

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

iGCSE

iGCSE Religious Studies (4425)

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Summer 2008

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Contents

| | | |
|----|----------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Paper 1: Beliefs and Values | 3 |
| 2. | Paper 2: The Religious Community | 7 |
| 3. | Statistics | 12 |

Paper 1: Beliefs and Values

General Comments

It was pleasing to note the further increase in the number of candidates taking IGCSE Religious Studies this summer. There were some outstanding scripts, and a range of performance from A* to E grade, indicating that the paper was appropriate for the ability range of the candidates for whom it was intended, and achieved satisfactory differentiation.

The Content of Paper 1

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, 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.

Sections A-D

Many candidates showed thorough knowledge of the topics studied and of religious teachings, particularly in Christianity and Islam. There was also pleasing evidence that centres had taken note of previous reports, and had ensured that candidates studied the key words for Sections A-D part (a) questions. There were many more accurate answers to these questions than in the past.

As in previous years, candidates generally fared better with part (b) than part (c) questions. In Sections C and D part (c) questions, in particular, candidates still tend not to develop their explanations, thus limiting their answers to Level 2. In both part (b) and part (c) responses, candidates (and this was not confined to weaker ones) still have a tendency to ignore, or to stray from, the question set, in order to write about religious teachings that they consider important.

Again (see the Examiners' reports for June and November 2007), it is necessary to remind centres that, as well as knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, values and traditions of at least one of the six major religions, candidates need to know about and understand key religious ideas which are not specific to any one religion, and non-religious ideas and responses. Question 4 (b) asked for a description of one non-religious attitude to euthanasia. However, very many candidates outlined the issue of euthanasia in general terms (perhaps with some reference to a non-religious attitude) and/or then referred to teachings about euthanasia from the religion they had studied to show why it is wrong. It is also important that centres and candidates appreciate the difference between 'describe' and 'outline' in Section A-E part (b) questions. Centres should refer to page 7 of the Teacher's Guide.

Section E

In Section E, although answers are often well supported by religious/moral argument, many responses still could not go beyond Level 2 because they covered only one point of view. This weakness was, perhaps, slightly less pronounced than previously, but there are still many candidates who, in their desire to give their own opinions on the issues, lose sight of the fact that, to go beyond Level 2, answers in this section must refer to another point of view (and also give an opinion and refer to at least one religion), and that, 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

Question 1 was far more popular than Question 2.

In **Question 1** - most candidates were able to earn at least one mark for part (a). There were some good responses to part (b), but some candidates explained why human beings are responsible for the planet, instead of outlining ways in which they can exercise their responsibility for it. In part (c), some candidates spent too much time describing divine judgement, rather than answering the question, which is to explain how it may affect people's beliefs about life after death.

Many candidates who attempted **Question 2** were able to answer part (a) accurately. In part (b), there was a tendency for candidates to outline the teachings of one religion about injustice (or justice), rather than outlining its teachings about human responsibility for injustice. Generally, part (c) was answered quite well.

Section B

Question 3 was more popular than Question 4.

Question 3

Most candidates gained at least one mark on part (a). Part (b) was generally answered quite well, with references to specific religious teachings. In part (c), there were some thoughtful and developed explanations, which reached Level 3 or even Level 4. However, some candidates did not address the actual question, about how the search for meaning and purpose in life may lead to, or support, belief in God, and simply listed reasons for believing in God.

Most candidates, who attempted **Question 4**, were able to define 'monotheism' accurately. Part (b) has been discussed above. Part (c) was generally quite well answered, with some developed explanations of why some people believe God cannot be benevolent.

Section C

Question 6 was far more popular than Question 5.

Question 5

Candidates were able to answer part (a) accurately. There were some pleasing responses to part (b), with organised outlines of differing religious attitudes to celibacy that reached Level 3. Part c) was also generally quite well answered.

Question 6

Most candidates were able to gain at least one mark on part (a). Generally, part (b) was answered well, with references to specific religious teachings. In 6 (c), many candidates stated reasons why some people decide not to have children, but did not develop these into explanations which could reach the higher levels.

Section D

Question 8 was far more popular than Question 7.

Question 7

Candidates who chose this question were generally able to give an example of discrimination (part (a)). 7 (b) caused difficulty, as many candidates obviously did not know what an inter-faith relationship is, despite the fact that 'Inter-faith relationships' is a sub-section of Section D in the specification. In 7 (c) candidates stated reasons why some religious people oppose equal rights for women, but did not develop these into explanations which could reach the higher levels.

Question 8

Candidates were able to define 'charity' accurately (part (a)). Part (b) was generally answered well, with references to specific religious teachings. In 8 (c), explanations were not developed, and some candidates focused on the dangers and difficulties of free speech, rather than why both religious and non-religious people should support it.

Section E

In Section E, Questions 13, 14 and 15 were the most popular questions.

Question 9

This was a fairly popular choice. Generally, candidates did not agree that God is the real cause of moral evil, and supported their view(s) with religious/moral evidence, but many failed to consider an alternative point of view.

Question 10

Another quite popular choice, with candidates arguing that the universe does have a purpose, and supporting their view(s) with religious/moral evidence, but not referring to an alternative view.

Question 11

Few candidates attempted this question, but those who did supported their view(s) with religious/moral evidence, and, in general, did refer to another point of view.

Question 12

Few candidates attempted this question, and some of those who did confused 'agnosticism' and 'atheism', despite both being key words in the specification.

Question 13

This was the most popular Section E question. Generally, candidates supported their view(s) with religious/moral evidence, and some responses referred to an alternative view, but there were many one-sided answers.

Question 14

This question was also very popular. Again, candidates used religious/moral evidence, but answers tended to be one-sided.

Question 15

Another popular choice, with use of religious/moral evidence, and some candidates balancing the consequences of predestination (and the obligations of the rich to the poor) against people improving their economic circumstances through individual effort.

Question 16

Chosen by few candidates, but there were some balanced responses, supported by religious argument and evidence.

Paper 2: The Religious Community

General Comments

There was an encouraging increase in the number of candidates opting for IGCSE Religious Studies this year. Those candidates produced a wide range of results and some of the scripts were outstanding in quality. This suggested that the tasks were appropriate for the ability range of the candidates for whom it was intended.

The Content of Paper 2

There are six sections in Paper 2, each containing five questions which are specific to one of six major religions. Candidates are required to answer two questions and may answer on the basis of a study of either one or two of these faiths. Each question is divided into two parts which assess the candidate's knowledge in part "a" (AO1) and understanding in part "b" (AO2). The purpose of Paper 2 is to assess knowledge and understanding of faith, practice and tradition in the religious communities of one or two of six world religions.

Section 1 - Buddhism

No candidate attempted questions from this section.

Section 2 - Christianity

This was a popular section and there was a wide range of marks gained by candidates here. As has been the case in previous years, candidates generally performed better on part "a" rather than part "b".

Question 6

This was a popular question. Part "a" was answered well and candidates showed a pleasing knowledge of a wide variety of traditions from different Christian denominations. However candidates should be reminded that to reach level 4, they are required to have an answer with a coherent structure - one or two candidates lost marks here by simply presenting lists of facts which (although accurate) could not really be described as a "coherent structure".

Question 7

This was a less successfully answered question. In particular, several candidates lost marks here because they had clearly misunderstood what was meant by "authority" and "conscience". This should serve as a further reminder to candidates that questions should be read and thoroughly understood before they are attempted.

Question 8

This was an unpopular question which was only answered by a few candidates. Whilst answers showed a good general knowledge of Jesus' teaching, the specific knowledge of teachings in the Sermon on the Mount was less obvious. Unusually for the paper as a whole, part b was answered more successfully than part a in this question.

Question 9

This was a popular and generally well answered question. All candidates showed an impressive knowledge of the events surrounding the Resurrection, although in part b, a few candidates lost marks by writing about Jesus' miracles in general rather than one healing miracle as specified in the question.

Question 10

Another popular and generally well answered question. As expected, a wide range of different places of worship were outlined in part a. It was pleasing to note that candidates did succeed in outlining significant differences (based on differences in faith and practice in the community) rather than accidental or less profound differences in design. All the candidates showed that they knew the significance of Bethlehem as a place of Christian pilgrimage, although some would have gained more marks by developing their answers beyond a simple statement that Bethlehem was Jesus' birthplace.

Section 3 - Hinduism

As in previous sessions, this section was less popular than others although those candidates that did choose to answer these questions did so effectively.

Question 11

There were some pleasing answers to this question which showed a clear knowledge and understanding of the significance of images in Hinduism.

Question 12

No candidates attempted this question.

Question 13

No candidates attempted this question.

Question 14

No candidates attempted this question.

Question 15 - In parts a and b, candidates showed a clear understanding of the place of the temple in Hinduism. No candidate chose to write about a specific temple known to them (although this would have been acceptable) , candidates chose instead, to write generic accounts of the nature and purpose of temples in Hinduism.

Section 4 - Islam

As with section 2, section 4 was a very popular section for candidates. There was a wide range of marks obtained by candidates here.

Question 16

Most candidates scored well on part a here - giving a good account of different traditions and practices associated with marriage in Islam. Part b was answered less successfully with some candidates simply describing the ceremonies referred to in the question rather than explaining their significance.

Question 17

This was one of the most successfully answered questions on the paper. All candidates showed a good knowledge of the principles of ijma and qiyas, and clearly understood the importance of the Shar'iah in Islam.

Question 18

As with question 17, there were some very good answers here, showing that most candidates had a good knowledge and understanding of haram and zakah. However some candidates lost marks in part a by reducing their answer to a simple list of foodstuffs which are haram (as has been stated before, a list cannot be described as being a "coherent structure").

Question 19

This was a popular and straightforward question which was generally answered well. Candidates showed a good knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the Prophet's departure from Makkah. However, as in other questions, some candidates lost marks in part b by giving an account of events which took place at Madinah rather than explaining its significance.

Question 20 -

Generally a very well answered question with candidates showing familiarity with the interior features of Mosques and the significance of practices associated with the hajj.

Section 5 - Judaism

This was a less popular section on this year's exam. Those candidates that did choose to answer questions from this section also chose to answer a question from a different section (In general, the vast majority of candidates concentrate on one rather than two religions).

Question 21

No candidates attempted this question.

Question 22

No candidates attempted this question.

Question 23

No candidates attempted this question.

Question 24

Part a was answered very successfully here with all candidates showing a good knowledge of the events surrounding the birth of Moses. Part b was less successfully answered and some candidates would have gained marks by accompanying their general descriptions of the prophets with a more explicit account of why they were important.

Question 25

This was the more successful of the two questions attempted in this section. Candidates showed a pleasing knowledge, not only of the symbols contained in a synagogue, but also a knowledge of which specific symbols reflect the authority of the Almighty.

Section 6

Sikhism

As with Section 5, this was a less popular section although it was answered effectively.

Question 26

No candidates attempted this question.

Question 27

No candidates attempted this question.

Question 28

This was a successfully answered question although as in previous questions, answers to part a were generally stronger than to part b (the tendency towards description rather than explanation in answering b meant that some candidates lost marks here).

Question 29

All candidates showed a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the contribution of Guru Gobind Singh towards the development of Sikhism. Equally in part b, all answers showed a good understanding of the role of the Gurus in Sikhism.

Question 30 - No candidates attempted this question.

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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