

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
in Religious Studies (5RS12)

Unit 12: Judaism

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Unit 12 Judaism

This unit was sat by a reasonable number of candidates who mainly achieved good results. There were some strong candidates who performed well showing high standards of knowledge, understanding and personal opinions; weaker candidates struggled with some of the key words, ideas and issues.

Generally, candidates were able to respond well to question b and d, giving their own developed reasons as well as taking into consideration alternative views in question d. However it is important to note in question b the candidates must state what their personal opinions are and reasons are for their point of view to gain full marks. In question d candidates must give reasons to support their point of view and reasons why others may disagree with their opinion, including a reference to religion and or Judaism to gain the highest marks.

Question 1 was significantly more popular than question 2 and this may be due to confusion over the key word 'Talmud'. However, generally stronger candidates were aware of the key words and could give their meaning accurately although some specific Judaism terms were muddled and seemed more difficult for weaker candidates.

In section one some weaker candidates struggled with the term halakhah confusing it with Hanukkah and all candidates would benefit from having key terms clearly understood. In question 2c most candidates could give their opinions about the Shema being the essential prayer for Jewish belief. Some struggled with question 1b muddling the covenant with Moses and Abraham.

In section two the questions were equally popular. Question 3b was done well by strong candidates but some weaker candidates were unsure of what Hasidic Judaism is all about. Question 3c and 4c were done equally well by the majority of candidates. In question 3d almost all the candidates were able to give reflective and sensitive answers as to why the Holocaust should never be forgotten. In question 4d most could explain the reasons for and against whether all synagogues should have the same features.

In section three the questions were equally popular. The vast majority of candidates knew the key words but there was some confusion generally among weaker candidates about the different Jewish festivals, their meaning and importance, and some were very vague only giving generic answers but not really explaining or detailing anything specific about the festivals of Hanukkah or the importance of the celebration of Brit Milah.

In section four the questions were equally popular. In question 7b there was some confusion over the term social and community cohesion, some candidates only referring to Israel rather than the UK. In question 7c some weaker candidates struggled in explaining the importance of the Noachide Laws.

Generally the paper was completed by the majority of candidates to a very high standard indicating excellent coverage of the syllabus and a good understanding of the required examination style.

