

Examiners' Report

November 2009

IGCSE

IGCSE Religious Studies (4425) Paper 01

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Paper 1: Beliefs and Values

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 reasons for their opinion.

General Comments

There were some excellent scripts, which contained good responses to questions in all sections of the paper. However, there is still a tendency, which was noted in the May examination, for some responses to part (b) and (c) not to answer the question set. It is essential that candidates read each question carefully, and then ensure that the whole of the answer they give relates to it.

Sections A - D

In part (a) questions, there was evidence that knowledge of the key words continues to improve. There were many accurate or partially accurate responses to those questions, even from candidates whose performance was not good in other parts of the paper.

In part (b) questions, many candidates showed thorough knowledge of their chosen topics, particularly from the perspectives of Christianity and Islam, although they occasionally found it difficult for them to reach the higher levels.

In part (c), although there were responses of a very high standard, there was also evidence that some candidates still find it difficult to provide explanations, not outlines or descriptions, in response to the 'explain why' or 'explain how' questions. There is also still a tendency for explanations not to be sufficiently developed to reach the higher levels. Centres should refer to pages 7, 15-16 and 23 - 25 of the Teacher's Guide, which cover Sections A - D part (c) questions, and ensure that their students understand how to approach these questions.

The specification requires knowledge/understanding of, and the ability to evaluate, non-religious viewpoints (see page 9 of the Specification and page 2 of the Teacher's Guide). Two questions (4 (b) and 5 (b)) referred specifically to the ideas or attitudes of non-religious people. The responses to these questions indicate that many candidates are not aware that, as with religious people, there is no one attitude/response to issues that is typical of all non-religious people. Centres should ensure that students appreciate that non-religious beliefs and values are diverse and include a range of responses to fundamental questions of life.

Two questions (2 (b) and 7 (b)) asked for two differing ideas or attitudes. However, candidates did not always refer to two differing ideas or attitudes, but outlined ones which were (very) similar. The published mark scheme for these two questions indicate the type of answers expected.

Section E

In **Section E**, there were some very good, balanced responses, which considered more than one point of view, and which reached Levels 3 and 4.

However, there were also answers which were limited to a maximum of Level 2, due to not referring to an alternative view. Another reason why candidates did not go beyond level 2 was because they did not refer to at least one named religion. There were also responses which did not appreciate the difference between opinions supported by reasons and assertion. Centres should refer to pages 9, 16 - 17 and 26 -27 of the Teacher's Guide, which cover Section E questions, and ensure that their students are aware of the level descriptors for these questions (page 9 of the Teacher's Guide), and, in particular, of the importance of giving reasons for their opinions and referring to an alternative point of view.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Question 1. 1(a) was quite well answered. In 1(b), some candidates discussed moral evil in general, rather than outlining its causes, while not all candidates were clear about the difference between moral and natural evil. There were some good responses to 1(c), although there was occasional confusion between 'immortality' and 'immorality'.

Question 2. 2(a) was generally answered well. 2(b) caused some difficulty, with quite a few candidates answering the question 'how far should human beings exercise their freewill', rather than the question set. These candidates tended to produce evaluative responses, which did not outline differing ideas about how far human beings can exercise freewill. There were some well developed explanations in response to 2(c), which referred to religious teachings.

Section B

Question 3. 3(a) was answered well. There were some good answers to 3(b) from the perspectives of Christianity and Islam. In 3(c), candidates did not always address the specific issue of the appearance of design in the world, but fell back on outlining teachings about creation.

Question 4. Many answers to 4(a) were only partially correct. In 4(b), there was a tendency towards the view that there is only one non-religious idea: that life lacks meaning/purpose. There were some good explanations in response to 4(c), but also some confusion of monotheism with religious exclusivism.

Section C

Question 5. 5(a) Many candidates did not know the difference between adultery, pre-marital sex and promiscuity. In 5(b), candidates often did not recognise the possibility that there might be more than one non-religious attitude to the breakdown of marriage. There were some developed explanations in response to 5(c), which referred to specific religious teachings.

Question 6. 6(a) was generally answered well. Some candidates interpreted 6(b) as a question about the purpose(s) of having different genders, rather than the purposes of human sexuality. A lot of answers to 6(c) were not developed explanations, and therefore could not reach the higher levels.

Section D.

Question 7. 7(a) was quite well answered. In 7(b), candidates did not always outline differing attitudes or more than one attitude. Answers to 7(c) often did not get beyond Level 2, due to failure to develop explanations.

Question 8. 8 (a) was fairly well answered. For 8(b), the tendency was to outline (briefly) examples of practical generosity, rather than to describe one example, as required by the question. In 8(c), answers tended to be limited by undeveloped explanations.

Section E

Question 9. A fairly popular choice, with some balanced answers, but most of which were one-sided.

Question 10. Quite a popular question, and there were some good evaluations which drew on religious teachings and scientific evidence.

Question 11. Few candidates chose this question, and those doing so tended to consider only their own point of view.

Question 12. This question was not chosen by many candidates, and answers tended to disagree with the statement, without considering an alternative.

Question 13. Responses to this very popular question included coherent and reasoned evaluations, with balanced accounts of alternative points of view, which reached Level 4, but also some one-sided answers, which could not go beyond Level 2, due to not considering another point of view.

Question 14. This quite popular question also attracted balanced accounts of alternative points of view, which reached the higher levels, but also responses which could not go beyond Level 2, as they did not take account of another point of view.

Question 15. A fairly popular question, which received both balanced and one-sided responses.

Question 16. Also a fairly popular question, which received both balanced and one-sided responses.

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 & paper 3)

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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