah as the ritual in question were able to identify two parts of the ceremony. Many selected circumcision whilst naming and the role of the sandek were often identified. The weakest answers were often related to coming of age.
- 2.c** Many candidates had a clear understanding that the ceremony linked to the covenant with Abraham. Others referred to the way the ceremony was a mitzvot and represented the entry of the child into the community. The weakest responses still made references to adulthood and reading the Torah in the synagogue.
- 2.d** Some candidates were clearly surprised by the change of subject at this point. This might explain why a small number of responses were a little superficial. The best responses made connections between kiddushin rituals and the importance of marriage within Judaism. Others successfully focused on more general ideas about ‘becoming one flesh’ and the importance of marriage in bringing up the next generation. In doing so, they explained that marriage is G-d’s plan for people. Some discussed the role of sex within marriage and the bringing together of two families.
- 2.e** Once again candidates who made the connection between the topic and the rituals in the marriage ceremony were better able to access the higher levels. Breaking the glass, the canopy and the ring were all discussed. Although it was not necessary, some candidates had a clear understanding of Jewish belief about divorce and they used this well. It is important that candidates understand how ceremonies reflect Jewish beliefs. There was some confusion between the Christian ceremony and kiddushin, especially with regard to the vows said in a church. The candidates had little problem in identifying different points of view and in expressing their own beliefs.
- 3.a** Examiners did not credit reference to ‘holy books’. Many who attempted the question identified the prophets whilst others provided responses that were too general.
- 3.b** Examiners credited any of the books of the prophets. Hebrew and English terms were credited. Some candidates referred to books from other parts of the Tenakh and these were not accepted. In particular the books of the Torah were sometimes cited.
- 3.c** Examiners accepted general responses that were accurate. Candidates referred to learning from the Neviim, using them in worship and so on. These were credited if they did not overlap. Better responses referred to the Haftarah and the use of the prophets to learn about history or moral teachings.
- 3.d** It seems that some candidates were surprised by the change of subject area at this point. It is, of course, important that candidates read the whole question before selecting which to answer. Some candidates had an excellent understanding of the origins and use of the Talmud. They were able to explain its relationship with the Torah and cite some its influential teachings. Others were unable to differentiate between the written and oral Torah and simply wrote a generic answer about the importance of sacred texts.

- 3.e** This question was well answered by many candidates. It seemed to provoke interesting and informed discussions about the nature and influence of sacred texts. Candidates provided examples of where the Tenakh seemed to be ethically remote from contemporary society. Some considered whether the freedom to make one's own moral choices was a good thing and how this might be consistent with a belief in G-d and the covenant. Candidates sometimes argued that G-d's omnibenevolence and omniscience were relevant to this debate as He would know what is best for people. In general, candidates included clear personal opinion and referred to aspects of Judaism in their answer.

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

General Comments:

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

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

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

Once again it was apparent that candidates do not always read questions carefully, and this can be detrimental to their success as they answer what they think is being asked, rather than responding to the question set.

Specifically there were descriptions rather than definitions for 1a). Most candidates were able to consider the issues raised in e) questions but not all were able to justify a variety of points of view and give their own responses.

There were fewer 'for and against' structures than in previous years to these responses with an acknowledgement of personal response rather than a supported response. It is clear that candidates are being better prepared for the evaluation question and there is evidence of engagement with the issues at the higher levels.

There was a good spread of answers to all the 3 questions. Question 1 was very popular and then there was an even spread between questions 2 and 3 with question 3 being marginally more popular than question 2.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

- 1a Most candidates answered this question correctly, some read the question as name **a** Sikh symbol instead of **the** Sikh symbol.
- 1b. Answered accurately.
- 1c. Most candidates could give three accurate reasons for *langar* taking place.
- 1d. An accessible question which the majority tackled by stating how the *Guru Granth Sahib Dev Ji* is treated by Sikhs. Few responses were able to develop this initial response into a coherent explanation of the importance or symbolism of these actions. Generally marks did not progress beyond Level 2 for this response.
- 1e. The majority of candidates were able give good arguments for and against the use of symbols in religion but surprisingly few referred to the 5Ks as a Sikh example, which might have enabled them to develop a higher level response. Some references to topical events concerning religious targeting were used sensitively. Candidates were also, in some cases, able to consider the relative merits of symbols as opposed to actions, with *sewa* in various forms being cited as more helpful according to some.

- 2a. No issues in most cases.
- 2b. Very few candidates were able to give two examples, and it was evident that many simply guessed and named two prayers or holy readings.
- 2c. This was answered accurately by nearly all candidates.
- 2d. Candidates gave mostly generic responses, thus failing to access higher levels. There seemed little inclination to link this to Sikhism or any religious implications specifically.
- 2e. The majority of candidates were able give good arguments for and against the value and relevance of religious ceremonies. They were able to use examples from a number of different ceremonies and to consider their religious and social importance. Some included discussion about festivals which was credited when relevant, although not required. Most considered one or two specific ceremonies in depth after a general introduction, rather than attempting to comment on all ceremonies, and this was probably more effective. Some were able to compare the importance of ceremonies from a personal and public perspective.
- 3a. A number of candidates gave an incorrect response (*Bai Mani Singh* compiled the *Dasam Granth*)
- 3b. Most candidates could give two statements although there were some unusual incorrect ideas.
- 3c. Most candidates could name at least one *Guru*. A significant number gave a second incorrect response, despite there being seven possible correct ones.
- 3d. Candidates who clearly knew who the *Bhagats* were and what their contribution was gave good responses and were able to suggest ways in which they might help Sikhs. A number of very generic responses dealing with the holy writings made it evident that a significant number did not know what was being asked.
- 3e. The majority of candidates were able give good arguments for and against the relevance of sacred writings to believers in the 21st century. Many considered the intrinsic importance of the *Guru Granth Sahib Dev Ji* in all aspects of Sikh life, both public and private, and were able to give specific examples of how it helped faith adherents. A few simply suggested that sacred writings were old and outdated and therefore of no use.

B583 Christian Scriptures 1 (Mark)

General Comments:

The overall performance was good and there was sound evidence that candidates had studied the specified text. Candidates were able to show knowledge and understanding of their study of Jesus' ministry as recorded in Mark's Gospel and its practical application for Christians today.

Successful answers to question parts (a) to (c) depended upon candidates' knowledge of the specified text.

Part (d) questions assessed understanding and application of the Gospel teaching. A common error made by a number of candidates was to underestimate the amount they needed to write to match the level descriptors for a 6 mark question.

For most candidates, the most challenging area of the examination is still the part (e) questions. Many candidates appeared not to appreciate that to access the higher levels of marks all the components of the evaluation question need to be equally addressed.

Many candidates, with good knowledge and understanding of the Gospel and the Christian response to its teachings, discussed ably and sometimes at length, alternative Christian viewpoints on an issue. Usually this presented sound evidence from the Gospel and Christian teaching as to why different views might be held. Unfortunately, all too often, they invariably neglected to engage with the personal viewpoint aspect of the question. Responses therefore did not attempt to discuss or make a judgement of any reasonable length as to why they personally might find the arguments valid or weak or to justify their own comments and reflections.

The most successful answers to part (e) questions were those in which the personal evaluation and reflection on different viewpoints was expressed and justified at various points throughout the essay, rather than just added as a short paragraph at the end.

A large number of candidates wrote undeveloped answers where the viewpoints they presented were not supported or justified with evidence or examples. Many included a personal viewpoint of one sentence or a brief summary of the views already presented, which could not be classed as 'an appropriate personal response'.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Q.1(a) This was mostly correctly answered.

Q.1(b) The answer that the disciples were eating food with defiled/unwashed hands gained the majority of candidates 1 mark. Very few candidates identified that the other criticism made on this occasion was that the disciples were not living according to the tradition of the elders. Some candidates confused this occasion with the incident in the Sabbath cornfield.

Q.1(c) The teaching about 'clean and unclean' was well-known and accurately described by the majority of candidates.

Q.1(d) This question elicited some good explanations from candidates who had understood that Jesus used the Pharisees' own teaching on Corban to criticise them for putting their traditions above God's commandment to 'Honour your father and mother.' Some candidates, unsure about the detail on Corban in the text, were still able to gain credit

for their understanding that Jesus was admonishing the Pharisees (who had criticised the disciples) for their hypocrisy and over-emphasis on man-made traditions at the expense of truly following God's law.

- Q.1(e) Good answers were thoughtful and perceptive and many candidates judged this to be a question of appreciating what was fundamentally important about having rules in religion and which rules might be in the best interest of Christians. Most personal viewpoints were based on the precept that those who chose to follow a religion would also accept that this meant following the rules, or that it was a personal view on the validity of certain rules. In weaker answers, the issue of whether rules might detract from the appeal of religion was often not as maturely discussed and some candidates attempted to argue that it was the desire to behave badly, immorally or anti-socially that stopped people from joining a religion because of the rules.
- Q.2(a) This was a question which tested knowledge of the opening line of Mark 16:1-8. The majority answered correctly but there were also some incorrect guesses and ambiguous responses e.g. 'to see Jesus'.
- Q.2(b) Again, lack of accurate knowledge of the text led to some candidates making incorrect guesses at part (i) of this question.
- Generally, (ii) was correctly answered with most candidates remembering that the women saw a 'young man/angel'.
- Q.2(c) Knowledge of this section of the text about the message given to the women was better and the majority gained full marks.
- Q.2 d) Overall, candidates demonstrated good understanding of the significance of the Resurrection account in Mark and the importance of this for Christian belief. Good accounts explained the full significance of Jesus being revealed as Messiah, the fulfilment of prophecy and the promise of eternal life. Some, equally as good, explained the significance of this passage being the shorter ending of Mark and the dilemma of the women being afraid and telling no one. A significant number of candidates gained level 2 because although they understood and responded to the focus of the question, their responses were short and lacked the detail necessary for level 3.
- Q.2(e) The performance on this question was very varied. Some candidates were able to promote a good case for one side of the argument or another and a personal viewpoint and achieved the highest level. There were references to the advantages and disadvantages of the number and regularity of Christian festivals and their observance. The personal viewpoint was usually based upon the candidate's own response as to whether one festival could be made sufficiently meaningful. Some candidates' knowledge of the festivals celebrating Jesus' life was limited to Christmas and Easter and was vague on the importance of others. In some responses, the arguments in favour of one festival were frequently based on the advantage of reducing the cost of celebrating with parties and presents. Some weak answers had little reference to Christianity or Jesus.
- Q.3(a) Mostly correctly answered. Some candidates confused the event with Jairus' daughter and subsequent answers were also wrong.
- Q.3(b) Most candidates identified the woman as a gentile, considered not worthy of help from Jesus.

- Q.3(c) The majority responded well to this question and gained full marks, showing that Jesus' answer to the woman was considered to be an important part of the story. There was evidence that some candidates had at least a partial knowledge of the quotation.
- Q.3(d) Many candidates responded well to this question. They showed a good understanding of the importance of the teaching in this story for Christians living in a multi-cultural society. Most candidates developed their answer from Jesus' example in refusing to discriminate against the woman and the teaching of the all-encompassing nature of God's love. Some commented on the woman's faith.
- Q.3(e) Good answers showed a perceptive understanding that Jesus' acts of rebellion were a necessary part of his journey to the cross and the salvation of his people. Most contrasted this with the different view that the authorities were afraid of the truth of his teaching and his justified criticisms and so became his enemies and plotted his death. Those who successfully expressed a personal viewpoint usually based it upon their assessment of whether Jesus was a determined rebel or a victim (of the malicious authorities) and whether their own interpretation of 'a rebel' fitted in with the image of a loving Jesus. Some candidates' misunderstanding of the word 'rebel' caused them difficulties.

B584 Christian Scriptures 2 (Luke)

General Comments:

Overall, the standard of performance was high this year. Candidates demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of the specified text in Luke's Gospel and the meaning and application of its teachings for Christians today.

Question parts (a) to (c) were very well answered and the majority of candidates had an accurate working knowledge of the text.

Question parts (d) called for understanding and application and was a little more challenging for some candidates but many others showed a perceptive understanding of the significance of the teachings in Jesus' ministry and the relevance of these teachings for Christian belief.

Question parts (e), which calls for evaluation of different views and a personal response, is still the most challenging part of the examination for all candidates. Candidates should be aware that as much consideration should be given to discussion of a personal viewpoint as is given to the discussion of different views.

In part (e) of their chosen questions, many candidates presented alternative points of view readily enough in their discussion, usually with supporting evidence to explain why some Christians might hold one point of view or another. Unfortunately, all too often, they failed to make any judgements on this evidence in terms of a sufficiently developed personal response; for example explaining why they personally might find particular arguments valid or weak. Many candidates would have achieved the highest level of marks if they had written at more length in the first person in order to justify their own particular viewpoints and reasoning. Some just presented the 'pros and cons' of an issue without personal comment or reflection. The best responses were those that engaged with the question by offering personal judgements and reflections throughout the essay rather than leaving the personal response to a short paragraph at the end of a lengthy explanation of different views. Some candidates failed to do themselves justice because the personal evaluation was a two or three line sentence.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- Q.1 (a) The majority of answers to this question were correct. A significant number of candidates guessed at 'Jerusalem' or 'Nazareth' and did not gain credit.
- Q.1 (b) Mostly correct answers from candidates who were familiar with the text.
- Q.1 (c) Mostly correct answers. Some candidates who knew few other details of the healing guessed that 'Jesus touched her' and gained a mark.
- Q.1 (d) This question was answered well by candidates who were able to identify the healing correctly and use the salient facts from the story to support their explanations.
- Q.1 (e) Overall, candidates answered this question with enthusiasm and showed familiarity and engagement with the special emphasis in Luke's Gospel on the poor and outcasts. Most candidates were able to support their discussions with relevant reference to the gospel stories, parables and teachings. Some candidates discussed the role of women as an oppressed group as well as the diseased and the poor. The majority were able to present evidence for Jesus both championing the poor and being concerned that the richer members of society should be cared for and advised on how to achieve eternal life. Some responses failed to consolidate this achievement when it came to

demonstrating a personal viewpoint, (as commented on previously). However, where candidates did pay attention to developing their personal viewpoint, there were some perceptive and thoughtful evaluations of the universalism of Jesus' ministry in Luke.

- Q.2 (a) Candidates, generally, demonstrated good knowledge of the story of Peter's denial of knowledge of Jesus. Answers were mostly accurate.
- Q.2 (b) Again, answers to this question were mostly accurate.
- Q.2 (c) Many candidates quoted the relevant text on the 'Cost of Discipleship' accurately and gained full marks. Some candidates paraphrased the text in terms of giving up family, suffering persecution and death and following Jesus with dedication/determination, to gain, equally, full mark credit.
- Q.2 (d) Generally, well answered. Candidates were familiar with the character of Peter, as portrayed in the gospel and his later role in the early church and most answers offered good explanations of his bluster at Jesus' prediction of his denial, his courage in following Jesus after the arrest, his human weakness when he was afraid and his genuine remorse. There were very few weak answers to this question.
- Q.2 (e) Some candidates failed to identify the main thrust to this discussion question about 'being loyal to yourself' and instead wrote rather generally about kindness or helping others, which often meant that their answers were not as well focused as they could have been. Some of the best responses used the example of Peter's disloyalty to Jesus and therefore to himself, as a starting point for their discussion and developed the answer to include other examples and arguments about self-loyalty e.g. keeping to Christian principles and loyalty to others in terms of love and support and even sacrifice. Although, in this question the response to the focus of the question was varied, the personal response was often more developed and better than in the other part (e) questions as candidates identified with the idea that if a person held strongly to their own beliefs and principles; they would also act in the best interest of others.
- Q.3 (a) Most of the answers were correct. As the answer was 'a disciple', the name of a disciple was also accepted.
- Q.3 (b) Nearly all the candidates who attempted this question correctly identified two lines of Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer.
- Q.3 (c) The structure of this question helped candidates to set out their answer correctly and the vast majority of candidates recognised this parable.
- Q.3 (d) Generally, this question was well answered. Most responses demonstrated understanding of the 'Friend at Midnight'. The teaching about persistence in prayer 'Ask, seek, knock and the door will be opened' was clearly explained and the importance of this for Christians, as a teaching about God's love and mercy. Some candidates linked this to the example of the Lord's Prayer, addressing God as 'Father', who will provide what is needed. Other candidates included some explanation of the teaching on prayer that followed the 'Friend at Midnight', all for equal credit.
- Q.3 (e) Most candidates were able to competently explain the advantages of both praying privately and praying with the support of other Christians. There was also, in some responses, sensitive discussion of what the private nature of personal matters might be and why it might not be something to always share with others. As with other part (e) questions, the opportunity to reflect personally on the issue and discuss the validity or weakness of different views was not always taken by candidates. A large number of responses contained only one or two sentences as a personal viewpoint, to conclude

the discussion. They were usually prefaced by the phrase 'I think that...' and were just an expression of agreement or disagreement with one of the views presented earlier, without any further justification. Enhanced development of this aspect of the response would have meant that more answers would have achieved level 4.

B585 Jewish Scriptures (Tenakh)

General Comments:

There were some excellent and very good responses to the demands of the paper and the questions differentiated well between candidates producing the full range of marks. Candidates were able to show consistent knowledge and analysis and an ability to consider and judge alternative explanations; many were also able to demonstrate a high level of interaction with the set specification texts. It was pleasing to see evidence that candidates had devoted thought to their answers especially in the (e) part questions. The best responses addressed the specific question asked, considered all aspects of the question in a relevant way, and were supported with careful analysis which focused specifically upon the set specification texts. The best answers also integrated formal description with convincing discussion of the set text content and context.

Some candidates needed to focus more on the set specification texts and to show detailed awareness of the text content. Candidates achieved higher marks when they considered all of the subject matter and supported their answers with detailed knowledge and analysis. When candidates did not achieve higher marks it was usually because they did not answer the question set and instead provided an answer for a question they had prepared for, or where they had limited knowledge of the set text being asked about and as such were not able to directly address the question. Some candidates also were unable to present a developed response on the longer answer questions or present more than one point of view on the (e) part questions so reducing the available marks they could gain.

In terms of knowledge and understanding of the prescribed texts, a large majority of the candidates engaged with the questions and produced mostly accurate answers, although some candidates were let down by a lack of knowledge of the set texts which formed many of the (a), (b) and (c) questions. Some candidates were able to display excellent and accurate knowledge and understanding of the prescribed sections of the set texts and engage in high level analysis; however, the skill of analysis requires further development for some candidates. In general, candidates were well prepared for the exam and there was some evidence of excellent classroom practice and commitment. Some candidates produced outstanding and detailed answers showing a high level of ability to deploy relevant information and analyse accurately the question demands.

All questions were attempted with no one question being the most popular. The questions appear to have provided opportunities for candidates of a wide range of ability to demonstrate their skills. There was good evidence of detailed SPG on the part (e) questions and most candidates obtained full marks on this criteria.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Question 1

- a) The majority answered this accurately showing clear and detailed awareness of the set text and text context.
- b) The majority of candidates answered this accurately; it was very apparent that this section of the text was well known by candidates.

- c) This question resulted in mixed responses. Many were able to accurately describe the relationship between man and woman as described and outlined in the set text (Genesis 1:1-2:9, 15-25). Candidates that responded well to this question and scored highly were able to manipulate the set text drawing out 1 or more points and describing them in order to gain the 3 marks. Some answers however, did not make *any* reference to the set text rather describing ‘general’ features of the relationship between man and woman despite the question trigger aimed to aid the candidate to ‘Describe what *this text* shows..’
- d) Satisfactory responses concentrated on general attitudes within Judaism to the environment. Better responses provided good explanations as to why the global environment is an important issue within Judaism and showed contextual knowledge and understanding of the biblical background to this attitude from the set text. Many candidates were able to discuss that within the set text Adam and Eve were commanded to ‘till and tend the earth’ and as such, Jews today have a responsibility to look after G-d’s creation. Some were able to discuss the concept of stewardship and many were able to make links between the biblical text and the contemporary issue of the global environment in life and faith. It was disappointing that some candidates just mentioned the contemporary issues and were unable to provide the textual context for these beliefs. In order to reach Level 3 candidates should be able to discuss confidentially the question using evidence and examples from the set text to support their reasoning.
- e) This was a well answered question with candidates mostly considering that Jews should not be vegetarian. Many candidates were able to discuss this contemporary issue well and were able to link this confidently to Biblical sources to support their answer. Many candidates were able to discuss their own views on vegetarianism as a teenager today so engaging personally with the question. In the main this was a well answered question and candidates were able to discuss differing denominational views to the question. Many excellent responses contained detailed arguments on both sides of the debate; others needed to develop more detailed, balanced arguments in order to achieve high marks. Weaker responses did not contain any detailed reference to Judaism or did not offer supported contrasting points of view; rather presenting general argument which although sometimes interesting, needed reference to religion in order to be marked at a higher level.

Question 2

- a) This proved to be a very accessible question and was answered correctly by many candidates.
- b) Many candidates were able to answer this question successfully. Some named 2 parts of the Tenakh, others specific books within the Tenakh. Either approach was credited.
- c) This was also a very accessible and well answered question. Many candidates scored full marks on this question showing detailed knowledge and understanding.
- d) Candidates used their knowledge and skills appropriately to respond to this question and on the whole performance was good. The majority of candidates were able to discuss why different parts of the Tenakh, or the Tenakh as a whole, was important to Judaism. Many candidates were able to show detailed knowledge and understanding and there was evidence of key terminology in frequent and confident use.
- e) Responses to this question were, in the main, good; however, some candidates (despite showing excellent knowledge) were unable to gain a high level of response due to a lack of analysis and argument. Some candidates presented a one-sided argument only or did not give their own viewpoint and as such, could not go beyond L2. The answers which showed the most sophistication were the ones which not only explored the topic but which drew upon historical and contemporary issues in order to contextualise their answer. Some

answers were let down by merely listing parts of the Tenakh and describing them without engaging in the analysis as to which part might be considered 'more important'.

Question 3

- a) The majority answered this accurately; however, some candidates were clearly not familiar with certain aspects of the set text or the set text content.
- b) There were some excellent answers to this question which demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding of the set text. It was apparent however, that some candidates did not know the text and were 'guessing' answers. Credit was given for 'general' correct ideas from the text and as such, the text did not need to be paraphrased to be awarded marks. The answers which achieved full marks however, were those that could confidently describe the set text.
- c) As with parts (a) and parts (b) there were some excellent answers to this question which demonstrated a very high ability of learning regarding the set text. The better answers were those that could confidently show knowledge of the text and were aware of the events within the set text, their order, and their significance and which could manipulate this information to answer the question succinctly and accurately. It was very pleasing to see some candidates demonstrating such a high level of understanding of the set text.
- d) There were some excellent responses to this question which demonstrated a high level of understanding and analysis. Many candidates were able to discuss 'wrongdoing' and relate this specifically to the set text through citing examples from Jonah in order to support their explanation. Better answers were those that discussed the events of all four chapters and how these showed wrongdoing. The answers which scored highly were those that were able to discuss different 'types' of wrongdoing and the wrongdoing undertaken by different 'groups' within the set text.
- e) This was, in the main, a very well answered question. The majority of candidates were able to successfully link the question to the set text of Jonah and used evidence and examples from within the set text to support their argument. Many answers showed a clear indication of appropriate personal response which was fully supported and justified. The better answers were those, which like part (d), focused not only the prayer of Jonah but that of other parties within the set text such as the sailors and the Ninevites.

B586 Jewish Scriptures (Talmud)

General Comments:

There were some excellent and very good responses to the demands of the paper and the questions differentiated well between candidates producing the full range of marks. Candidates were able to show consistent knowledge and analysis and an ability to consider and judge alternative explanations; many were also able to demonstrate a high level of interaction with the set specification texts. It was pleasing to see evidence that candidates had devoted thought to their answers especially in the (e) part questions. The best responses addressed the specific question asked, considered all aspects of the question in a relevant way, and were supported with careful analysis which focused specifically upon the set specification texts. The best answers also integrated formal description with convincing discussion of the set text content and context.

Some candidates needed to focus more on the set specification texts and to show detailed awareness of the text content. Candidates achieved higher marks when they considered all of the subject matter and supported their answers with detailed knowledge and analysis. When candidates did not achieve higher marks it was usually because they did not answer the question set and instead provided an answer for a question they had prepared for, or where they had limited knowledge of the set text being asked about and as such were not able to directly address the question. Some candidates also were unable to present a developed response on the longer answer questions or present more than one point of view on the (e) part questions so reducing the available marks they could gain.

In terms of knowledge and understanding of the prescribed texts, a large majority of the candidates engaged with the questions and produced mostly accurate answers, although some candidates were let down by a lack of knowledge of the set texts which formed many of the (a), (b) and (c) questions. Some candidates were able to display excellent and accurate knowledge and understanding of the prescribed sections of the set texts and engage in high level analysis; however, the skill of analysis requires further development for some candidates. In general, candidates were well prepared for the exam and there was some evidence of excellent classroom practice and commitment. Some candidates produced outstanding and detailed answers showing a high level of ability to deploy relevant information and analyse accurately the question demands.

All questions were attempted with no one question being the most popular. Although the exam paper offers the candidates a choice of question it appears that some candidates may have lacked knowledge of all the required sections of the specification; some candidates attempted a question where they offered No Response or 'guesses' for part (a), (b) and (c) and so lost marks instead of answering the other available question which they may have received marks for.

Answers to part (d) of questions were generally satisfactory to good and candidate understanding of the meaning of the set texts was usually well expressed. Some candidates would have performed better with a greater understanding of the assessment objective for part (d) questions, as they gave detailed descriptions rather than explanations. 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. The best answers were those that showed organisation and structure and which fully answered the question set through focused application of knowledge and/or well-argued analysis and evaluation. The questions appear to have provided opportunities for candidates of a wide range of ability to demonstrate their skills. There was good evidence of detailed SPG on the part (e) questions and most candidates obtained full marks on this criteria.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

- a) The majority answered this accurately.
- b) In the main this question was answered well. Nearly all candidates were able to accurately state that the tassels were placed on the 'corners' of garments as described within the set text being examined. Some candidates however were unable to answer that the tassel thread was blue or turquoise as described within the set text, and gave the answer 'white' so drawing upon their general knowledge or experience.
- c) Responses varied here. There were some excellent answers to this question which demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding of the set text. It was apparent however, that some candidates did not know the set text or were unaware that the question required them to answer (as the question heading) with reference to Numbers 15:37-41 only. Many candidates gave answers such as 'omnipotent', 'omniscience' or discussed their learning about the Shema from Deuteronomy and as such, were unable to gain marks as they had not answered the set question which was to describe what Numbers 15:37-41 says about G-d. This was a very simple question requiring the candidates to recall knowledge from the set text only.
- d) Many candidates were able to access this question however, responses varied. Good responses showed understanding of the how the commandments influence daily life and were able to give examples to illustrate their discussion. Better answers were those that enhanced their discussion through evidence and examples from the set text being examined and the broader area of study of Shema. There were some high level answers seen which demonstrated excellent knowledge of the subject area.
- e) A number of responses made an excellent or very good attempt to present supported arguments and showed a high level of engagement with the question. Many candidates were able to draw upon historical and contemporary evidence and thought in answering the question. It was noted that many candidates were able to talk about the importance or non-importance of wearing religious clothing from both a religious and secular point of view and many were able to support their argument fully through the use of textual evidence from the set studied texts. There were a significant number of very good answers to this question which demonstrated a high level of ability to deploy relevant information and analyse it through supported argument.

Question 2

- a) Answers to this question varied significantly. Some candidates had very good/excellent knowledge of the set text and were able to answer this question accurately, others presented 'no response' or a guess here.
- b) Many candidates were able to give one response here; some were able to correctly identify two answers.
- c) Answers to this question varied significantly. As with parts (a) and (b) it was very clear that some candidates had excellent knowledge of the set text and there were some excellent answers to this question which demonstrated a very high ability of learning. The better answers were those that could confidently show knowledge of the text and were aware of the content of the set text and could manipulate this information to answer the question succinctly and accurately. It was very pleasing to see some candidates demonstrating such a high level of understanding of the set text.

- d) This question was, in the main, answered very well and it was apparent that many candidates had excellent subject knowledge. The highest level responses showed understanding of the background, meaning and significance of the first three blessings and were able to explain the importance of these for Jews today.
- e) Responses to this question were, in the main, good; however, some candidates (despite showing excellent knowledge) were unable to gain a high level of response due to a lack of analysis and argument. There were some very high level answers to this question which showed sophistication in argument and which really got to grips with the question even if they found it a challenging statement. Some answers were let down by merely listing points of discussion supporting or rejecting the question with no further evidence or explanation; this is not sufficient for a high level response. To achieve marks of level 3 and higher, candidates were expected to explore differing views even if they don't agree with the viewpoint. Moreover, merely stating 'on the one hand...on the other hand...' does not constitute a high level supported analysis. On the whole however, this question was well answered and many candidates' arguments made for interesting and thought provoking reading.

Question 3

- a) The majority answered this accurately and were able to give a correct definition.
- b) Some candidates showed a very detailed knowledge of the set text and were able to answer this question accurately and succinctly. Some candidates presented general rather than text specific answers or confused this text with other set texts studied.
- c) This was a very well answered question and the majority of candidates were able to gain full marks.
- d) There were some excellent responses to this question which demonstrated a high level of understanding and analysis. Many candidates were able to discuss the contemporary issue of war and peace and support their answer with reference to the set texts and wider learning on Judaism.
- e) A number of responses made an excellent or very good attempt to present a supported argument drawing upon their learning, discussing different points of view and showing a mature and high level personal response. There were very good answers to this question which demonstrated a high level of ability to deploy relevant information and analyse it through supported argument. As with question 1 (ehb) many candidates' arguments made for interesting and thought provoking reading and demonstrated a very good ability to present independent argument and thought. Weaker answers were those that did not present more than one point of view or present contrasting argument.

B589 Perspectives on World Religions

General Comments:

The paper proved accessible and candidates were able to fulfil its demands within the allocated time. There were few rubric infringements reported.

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. However, some candidates offered several responses where only one or two were required. Centres should be aware that responses will be marked in the order in which they are written. Where a candidate offers several responses, for example to a part a) which is asking for one response, the candidate's first response will be marked. If that response is wrong, no other responses will be credited even if they are correct. If a candidate gives two responses when only one is required and they are contradictory, no mark can be awarded.

In part d), where candidates are required to demonstrate their understanding of an issue, some candidates offered responses showing 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 tendency was observed in this section to offer a description of views rather than an explanation which focuses on the way that the question has been asked. 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.

Responses from many candidates to the e) parts of the questions consisted of well-presented arguments about the issue in the stimulus and clear evidence of a personal viewpoint. The personal viewpoint tends to be offered as a distinct section of the response by many candidates. Some of the best responses however, contained the personal viewpoint as a series comments throughout the response, demonstrating the candidate's engagement with the issue and their ability to respond well to the demands of AO2. On occasions, candidates' knowledge unfortunately dominated the response to the detriment of the argument. Some responses were limited because they failed to offer any religious content at all whilst some developed an argument on one side of the issue but with no consideration of alternative views or shades of opinion. These latter sorts of response, along with responses which did not offer any personal comment at all, could not be given much credit.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A: Responsibility for the Planet

Question No. 1- 6

- a) This proved to be accessible with the 'world around us' or 'where we live' being common responses.
- b) Candidates tended to give a creation story or that "God created the world' and as a second, belief, 'the Big Bang'.
- c) Candidates focused on the Biblical creation narratives with the idea of dominion, and the action of Adam naming the animals. The idea that animals have no souls which makes them inferior was also offered along with the view that animals were created by God for humans to use and are therefore inferior.

- d) Candidates referred effectively to the idea of stewardship and responsibility to one's neighbours. Many explained how this meant that there was a responsibility toward the future generations as well as the present population. Although the question enabled candidates to focus on individual issues, most chose to consider environmental issues in a general sense. Some responses focused on specific environmental issues without reference to the chosen religion. This sort of response could gain little credit.
- e) The stimulus seemed to surprise many candidates who felt that humans are not selfish and therefore there is no problem. Most, as they worked through their response, grasped that the stimulus enabled them to discuss whether humans had the capacity to do without things for the sake of others or for future generations. Some responses expressed the view that as God had given people dominion over the earth, environmental issues caused by humans exploiting the planet were up to him to sort out as he was ultimately responsible. This was contrasted effectively in many responses with the view that God given free will meant that people had to sort things out for themselves and had to behave responsibly towards creation and other people.

Section B: War Peace and Human Rights

Question No 7 – 12

- a) Pacifism or pacifist, two correct responses, were frequently offered. Some candidates offered instead a sentence describing non-violence, having missed the requirement to provide a single word as a response.
- b) Most candidates offered two of the rights stated in the UDHR. Some referred to its character or to its purpose. These were acceptable responses, the word 'features' in the question being interpreted broadly.
- c) In this section candidates had to take one attitude and develop it for three marks. Many responses effectively offered a statement of a point of view held by the religion chosen and then supported it with further description or exemplification. Candidates who stated two or more attitudes could only be given credit for the first.
- d) The question asked candidates to explain why there are different views about war in the chosen religion but many responses were just descriptions of different attitudes without explanation as to why different people from the same religion might have those different attitudes. Whilst some credit could be given for those sorts of responses candidates could not achieve the highest level of marks unless they addressed the underlying reason for differences in some way. Those who did, referred for example to the fact that sacred texts were ambivalent about war and violence, or that key figures in the religion or in the religion's history had found cogent reasons as to why religious people should be for, or against war.
- e) The stimulus was intended to provoke candidates to discuss the question of the place of religion in the fight for human rights. In some responses the candidates focused on the word fight and veered into discussions about the appropriateness of religions being involved in physical conflict in support of human rights. Credit was given where possible but the best responses focused on the issue of whether religion could benefit or whether it might hinder the fight for human rights. Responses referred to examples of key figures in the fight such as William Wilberforce, Martin L King and Desmond Tutu. On the other side candidates pointed out that religions had often been very slow to follow the lead of such people and sometimes opposed them and the fight for human rights altogether. The best responses alluded to appropriate knowledge to support the arguments and engaged with the issue, offering a supported personal stance.

Section C: Prejudice and Equality

Question No 13 - 18

- a) The response – ‘to pre judge’ or ‘to make up one’s mind without evidence’ secured the mark for many candidates. Some responses confused prejudice with discrimination and others gave examples of discrimination. No credit could be given for those responses.
- b) This proved quite challenging. Many vague responses were offered which described attitudes rather than specific examples of discrimination. Historic examples of inequality, which still prevail outside Britain, were accepted, such as not having the right to vote or a lack of access to equal pay or to the same employment status as men.
- c) The need to concentrate on one attitude and describe or develop it in order to respond fully to the question meant that some candidates failed to achieve full marks as they offered two or more attitudes. Candidates who stuck with one attitude and developed it with reference to the practice of the religion or a sacred text could gain the full credit.
- d) The question required candidates to refer to the religion chosen to explain why followers of that religion might be against racism. Candidates writing from the perspective of Christianity for example, supported their explanation with appropriate material from the Bible. Such statements of knowledge do gain some credit. In order to achieve the highest marks, demonstrating understanding rather than knowledge, candidates had to show how and why such material has led to the stance of the religion
- e) Many responses started with initial agreement with the stimulus, concentrating on the word ‘deserve’ in the stimulus. Candidates referred to people who, through criminal activity, had lost the right to equal treatment because of how they had themselves treated people. Some responses took the view that people should separate the evil and the evildoer who could still be given equal treatment if they repented of their evil. Many responses suggested that it was impossible for humans to ensure equal treatment for everybody and that only God could do that. Humans however should still try to aim for the ideal of equal treatment.

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

General Comments:

The paper proved accessible and candidates were able to fulfil its demands within the allocated time. There were few rubric infringements reported.

It was noted that some candidates responded to the parts of their chosen questions not in order beginning with the e) part of the questions. Whilst this makes sense from the point of view of tackling the highest mark part of the question first, there is a danger that too much time is spent on that part to the detriment of the other sections.

Many candidates offered clear and appropriate responses to the questions in parts a) to c) of each section where short answers or even one word responses are required. However, some candidates offered more than the required number of responses. Centres should be aware that responses will be marked in the order in which they are written. Where a candidate offers several responses for example to a part a), which is asking for one response, the candidate's first response will be marked. If that response is wrong, no other responses will be credited even if they are correct. If a candidate gives two responses when only one is required and they are contradictory, no mark can be awarded.

In part d), where candidates are required to demonstrate their understanding of an issue, some candidates offered responses showing a sound grasp of the significance of the issue for the religion of their choice. Candidates who supported their understanding with reference 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 tendency was observed in this section to offer a description of views rather than an explanation which focused on the way that the question had been asked. 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.

Responses from many candidates to the e) parts of the questions consisted of well-presented arguments about the issue in the stimulus and clear evidence of a personal viewpoint. The personal viewpoint tends to be offered as a distinct section of the response by many candidates. Some of the best responses however contained the personal viewpoint as a series of comments throughout the response demonstrating the candidate's engagement with the issue and their ability to respond well to the demands of AO2.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A: Religion and Human Relationships

Question No. 1- 6

- a) The correct response (Divorce) was given by most candidates with a small number offering annulment which could not be credited.
- b) In response to this part, candidates correctly referred to love and companionship, the desire to provide a secure environment for the upbringing of children and the opportunity for the couple to show public commitment to each other.

- c) The role of women in the family was often described in very traditional terms sometimes supported by reference to sacred texts. This view was balanced by some candidates with the recognition that many families depended on an equality of roles in order to function in the modern world. The focus of the question was on the role in the family which was missed by some candidates who provided responses about the role of women generally or in religious institutions. Little if anything could be salvaged from such responses.
- d) Candidates offered some very thoughtful responses to this part. The importance of sexual relationships within the marital relationship (heterosexual and same sex) was emphasised by candidates. Reference was made to the importance of a sexual relationship as a way of expressing love and as a way to bond a marriage. Candidates responding to the Christianity questions referred to the idea of becoming one flesh as well as the need to fulfil the command to procreate. The tendency to offer a description of views about sex, rather than to focus on the importance of sexual relationships meant that some very full, factual responses failed to reach the higher marks.
- e) Responses to the stimulus frequently focused on the way in which a religion views marital breakdown, which of course has an impact on the way a couple from that religion might view difficulties in their relationship. Some responses quite appropriately therefore concentrated on a discussion of the attitude to divorce of the religion they had chosen. Candidates also evaluated the extent to which sharing a faith might support a couple who made it a central part of family life. The view was commonly expressed that if religion was a significant part of the couple's individual lives, being able to share it with their partner would be a very positive thing for the couple but not necessarily something which could be guaranteed to prevent marital breakdown.

Section B: Religion and Medical Ethics

Question No 7 – 12

- a) Suicide, as the correct response was offered by most candidates. Euthanasia, offered by some candidates was not accepted as a response.
- b) Candidates sometimes struggled to find two different beliefs. Most offered the belief that cloning was wrong as it puts humans in the position of creating life which is the role of God alone. The belief in the uniqueness of each person as created by God which would be lost if human cloning ever became possible, figured in many responses as did the belief that therapeutic cloning could be a positive benefit to humanity.
- c) Candidates were required to focus on describing **one** attitude which most managed to achieve very successfully. Some responses were very long to this part which must have affected time management for those candidates. Candidates should bear in mind the mark allocation for each part of the question, which is an indication of the amount they need to write.
- d) The question asked candidates to explain why there are different attitudes but many responses were just descriptions of different attitudes, without explanation as to why different people from the same religion might have those different attitudes. Whilst some credit could be given for such a response, candidates could not achieve the highest level of marks unless they addressed the underlying reason for differences in some way. Those who did so generally referred to the fact that sacred texts were written well before fertility treatment was made available. Others explained that some believers would see the ethical imperatives of the sanctity of life and the command to go forth and multiply as competing on an issue such as this, which led to different ethical stances and attitudes amongst believers.

- e) The stimulus was intended to get candidates to discuss the issue of choice and to draw on their knowledge and understanding of the suicide and euthanasia debates. Some achieved this and offered well-argued responses which contained mature comment throughout. Many responses were just a rehearsal of the euthanasia debate and failed to address the issue of choice at all. Knowledge of arguments was sometimes offered rather than a discussion of the issue in the stimulus. This reduced the amount of credit that could be awarded as that type of response was generally judged to be limited rather than competent or good.

Section C: Religion, Poverty and Wealth

Question No 13 - 18

- a) Donations of money or time were appropriate responses to this part.
- b) Candidates were able to offer a sentence describing at least one relevant teaching and most offered two. Some responding to the questions on Christianity, just listed the titles of two parables which needed to be described or explained briefly for the marks to be awarded.
- c) The need to concentrate on one belief and describe or develop it in order to respond fully to the question meant that some candidates failed to achieve full marks as they offered two or more beliefs. Responses which just listed immoral occupations could also be given little, if any credit. The best responses stated the belief and supported it with further development and appropriate exemplification.
- d) The question made it clear that candidates should refer to the teaching of the religion chosen to explain why, according to that religion, there is so much poverty in the world. Whilst some credit could be given for responses which referred to practical reasons to do with geography, politics or economics, the best responses offered a religious interpretation. Reference to the tendency for humans to be greedy and to be unable to seek the middle way or to allow the poor to languish as did Lazarus in Jesus' parable, enabled candidates to achieve the higher levels. The view that poverty is very much the result of human failure to obey the command to love one's neighbour was a common theme in many responses.
- e) The stimulus seemed to surprise some candidates and as a result evoked some excellent responses. For some it was obvious that religion was actually the driving force behind much of the charitable work which is done to support the poor across the world. Candidates referred to charities and to the way in which they were the practical outworking of the moral attitudes of the believers. Some candidates distinguished between the response of religion which might be spiritual and therefore of little practical use and the response of religious people, which was undeniably practical and valuable. There were good examples of a thread of argument being followed through a response, which meant that high marks could be awarded as the candidates fulfilled the requirements to provide a discussion of the issue and a personal viewpoint, well supported.

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