

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

iGCSE

iGCSE Religious Studies (4425)

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Paper 1: Beliefs and Values

General Comments

iGCSE Religious Studies 4425 was offered for the first time in May 2006, and it is encouraging to note the increase in the number of candidates taking the examination this year. Overall, candidates showed adequate to very good knowledge of the religion(s) they had studied, and there were some responses of a very high standard to all types of question..

Apart from four questions (one in each of Sections A-D), which require candidates to answer from the standpoint of only one chosen religion, the questions in Paper 1 are generic ones, which can be answered from the standpoint of one, or more than one, of the six major religions.

Sections A-D assess AO1 (Knowledge) and AO2 (Understanding). Each section contains two three-part questions, of which candidates must answer all parts of one question. Part (a) tests AO1, and relates to definitions of the key words for the particular section; part (b) also tests AO1, and requires candidates to outline or describe a religious (or non-religious) belief(s), teaching(s), or practice(s). Part (c) questions assess AO2, and require candidates to explain a religious (or non-religious) belief(s), teaching(s), or practice(s).

Section E assesses AO3 (Evaluation), and consists of eight questions, of which candidates must answer two. Questions take the form of controversial statements, relating to the beliefs, teachings and practices covered in the previous sections. Candidates are asked whether they agree with the statement, and to give reasons for their opinion.

In Sections A-D, there was evidence that candidates had studied and learnt the key words (part (a) questions), and there were many good responses to part (b) questions, reflecting candidates' thorough knowledge of the religion(s) they had studied. Candidates also dealt with part (c) questions more successfully than last year, and, in general, responses to the 'explain why' questions (six of the eight) were explanations, not descriptions. However, some candidates were less assured in their handling of the two 'explain how' questions (3 (c) and 5 (c)), where it can be harder to avoid a merely descriptive answer. These candidates treated Question 5 (c), for example, as if it were a part (b) question, they outlined examples of ways such as counselling and provision of financial support, in which religious communities can help to keep families together, without explaining how they do so.

There is still evidence that candidates are insufficiently aware of the generic nature of Paper 1, and that, in addition to knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, values and traditions of at least one of the six major religions, they need to know about, and understand, key religious ideas, which are not specific to any one religion, and non-religious ideas and responses. This year, there were two questions (2 (b) and 5 (b)) requiring knowledge of non-religious ideas or attitudes, and one question (3 (b)) requiring knowledge of religious beliefs about the ultimate reality, which do not include reference to God. Many candidates simply ignored the word 'non-religious' in Questions 2 (b) and 5 (b), and outlined religious ideas/attitudes, based on the religion(s) they had studied. Again, with Question 3 (b), candidates ignored the part of the question about beliefs that do not include

reference to God, and outlined beliefs about the ultimate reality from the religion(s) they had studied. Centres should refer to pages 5-6 of the Teacher's Guide, which sets out the generic and religion-specific content of Paper 1, and also to pages 14-15, where there is discussion of how to approach a question requiring knowledge of non-religious ideas. The way some candidates approached these questions also underlines the importance of their taking time to read all the questions carefully, to make certain that they understand exactly what the questions are about and what information they need to provide.

Answers to Section E questions varied in quality. There were some very good evaluations, which, by using religious/moral argument and evidence/examples effectively, and coming to a personal conclusion, after giving a balanced account of alternative points of view, reached Level 4. However, other answers, although powerfully argued, and well supported by religious or moral evidence, made no reference whatsoever to another point of view. One factor seems to be that, because candidates feel passionately about their own point of view, they are unwilling to include opposing views in their answers. However, it is only by referring to another point of view in their responses to Section E questions that candidates can achieve the higher levels. It is essential that centres and candidates appreciate that, unless answers refer to another point of view (and also give an opinion and refer to at least one named religion), they cannot go beyond Level 2; and that, in order to go beyond Level 3, they must give a balanced account of alternative points of view and reach a personal conclusion. Centres should refer to the Teacher's Guide (pages 9, 16-17) for discussion of Section E questions and the way they are assessed, and to the specimen Section E answers (pages 26-27).

Section A

Questions 1 and 2 were equally popular. Generally, candidates who attempted Question 1 were able to give a definition of 'predestination' (part (a)), and had at least sound knowledge of the origin and cause of moral evil in the world (part (b)). Part (c) caused some difficulties, with candidates tending to focus, not on the key word definition on page 51 of the Specification ('(The belief that) nothing exists except matter'), but on 'materialism', in the sense of excessive concern with/pursuit of money and the things it can buy. Although this was a legitimate approach to the question, Section A is concerned with 'Human Beings and their destiny', not issues of wealth and poverty, which come under Section D ('Relationships with other people'). This approach also led candidates to focus on evaluating the rights and wrongs of materialism, instead of explaining why some people believe in it.

Most candidates were able to give at least a partially correct definition of 'resurrection' in part (a) of Question 2. As discussed above, part (b) was not answered well, due to candidates ignoring the word 'non-religious', and just discussing the issue of freewill and/or giving their own views about how it should, or should not, be exercised. Generally, responses to part (c) showed good understanding of the issues, and many were effectively supported by reference to religious teachings.

Section B

Question 3 was slightly less popular than Question 4. Several candidates were uncertain about the meaning of 'omnipotent' (part (a)), confusing it with 'omniscience' or 'omnipresence'. As discussed above, candidates did not really know what to do with part (b), and just outlined their own choice of religious beliefs about the ultimate reality. There were frequent references to God, and a lot of answers referred extensively and/or exclusively to Christian teaching. In part (c), many candidates ignored the word 'experience' and focused on the issue of conversion, and what there is to be said for and against it. Some answers also contained a lot of purely descriptive material.

Most candidates responding to Question 4 were able to give at least a partially correct definition of 'causation' (part (a)). In general, part (b) was answered well. Most candidates chose Christianity, and responses were well supported by reference to specific religious teachings. Responses to part (c) tended to ignore the important word 'relieve' in the question, and to focus on the inevitability, or value, of suffering, and how it can strengthen religious belief and commitment. Some of these responses would have been very good answers to a different question.

Section C

Question 5 was more popular than Question 6. Most definitions of 'remarriage' (part (a)) were accurate. In part (b), the word 'non-religious' was again ignored, with candidates writing about religious attitudes to adultery and/or discussing why it is wrong. Although there were some largely descriptive responses to part (c), there were also some thoughtful explanations, which, as well as covering practical forms of help, such as counselling and financial support, also explained how the example of successful religious families and religious teachings can bring home, and reinforce, the value of family life to families that are experiencing difficulties.

There were many accurate definitions of a 'reconstituted family' in Question 6 part (a). Most candidates who attempted this question chose Christianity for part (b), which was generally answered well, with responses referring to specific religious teachings. For the most part, candidates showed quite good understanding of the issues surrounding genetic engineering (part (c)), but tended to ignore the part of the question that refers to its use as a means of supporting successful conception.

Section D

Question 7 was slightly less popular than Question 8. Most candidates could define 'freedom of speech' (part (a)). Part (b) was answered quite well. Responses showed an interesting emphasis on the individual's right to choose his/her religion, and not to be coerced into accepting another. In part (c), candidates showed good understanding of the issues. They tended to begin by defining the terms, and then went on to explain why religious people should oppose both.

In general, answers to Question 8 part (a) were at least partially correct. In part (b), candidates were able to outline a wide range of practical forms of generosity. Although there were some good answers to part (c), a lot of candidates struggled with it, finding it hard to get beyond the basic reason that people have a right to

choose their religion. They tended to repeat this reason, without developing it, or introducing others.

Section E

Very few candidates answered Question 9.

Question 10 was quite popular with candidates, but, although there were some thoughtful responses, which considered both sides of the issue, others tended to take one side or the other, and argue for that, without referring to another point of view.

Question 11 was a very popular question, and there were very many candidates who felt strongly about the issue. While there were many well-argued and balanced evaluations, which achieved Levels 3 or 4, there were also powerfully expressed, but wholly one-sided, answers in support of the statement.

Question 12 was not a particularly popular choice, although responses tended to consider both sides of the issue.

Question 13 was chosen by few candidates. Those who did tended to argue that there is a role for religious celibacy.

A large number of candidates chose this Question 14, and, as with Question 11, while there were many well-argued and balanced evaluations, there were also powerfully expressed, but wholly one-sided, answers in support of the statement.

Question 15 was the least popular question in Section E.

Question 16 was quite a popular choice, and there were some well thought-out and balanced evaluations.

Paper 2: The Religious Community

General Comments

This is only the second Summer examination series iGCSE Religious Studies has been offered and there was an increase in the number of candidates entered for this specification.

Although the total entry was small there was a range of performance by the candidates, indicating that the paper was appropriate for the ability range for which it was intended. Overall, the candidates showed a good knowledge of the religions they had chosen to study. The majority of answers were written about Christianity and Islam.

Candidates generally performed better at part (a) of the questions which dealt with AO1 (recall, selection, organisation and use of knowledge) rather than the more challenging (b) parts which assessed AO2 (description, analysis, explanation).

Clearly there was a good knowledge of the religions by candidates but some candidates found it difficult to use this knowledge to then explain certain aspects of their chosen religion. The distinction between description and explanation needs to be emphasised by centres.

Component 3: Coursework

Coursework is the alternative option to written paper 2: The Religious Community. Coursework entries were received for the first time in Summer 2007, however the majority of candidates entered for this specification still select paper 2 rather than the coursework option.

The majority of candidates submitting coursework did not select the exemplar titles provided on page 7 of the specification, instead centres designed their own titles using the exemplars as a basis and following the guidance in the specification and teachers guide. This meant that the coursework titles were in line with the specification and adequately covered the assessment objectives.

The work was in general received by the submission and the information provided on the OPTEMS form was completed correctly. The coursework was presented well and authenticated by both candidates and teachers and there was adequate annotation to aid the moderation process.

Statistics

iGCSE Religious Studies (4425) Grade Boundaries

Option 1 (paper 1 & paper 2)

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall boundary mark	84	70	56	43	34	25	16	7

Option 2 (paper 1 & coursework)

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall boundary mark	81	68	55	42	33	24	16	8

Note: Grade Boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject depending on the demands of the question paper

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