

Examiners' Report November 2007

iGCSE

iGCSE Religious Studies (4425)

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Paper 1: Beliefs and Values

General Comments

The questions in Paper 1 are generic ones, which can be answered from the standpoint of one or more, of the six major religions, although there are four questions where candidates are asked to answer from the standpoint of only one chosen religion.

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 key words for the particular section; part (b) also tests AO1, requiring 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 their reasons for their opinion.

More able candidates showed adequate to very good knowledge, in relation to Christianity (in particular) and Islam. In Sections A-D, some candidates did not appear to have studied and learned the key words, and so did not achieve full marks for the part (a) questions. There were very pleasing answers to some of the part (b) questions, which showed excellent knowledge of the beliefs and teachings of the religions studied, and reached Level 4. However, less able candidates tended not to address the questions asked, and to include irrelevant material in their responses. In general, candidates fared less well with their part (c) responses. There were some very good explanations, which reached Level 4, but other candidates did not develop their explanations sufficiently to reach Level 3.

Once again, some candidates do not seem to be aware 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. Questions 3 (b), and 6(b) concerned non-religious ideas or responses, and answers to these questions were poor. Pages 5-6 of the Teacher's Guide set out the generic and religion-specific content of Paper 1 and pages 14-15, discuss how to answer a question requiring knowledge of non-religious ideas.

There were some excellent answers to the Section E questions, which gave a balanced account of alternative points of view, and reached a personal conclusion. However, other responses could not go above Level 2, because they dealt with only one point of view. As mentioned in previous reports, 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, to go beyond Level 3, they must give a balanced account of alternative points of view and reach a personal conclusion. The Teacher's Guide (pages 9, 16-17) discuss Section E questions and the way they are assessed, the specimen Section E answers (pages 26-27).

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

For Question 2, some candidates were able to give an accurate definition of 'immortality' in part (a). In part (b), candidates who chose Christianity and Islam showed good knowledge of their beliefs about human destiny. Overall, part (c) answers were weak. Some candidates did not know what 'sin' is, while others wrote about sin, rather than explaining why some people believe that it is the root cause of human wrongdoing, or failed to develop their explanations.

Section B

Questions 3 and 4 were equally popular. Generally for Question 3, candidates were not clear about the meaning of polytheism in part (a), and in part (b) did not address the specific issue of non-religious ideas about the meaning of life, but just wrote about the meaning of life. Most of the candidates who attempted this question did not know what causation is, and so did not achieve the highest marks.

In general, Question 4 was answered well. Part (a) was answered with commendable accuracy. Some candidates showed very extensive knowledge of Christian teachings about the sanctity of life. In general responses to part (c), did not grasp what the question required, or did not develop their explanations.

Section C

Questions 5 and 6 were equally popular. In general Question 5 part (a) answers were correct and in part (b) candidates showed good knowledge of Christian teachings about promiscuity, and were able to explain why religious people should support the rights of children in part (c).

In Question 6, candidates were unable to give a wholly accurate definition of 'genetic engineering' for part (a). However in part (b), candidates tended to write about changing relationships between the sexes, or changing attitudes to them, rather than about non-religious responses to these changing attitudes. In general for part (c) candidates wrote about family life in general, rather than explaining how different generations within the family have different responsibilities towards each other.

Section D

For Question 7, most candidates were able to answer part (a) correctly. Some answers to part (b) showed very good knowledge of Christian teachings about compassion, but other candidates did not know what compassion is. For part (c) candidates tended to focus on the word 'bias', and wrote about prejudice or discrimination, rather than gender bias, as the question required.

Section E

Question 9. There were responses which considered alternative points of view, and reached a personal conclusion. However, there were also well-argued, but wholly one-sided responses to this question, which could not go beyond Level 2, because they did not refer to another point of view.

Question 10. There were no responses seen to this question.

Question 11. There were some excellent responses, which considered alternative points of view, and reached a personal conclusion; other responses were strongly argued, but dealt with only one point of view.

Question 12. There were responses which considered alternative points of view, and reached a personal conclusion. However, other candidates agreed with the statement, and backed up their answers with religious and/or moral evidence, but did not refer to an alternative point of view.

Question 13. Responses to this question did not refer to another point of view.

Question 14. Answers to this question made use of religious and/or moral evidence, but did not refer to another point of view.

Question 15. Responses to this question made quite a strong case for the candidate's own point of view, but did not refer to an alternative one.

Question 16. There were no responses to this question.

Paper 2: The Religious Community

The question paper is based on the same model as previous papers, therefore the requirements and weightings of marks given for Assessment Objective 1 (knowledge) and Assessment Objective 2 (understanding) have not changed. A thorough knowledge and understanding of at least one chosen religion was required to achieve the higher marks. All the candidates entered for the November 2007 examination series chose to respond to questions regarding Christianity, Islam or Sikhism, no answers were seen in response to Hinduism or Buddhism. This continues the trend seen in previous examination series.

In general, lower scoring responses demonstrated a lack of knowledge about the chosen religion, meaning that answers did not progress beyond level 2 “Basic relevant knowledge presented within a limited structure”. In some questions candidates did not distinguish between knowledge and understanding when answering part (b). Therefore those candidates who provided detailed descriptions but who didn’t provide a sufficiently developed explanation were not able to achieve marks beyond level 2 for part (b).

Comments on Specific Questions

Below are comments on the questions where responses were seen.

Question 8

Responses to part (a) did not go beyond basic knowledge about the Sermon on the Mount. In part (b) explanation was provided but was not supported by enough evidence.

Question 9

Answers to part (b) were mainly descriptive and in general did not provide adequate explanation.

Question 16

Good accounts of the rituals associated with Id-ul-Fitr were provided for part (a) of this question. In part (b) candidates explained the importance of Id-ul-Adha well.

Question 18

Responses to part (a) of this question demonstrated a thorough knowledge of Islamic fasting.

Question 26

In part (b) of this question the phrase ‘rites of passage’ was misunderstood.

Question 27

Answers to part (b) of this question gave a good description but did not provide adequate explanation.

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

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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