

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/12

Paper 1

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated an impressive level of knowledge and understanding. Most candidates completed the required number of questions. Many candidates wrote very full answers to all the questions.

It is important for candidates to be clear about details from each religion and not confuse them, for example features of a mosque should not feature in an answer on a synagogue and the role of a Rabbi should not be confused with that of an Imam.

It appears that some candidates have knowledge of all three religions. Whilst this gives the candidates a wide understanding of these world faiths, depth was sometimes missing from the responses.

Comments on specific questions

Section A - Christianity

This was a popular section where candidates were able to show a good knowledge of this world religion through its main teachings and in some pertinent ways through local practices.

Question 1

- (a) (i) Most candidates were able to choose four things from the Apostles' Creed in their response to this question. There was some confusion of general statements of faith with those found in the Creed itself.
- (ii) Candidates who read this question carefully responded with three ways in which the Bible can be used for worship, citing sacramental worship, Bible services or in some cases the words put to music as hymns. This was not a question in which the variety of ways in which the Bible may be studied was required.
- (b) Most candidates were able to write about a good range of ways in which the Bible is used to find guidance in life, particularly when it comes to making moral decisions. Some used rules found in the earlier parts of the Old Testament while others focused their exploration on the beatitudes. Some started by explaining problems and then chose parts of the Bible where they thought solutions could be found.
- (c) Many candidates took the view that since the New Testament contains the teachings and actions of Jesus it must be more important than the Old Testament. However a significant number demonstrated an understanding of the need for the Old Testament as a forerunner of the New and therefore its importance in the interpretation of the later Testament.

Question 2

- (a) (i) Generally candidates had a good idea of what this question was asking and made use of the stimulus material in their responses. This was not a question asking for general answers about what churches could do to help families.
- (ii) This was one of those questions where, as well as demonstrating a sound understanding of the main weekly acts of worship in Christianity candidates were also able to add colour to their responses by describing local customs.
- (b) Candidates delivered a variety of responses to this questions going from obeying some church rules by weekly observance, through the witness of people gathering together to the support that can be found by a weekly meeting and sharing of faith practices.
- (c) Candidates produced high quality answers from both sides of the spectrum on this question. Some candidates focused on the intimate nature of private worship and its part in a developing relationship with God, whilst other candidates used some of the ideas from part **b**, developing the ideas of witness and support.

Section B - Islam

Question 3

- (a) (i) Most candidates demonstrated a good grasp of the preparation for prayer practiced by Muslims. However the different parts of wudu were not accepted as three different answers.
- (ii) Most found it easy to give four features of a mosque. A few candidates confused some features of a synagogue with that of a mosque.
- (b) Again those who understood which features belonged to a mosque were able to give a good account of why they were important: for example the minaret in terms of the call to prayer, the dome was usually well described in terms of the symbol of the universe created and ruled over by Allah.
- (c) There was a good understanding of the issues involved in assessing whether or not Muslims need a building in order to practice their religion. The best responses were able to see the value in both approaches: the ability to worship Allah wherever a believer is and the witness and community support found in a building.

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates had a good idea of the process by which Muhammad (pbuh) received the first revelation and gave a good account of the cave and the problems raised by his inability to read. They were also able to express the physical reaction of Muhammad (pbuh) during his meeting with Jibril. Candidates did not need to write out the verses which were revealed.
- (b) Most candidates were able to put Muhammad (pbuh) into the context of the Aramaic prophets and explain that he as the last and most important of the prophets taught the last revelation from Allah and was thus considered to be the 'Seal of the Prophets'.
- (c) The evangelical nature of Islam was well expressed in responses to this question. Candidates were able to give a good range of reasons as to why the teachings of the Qur'an are capable of being applied to all peoples and in all places. Some candidates were also able to explore by way of contrast the extent to which other kinds of believers may find faith away from this final revelation given to Muhammad (pbuh).

Section C - Judaism

Question 5

- (a) (i) On the whole candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the nature and use of a mezuzah, speaking of its placement on the doorposts in a Jewish home and containing the Shema. Others were quite vague about the scriptural text and some thought it was an artefact in a synagogue.
- (ii) Here again, those candidates who understood what a synagogue is had little trouble in listing four features.
- (b) Candidates were often confused about the differing roles of the Rabbi and the Chazan. Those who did understand the two roles did not always answer the part of the question which asked them to explain their importance to a Jewish community.
- (c) There was plenty of material explored by candidates on both sides of this supposed dichotomy. Most candidates in fact recognised that there were many good arguments to be put for the practices of Judaism being equally important in the home and the synagogue.

Question 6

- (a) (i) Most candidates were able to give a good account of the cleaning of a Jewish home and the removal of yeast in preparation of a home for the celebration of Passover. Some responses tended to focus on preparing the Seder meal.
- (ii) Many were able to name five of the symbolic foods eaten at Passover.
- (b) Those who understood the story of the slavery in Egypt and the freedom brought about by the Passover event gave good accounts both of the symbolism contained in the food and the meaning of the various glasses of wine drunk during the meal.
- (c) Candidates, in their responses, made good use of a range of festivals which arguably help Jews to understand their religion. The best responses went beyond just describing what happens at these festivals and demonstrated how Jews can be expected to learn from them.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/13

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Section C - Judaism

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- (b) Those who understood the story of the slavery in Egypt and the freedom brought about by the Passover event gave good accounts both of the symbolism contained in the food and the meaning of the various glasses of wine drunk during the meal.
- (c) Candidates, in their responses, made good use of a range of festivals which arguably help Jews to understand their religion. The best responses went beyond just describing what happens at these festivals and demonstrated how Jews can be expected to learn from them.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/22

Paper 2

General comments

The candidate entry covered a wide range of ability and achievement. The majority of candidates coped well with the requirements of the paper and were able to respond to the demands of the different assessment objectives. Most candidates understood that it was only necessary to answer on two religions and to answer two questions from two sections of the paper. A small number of candidates answered questions on all three religions and so had failed to understand the rubric requirements. For the most parts, answers were well organised and coherently expressed with a good use of specialist vocabulary and religious terms.

Parts **(a)** and **(b)** of questions were usually the most strongly answered elements. The majority of candidates also understood that in part **(c)** questions, the highest level is obtained by discussing different points of view and specifically referring to a particular religion. There were some candidates who, although they argued strongly and supported their views with evidence, failed to evaluate other points of view on the topic or they did not refer to a specified religion.

Comments on specific questions

Section A Christianity

Question 1

- (a)** There were some excellent and very good answers to this question which showed an attention to detail. Most candidates who chose this question were able to provide a reasonable description of a Christian funeral, however, in a number of answers, the worship element of a funeral service was often omitted or confined to a description of prayers being said at the graveside. The question did not ask for a description of mourning customs or emotional responses to a death. Some candidates put too much focus on describing the period before the funeral and wrote only a few words about the funeral itself.
- (b)** Good answers linked Christian beliefs about resurrection with the death and resurrection of Jesus and the majority of answers showed a thoughtful awareness of Christian beliefs about personal accountability and life after death.
- (c)** The best answers to this question explored more than one point of view on the attitude Christians might have towards death. However, a large number of candidates asserted that there could be only one view e.g. that Christians should not be afraid of death and, in most cases this argument was well supported and clearly made but the candidates did not consider any other view.

Question 2

- (a)** Generally, the performance on this question was not commensurate with that on other part **(a)** questions. Candidates set out the Biblical teaching on the roles and responsibilities of men and women and describe how the teaching might be set out today. Development of the teaching since Biblical times e.g. Adam and Eve might have been included.
- (b)** This question was very well answered by the majority of candidates who chose **Question 2**. The performance was usually far better than on part **(a)**. Marriage and family life, as an essential part of Christian life, appeared to be clearly understood and explanations were detailed and thoughtful. The best answers included reference to relationships between both husband and wife and parents and children.

- (c) This evaluation question gave candidates the opportunity to assess the points of knowledge and understanding shown in part (a) and (b) answers and to consider some of the major changes in Christian practice concerning equality between men and women. Some candidates were prepared to discuss this issue and consider the evidence for and against equality according to different Christian views. Others appeared to reiterate facts on the roles of men and women already quoted in part (a) or (b) and the answers lacked discussion or analysis.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates made a competent attempt to answer this question. However, some candidates did not notice that the question asked for a description of only one place of pilgrimage and they listed five or six with some sketchy details. A description of the site and what acts might be carried out there was expected.
- (b) This question was answered well. The purpose and benefits of carrying out pilgrimage were often comprehensively explained.
- (c) Many candidates took this opportunity to support their arguments in favour of the statement with an explanation of the value of the Christian belief about the omnipresence of God. They were also able to balance the discussion and include an evaluation of other views about the benefits of pilgrimage. This was one of the best answered part (c) questions on the paper.

Section B Islam

Question 4

- (a) There was an overall good performance on this question. The birth ceremonies were well known. Other candidates who attempted this question gained at least a satisfactory level and there were only a few weak answers.
- (b) This question asked about the importance to Muslims of the ceremonies at the beginning of a baby's life. A minority of candidates took the straightforward route of explaining the importance of each of the ceremonies described in part (a). Those who did so usually gained a high level. Many answers were only vague generalisations about the importance of children.
- (c) The performance on this part of the question was widely varied. The best answers discussed the distinctive features of the Muslim ummah and compared its distinctive concept with the concept of a universal community in other religions e.g. Christianity or Judaism. Some candidates who took this approach gave excellent answers. The question did not ask for a comparison of the ummah with the pillars of Islam or other Muslim practices. To gain the higher levels candidates needed to include evaluation, not just description.

Question 5

- (a) Very good knowledge of the practice of Salah was shown by a large number of candidates. Answers needed to be fully comprehensive in detail to gain the top level.
- (b) The majority of candidates also had a good understanding of the importance of Salah and answers showed awareness of the benefits to the individual and the community of ritualised prayer at set times and also why performing Salah is a demonstration of faith. Some of the weaker answers showed some understanding but were repetitive concentrating on only one aspect of Salah.
- (c) Many candidates appeared to enjoy the challenge of answering this question. To varying degrees, the best answers focused on arguments about the interdependence of all Five Pillars, whilst still acknowledging the value of Salah. Weaker answers compared Salah to only one other Pillar e.g. Zakat, however, at this level there were still some satisfactory answers that argued and evaluated which might be the more important of the two.

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates had a good knowledge of the common elements of Muslim marriage ceremonies. However, these were sometimes confused with details of either a Christian or Jewish ceremony. Some answers contained religious terms and details of actions from another religious tradition. In these cases, Examiners credited what was relevant to the question.
- (b) Some candidates described some aspects of traditional teaching about women in Islam but answers often lacked sufficient explanation of why the teachings are considered important and valued by Muslims. Weaker answers were inaccurate and often focused only on modesty or female dress.
- (c) There were some perceptive evaluations about the different roles of men and women in Islam and different views about traditional and modern roles were also argued. Some candidate who had performed poorly on (a) and (b) gave only brief and vague descriptions of the different roles with no attempt at evaluation.

Section C Judaism

Question 7

- (a) Most candidates showed good knowledge of the Jewish teaching on love and concern for others and how that is practically translated into teaching on Tzedaka and charitable giving. There were some thoughtful answers. Some candidates limited their answer to a description of Biblical teaching 'love one another' or 'Do unto others...' etc. and confused Jewish and Christian teaching on putting this into practice.
- (b) Candidates who demonstrated good, accurate knowledge in part (a) also showed good understanding of how excess wealth might be used to help the poor, and how, in Jewish homes, the children are encouraged to give to charity and the concept of 'kind actions' puts the teachings into practice in everyday life. Some candidates, who had only written briefly in part (a), were able to gain some credit here for a general understanding of charitable works but these answers demonstrated very little specific knowledge of Judaism.
- (c) In this evaluation, some candidates were able to offer a discussion with a balance of views, showing the need to respond to the suffering in one's own community but also showing an awareness of the duty to respond to worldwide situations or the wider Jewish community. Some more limited answers argued strongly in favour of the local community but did not fully explore any alternative view. Answers needed to refer to Judaism.

Question 8

- (a) There were some very good answers describing the kashrut food laws. Most had good knowledge of the categories and types of foods subjected to these laws.
- (b) Commensurate with the knowledge shown in part (a) candidates showed understanding of the importance of the food laws in Judaism and the different ways they might be interpreted and practised according to the degree of orthodoxy or progressive thought among Jews.
- (c) Also emphasising the fact that this was a popular topic for a question on Judaism, the majority of candidates discussed different views about the relevance of the food laws to Jewish life today.

Question 9

- (a)** It was important not to confuse Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah for this question. The best answers displayed knowledge of the fasting ritual and all day synagogue attendance and its purpose. However, many answers combined some knowledge of this with the customs carried out at New Year and appeared to be unaware that they are separate days with entirely different rituals.
- (b)** Similarly, candidates who displayed confusion in part **(a)** continued this in part **(b)** explaining the importance of New Year rather than the importance of Yom Kippur e.g. 24 hour spent atoning for sins. Some candidates gained credit for relevant linking of the two as important Holy Days but the best answers concentrated on the importance of Yom Kippur, which provided plenty of scope.
- (c)** This question gave all candidates the opportunity to assess the importance of repentance to a religious believer. Candidates needed to relate their answer to Judaism. Candidates who kept the focus of the question in mind and made valid arguments achieved the top levels.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/23

Paper 2

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