

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Paper 0490/11

Paper 1

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) (i) This question was well answered in general with candidates demonstrating a good understanding of the kinds of literature used in the Bible. Some candidates listed 'writings' as a type of literature, which is not specific enough.
- (ii) This question was well answered by candidates of all abilities. Occasionally candidates focused on only the Old or New Testament in general rather than briefly describing both book's content. Some candidates wrote quite long essays in response to this question which left them with less time to respond to all the other questions.
- (b) There were a significant number of good answers to this question which included the Bible being the word of God, moral guidance, teaching others. A few very good responses explored the place of the Bible in Christian liturgies.
- (c) Many answers gave a good balance between why the Bible is meant only for Christians and why it is meant for everyone. Very few answers were one sided. Common responses included that Jesus was sent to bring the good news to everyone and that the Bible contains universal values that other religions and non-religious people share. Arguments in favour of the Bible being a solely Christian book usually included the need for belief to fully appreciate what is said, particularly in the New Testament.

### Question 2

- (a) (i) Most answers tended to mention Mary Magdalene and the tomb or angel. Some candidates confused Mary mother of James with Mary the mother of Jesus, who did not go to the tomb. A few, but significant few, confused the resurrection with the Ascension.
- (ii) There were some very good answers for this question. Weaker answers included confusion about which days were actually in Holy Week. Easter Sunday, Ash Wednesday and Shrove Tuesday are not in Holy Week.
- (b) The idea of saving mankind/forgiveness, salvation, and prophesy commonly occurred in many answers. Very good answers described how the crucifixion brought people closer to God and that the veil in the Temple/Holy of Holies was torn.
- (c) Most candidates answered this well. Most answers were balanced with a for/against answer which discussed how churches should be modest because Jesus was, costly decorations were distracting or because the money could be used for the poor. Arguments in favour of churches being highly decorated normally concentrated on honouring God and keeping his house clean or that decorations would attract people to the church so that they could enjoy the decorations.

### Question 3

- (a) (i) Many answers included Ramadan and fasting. Fewer mentioned thanking God, or completing one of the Five Pillars.
- (ii) This answer was well answered with many candidates mentioning Zakah, prayers in the mosque and new clothes.

- (b) Many answers focused on the community aspect of festivals, with some good descriptions of what takes place at each Id. Family was often mentioned and that festivals strengthened family bonds and taught children about the history of their religion. Weaker responses tended to see historical events as festivals rather than focusing on the two that are actually celebrated.
- (c) Many answers were good and balanced with a for/against answer. Most answers understood that the Ummah is worldwide and that there are mosques in most countries. Many answers also understood that it could be difficult being Muslim in a non-Muslim country because work places may not understand Sawm or the need for regular prayers during the day. Some very good answers mentioned how being a Muslim in a non-Muslim country could strengthen faith because Muslim countries had Shariah and a system set up around Islam which would not challenge Muslims and would be part of daily life whereas Muslims in non-Muslim countries showed extra commitment to their religion.

#### Question 4

- (a) (i) This question posed no problems for candidates with the naming ceremony, shaving the hair and adhan commonly mentioned.
- (ii) Most answers were good with discussion of the family, Imam and reading of the Qur'an.
- (b) Candidates often focused on children as a gift from God. Some candidates discussed the roles of the parents in the family with some showing how these roles have been changing in modern society. Very few answers discussed the extended family or emphasised the role of the mother (as shown in the Qur'an).
- (c) A significant number of candidates treated this question in a one sided way often focusing on the family as the most important. Answers often mentioned the family as the foundation of the community. Good answers showed how both family and community are foundations for each other and cannot be separated. A few candidates discussed family as being more important for new converts because they did not know the community.

#### Question 5

- (a) (i) Most candidates mentioned the Shema and that it was a box. Fewer answers also mentioned that it was a scroll/written on scrolls. Many also described where it might be placed or need to be placed in a Jewish home which meant they often repeated themselves in **part (ii)**.
- (ii) Candidates generally understood the use of the mezuzah in the home. As a reminder of God in the lives of the family or as a reminder to pray were common responses. Some candidates mixed up mezuzah with menorah.
- (b) Stronger answers used examples to support the explanation of how objects could strengthen faith.
- (c) This question was well understood and generally elicited well balanced responses. Candidates often discussed Shabbat/Sukkot as important in the home and why these events are seen as important. The synagogue services were used to demonstrate the importance of community; Bar/Bat Mitzvah and funerals were often discussed as important aspects that take place outside the home. Sometimes activities such as Bar Mitzvah were described as taking place in the home.

#### Question 6

- (a) (i) Many responses mentioned the lighting of the candles and prayer. Some answers focused too much on the preparation for Shabbat rather than the ceremony that welcomes Shabbat.
- (ii) Some candidates discussed prayer/blessing in the closing ceremony of Shabbat without mentioning the other aspects.
- (b) This question was answered well with many candidates discussing the creation of the world, the Ten Commandments and family time.
- (c) Some candidates answered this question with a one-sided answer. Some candidates wrote about the importance of Shabbat which was more relevant for **part (b)**. Fewer responses gave good

arguments in favour of how Judaism could survive without Shabbat. Good answers mentioned the many festivals that occur throughout the year and the presence of the synagogue as a focal point of the community. Weaker answers discussed Judaism during the holocaust as a counter argument and how Judaism continued after it.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Paper 0490/12

Paper 1

## Comments on Specific Questions

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- (ii) This question was well answered by candidates of all abilities. Occasionally candidates focused on only the Old or New Testament in general rather than briefly describing both book's content. Some candidates wrote quite long essays in response to this question which left them with less time to respond to all the other questions.
- (b) There were a significant number of good answers to this question which included the Bible being the word of God, moral guidance, teaching others. A few very good responses explored the place of the Bible in Christian liturgies.
- (c) Many answers gave a good balance between why the Bible is meant only for Christians and why it is meant for everyone. Very few answers were one sided. Common responses included that Jesus was sent to bring the good news to everyone and that the Bible contains universal values that other religions and non-religious people share. Arguments in favour of the Bible being a solely Christian book usually included the need for belief to fully appreciate what is said, particularly in the New Testament.

### Question 2

- (a) (i) Most answers tended to mention Mary Magdalene and the tomb or angel. Some candidates confused Mary mother of James with Mary the mother of Jesus, who did not go to the tomb. A few, but significant few, confused the resurrection with the Ascension.
- (ii) There were some very good answers for this question. Weaker answers included confusion about which days were actually in Holy Week. Easter Sunday, Ash Wednesday and Shrove Tuesday are not in Holy Week.
- (b) The idea of saving mankind/forgiveness, salvation, and prophesy commonly occurred in many answers. Very good answers described how the crucifixion brought people closer to God and that the veil in the Temple/Holy of Holies was torn.
- (c) Most candidates answered this well. Most answers were balanced with a for/against answer which discussed how churches should be modest because Jesus was, costly decorations were distracting or because the money could be used for the poor. Arguments in favour of churches being highly decorated normally concentrated on honouring God and keeping his house clean or that decorations would attract people to the church so that they could enjoy the decorations.

### Question 3

- (a) (i) Many answers included Ramadan and fasting. Fewer mentioned thanking God, or completing one of the Five Pillars.
- (ii) This answer was well answered with many candidates mentioning Zakah, prayers in the mosque and new clothes.

- (b) Many answers focused on the community aspect of festivals, with some good descriptions of what takes place at each Id. Family was often mentioned and that festivals strengthened family bonds and taught children about the history of their religion. Weaker responses tended to see historical events as festivals rather than focusing on the two that are actually celebrated.
- (c) Many answers were good and balanced with a for/against answer. Most answers understood that the Ummah is worldwide and that there are mosques in most countries. Many answers also understood that it could be difficult being Muslim in a non-Muslim country because work places may not understand Sawm or the need for regular prayers during the day. Some very good answers mentioned how being a Muslim in a non-Muslim country could strengthen faith because Muslim countries had Shariah and a system set up around Islam which would not challenge Muslims and would be part of daily life whereas Muslims in non-Muslim countries showed extra commitment to their religion.

#### Question 4

- (a) (i) This question posed no problems for candidates with the naming ceremony, shaving the hair and adhan commonly mentioned.
- (ii) Most answers were good with discussion of the family, Imam and reading of the Qur'an.
- (b) Candidates often focused on children as a gift from God. Some candidates discussed the roles of the parents in the family with some showing how these roles have been changing in modern society. Very few answers discussed the extended family or emphasised the role of the mother (as shown in the Qur'an).
- (c) A significant number of candidates treated this question in a one sided way often focusing on the family as the most important. Answers often mentioned the family as the foundation of the community. Good answers showed how both family and community are foundations for each other and cannot be separated. A few candidates discussed family as being more important for new converts because they did not know the community.

#### Question 5

- (a) (i) Most candidates mentioned the Shema and that it was a box. Fewer answers also mentioned that it was a scroll/written on scrolls. Many also described where it might be placed or need to be placed in a Jewish home which meant they often repeated themselves in **part (ii)**.
- (ii) Candidates generally understood the use of the mezuzah in the home. As a reminder of God in the lives of the family or as a reminder to pray were common responses. Some candidates mixed up mezuzah with menorah.
- (b) Stronger answers used examples to support the explanation of how objects could strengthen faith.
- (c) This question was well understood and generally elicited well balanced responses. Candidates often discussed Shabbat/Sukkot as important in the home and why these events are seen as important. The synagogue services were used to demonstrate the importance of community; Bar/Bat Mitzvah and funerals were often discussed as important aspects that take place outside the home. Sometimes activities such as Bar Mitzvah were described as taking place in the home.

#### Question 6

- (a) (i) Many responses mentioned the lighting of the candles and prayer. Some answers focused too much on the preparation for Shabbat rather than the ceremony that welcomes Shabbat.
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arguments in favour of how Judaism could survive without Shabbat. Good answers mentioned the many festivals that occur throughout the year and the presence of the synagogue as a focal point of the community. Weaker answers discussed Judaism during the holocaust as a counter argument and how Judaism continued after it.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Paper 0490/13

Paper 1

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- (c) Many answers gave a good balance between why the Bible is meant only for Christians and why it is meant for everyone. Very few answers were one sided. Common responses included that Jesus was sent to bring the good news to everyone and that the Bible contains universal values that other religions and non-religious people share. Arguments in favour of the Bible being a solely Christian book usually included the need for belief to fully appreciate what is said, particularly in the New Testament.

### Question 2

- (a) (i) Most answers tended to mention Mary Magdalene and the tomb or angel. Some candidates confused Mary mother of James with Mary the mother of Jesus, who did not go to the tomb. A few, but significant few, confused the resurrection with the Ascension.
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- (b) The idea of saving mankind/forgiveness, salvation, and prophesy commonly occurred in many answers. Very good answers described how the crucifixion brought people closer to God and that the veil in the Temple/Holy of Holies was torn.
- (c) Most candidates answered this well. Most answers were balanced with a for/against answer which discussed how churches should be modest because Jesus was, costly decorations were distracting or because the money could be used for the poor. Arguments in favour of churches being highly decorated normally concentrated on honouring God and keeping his house clean or that decorations would attract people to the church so that they could enjoy the decorations.

### Question 3

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- (c) A significant number of candidates treated this question in a one sided way often focusing on the family as the most important. Answers often mentioned the family as the foundation of the community. Good answers showed how both family and community are foundations for each other and cannot be separated. A few candidates discussed family as being more important for new converts because they did not know the community.

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# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Paper 0490/21

Paper 2

## General Comments

This year, the performance on Paper 2 was generally good. It was noticeable that candidates had, for the most part, carefully read questions and interpreted them correctly. The demands of particular questions were usually addressed with the correct skills and good quality of expression.

The majority of candidates performed marginally better on part **(a)**: Knowledge and **(c)**: Evaluation questions than they did on part **(b)**: Understanding and interpretation. In part **(a)** questions, many strong answers gave detailed descriptions showing good knowledge of the topic. There continues to be a good understanding among candidates of the necessity of considering different points of views and opinions in the answering of part **(c)** questions. In part **(b)** questions, however, many candidates provided descriptive answers when they should have been explaining the importance or significance of beliefs and their application in everyday life. Some of the responses to **(b)** questions were too brief, vague or repetitive.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### *Section A: Christianity*

#### Question 1

- (a)** Good answers were descriptive and detailed. All versions of infant baptism ceremonies were credited. The majority of elements included the common elements of water, blessings, naming and promises/vows. Some answers provided details of words and actions of priest, parents and Godparents but others were vague about these roles. A minority of candidates answered, sometimes at length, on the meaning of baptism for Christians rather than describing what actually happens in a ceremony and in doing so were not answering the question.
- (b)** Many responses described the visit of the Magi and their gifts. The best answers developed a brief description into an explanation of the significance of the event as the revelation/displaying of the new-born Saviour to the Gentiles. They also placed the celebration of their visit within the festival of Epiphany and noted the significance of this for Christians. Some of the weaker answers were brief and descriptive only, lacking both detail and development.
- (c)** There were some excellent and a number of very good answers to this question. Candidates considered different viewpoints and often came to a balanced conclusion that was also an expression of their personal opinion. The role and influence exercised by Godparents was well understood and assessed as being dependent upon the good character of the people involved as much as the advantage of having a strong Christian belief. Many answers were coherently and perceptively argued. Some responses considered only one point of view in favour of the statement and although well argued, missed the opportunity of developing a stronger response as the evaluation was not balanced with other views.

#### Question 2

- (a)** The events of Pentecost were well known and many answers gave fully detailed descriptions which gained full credit. Less thorough answers usually showed good knowledge of the beginning of the event and the gift of tongues but failed to complete the description to include Peter's sermon and the baptism/conversion of three thousand, according to Luke's Gospel. A small minority of responses confused Pentecost with the Last Supper.

- (b) The good answers to this question combined knowledge of historic events in Jerusalem as a Holy City from both Old and New Testament times. They also showed understanding of the spiritual benefits of pilgrimage, especially, pilgrimage to the place where Jesus was crucified, died and resurrected. Those candidates who showed an understanding of the significance for Christians of the Stations of the Cross, following in the footsteps of Christ's journey to the cross on the Via Dolorosa, did particularly well in this regard. The significance and benefits associated with other historical events in Jerusalem were also well explained.

In less successful answers, candidates often wrote a list of historical events or sites in Jerusalem associated with Christianity without any explanation as to why visiting them might be meaningful for believers. A few candidates confused Jerusalem with Bethlehem.

- (c) As with the other part (c) questions, many candidates assessed the pros and cons of the statement with interest and showed skill in balancing arguments for and against the premise that the future should be more important than the past. Personal opinions tended to be in favour of learning from the past to solve the problems of today. There were perceptive answers from candidates of all levels of ability who recognised the many challenges faced by Christians and communities today. Stronger candidates were able to express their arguments clearly and provided evidence to support their views.

Some candidates focused their answer on personal situations and the renewal and promise of new life following repentance and forgiveness for what has happened in the past.

### Question 3

- (a) The majority of candidates who chose this question had a satisfactory knowledge of the core Christian beliefs contained in the Apostles Creed. Some very good answers gave a full description of the whole text with some development. There were, however, fewer very strong answers than for the other part (a) questions in this section. Some weaker responses were vague and brief. A few responses, mistakenly, described The Lord's Prayer.
- (b) Generally, candidates were able to explain the Christian view of the traditional role of women as taught in the Bible and practised by the Early Church. They also explained why this traditional role is challenged by the changes in economic and domestic circumstances being experienced by women in society today. The changes in the role of women were usually well explained but not all candidates developed their answers to include explanations as to why there might be disagreement in Christian churches about the role of women in religious life. This missing development characterised weaker answers. The strongest candidates explained the reasons on both sides as to why there was disagreement on the ordination of women and the issue of equal roles in religious life.
- (c) There were many competent and interesting answers to this question. In the evaluation, the focus for answers was very varied. Some responses addressed equality in general terms such as race, gender and age. Other responses concentrated on equality between men and women, following on from the answer to (b). Equality and inequality was also seen in terms of varying degrees of Christian commitment, devotion, sacrifice and hierarchies of holiness.

Some candidates were able to argue cogently that all believers in all religions, including Christianity, are equal because of common elements in all religions. However, some, who offered good reasons in support of this view found it difficult to provide reasons to be critical of the view and did not consider any alternative view.

## Section B: Islam

### Question 4

- (a) (i) Some descriptions of the belief in Akirah (life after death) were only partially accurate. A number of candidates omitted reference to the Day of Judgement and described only the questioning of the soul by two angels. Some candidates gave confused answers, which included beliefs from other religions or folklore rather than a belief based on evidence in the Qur'an.
- (ii) Generally, the answers on Muslim belief in Angels were much more accurate and detailed.
- (b) There were some good responses to this question, which showed how a belief in life after death might influence attitudes and actions in everyday life. The best responses developed the answer to give examples of religious commitment and behaviour towards others. However, the majority of answers were vague and repetitive and candidates seemed unable to interpret how a desire to achieve enough good deeds/rewards to gain a favourable judgement and Paradise might be fulfilled although some of these did make reference to obeying God's commands and the Five Pillars.
- (c) Most candidates were able to analyse why a belief in life after death might be difficult to accept in today's world and in the majority of answers the alternative view offered was that such a belief was a matter of faith and not to be questioned by Muslims. As is usual with evaluation questions, the development of arguments to show reasons and evidence to support different views differentiated between the satisfactory answers and those which were very good.

### Question 5

- (a) This question on Muslim belief about the nature of God was well answered by a number of candidates. However, generally candidates found this question challenging. The stronger answers demonstrated religious knowledge about the nature of God and selected and presented details of Muslim belief about God's attributes, as described in the Qur'an. Some credit was gained by describing the attributes of God, as believed by all monotheistic religions and a significant number of answers did this but there was often no reference to Muslim belief in particular in these answers.
- (b) Although some candidates made a good attempt to answer this question, generally, candidates did not explain clearly the importance of the Qur'an. Answers were often limited to one aspect of the Qur'an as a guide for Muslims e.g. as a guide to right and wrong or following the Five Pillars. Answers were mostly descriptive and lacked understanding and interpretation of the significance of the Qur'an as the revealed word of God, unchanged and uncorrupted and the inspiration and security of faith it provides for the believer. The Qur'an as the basis for Shari'ah law was also usually omitted.
- (c) Generally candidates produced good answers to this question. The majority of responses were sympathetic to arguments on both sides. Most recognised the benefits of retaining the Qur'an in Arabic to preserve its authenticity and accuracy but also showed awareness that allowing translations provided accessibility and enhanced the understanding of Muslims in non-Arabic speaking countries. Most candidates provided several reasons to support the different views and offered a balanced personal view as a conclusion.

### Question 6

- (a) This was the most popular question in this section. Overall, the performance on (a) was commendable. The majority of responses gave accurate descriptions of all Five Pillars and a significant number of candidates produced very strong answers.
- (b) This question on the significance of Makkah required an understanding of both the religious and historical importance of the city. The best answers were well developed and explained both aspects. A number of answers demonstrated knowledge and some understanding of the Ka'ba as a focal point for the Hajj and the direction faced during prayer but they were less accurate about the historical events associated with Makkah.
- (c) A number of candidates had difficulty in evaluating which Pillar most unites Muslims and tended to give an outline of all five without expressing a view or making any comparative assessment.

### Section C: Judaism

#### Question 7

- (a) Responses on Yom Kippur generally concentrated on what happens in the home or the synagogue despite the question asking for a description of both. Only a minority of candidates were able to give a full description. Some demonstrated knowledge of the ancient Temple tradition of the scapegoat but were vague on the present day rituals associated with Yom Kippur. Some confused the customs with those of Rosh Hashanah.
- (b) This question produced stronger answers than part (a). The importance of the Day of Atonement as a special day each year and the significance of a day of repentance and the opportunity it affords for spiritual and physical renewal was well understood. Many candidates also showed an awareness of the reparations made with others during the days leading up to Yom Kippur.
- (c) Good, perceptive answers showed an appreciation that observing special days is obeying God's law in the same way as keeping a kosher home or observing other mitzvot. Some candidates observed that different levels of importance might be applied to both different festivals and different kinds of laws.

#### Question 8

- (a) Most responses directly responded to the question with a full description of funeral customs. Many fully detailed and accurate answers showed a strong understanding. A small minority of weaker answers confused Christian and Jewish rituals. Some responses also described Shiva, at length, but showed little knowledge of the funeral rites.
- (b) There were a number of strong answers to this question. However a common mistake in responses to this question was for candidates to spend a great deal of time describing Shiva rather than providing an explanation for how the practice of Shiva might be of benefit to mourners. In preparation of candidates for the examination, it should be emphasised that the skill being assessed in part (b) questions is the ability to explain and show understanding. This might mean that some brief description is needed but it should only be an introductory sentence or two leading into an explanation.
- (c) Answers showed good understanding of the purpose of funeral and mourning rituals and the Jewish concern to observe the correct funeral rites and to show respect for the dead. Some answers also discussed the emphasis on providing help and support for the mourners to help them to cope and move on with their lives, in order that they might continue to live in obedience to God's laws. In general, answers showed good preparation on this topic.

#### Question 9

- (a) Most candidates could accurately identify three religious features of a synagogue but answers varied in the amount of accuracy and detail provided for each one. The best answers involved some description of the purpose of the feature and how it is used in worship. The Ark, Sefer Torah, Bimah and Menorah were the most commonly identified features.
- (b) As mentioned previously, a common weakness here, as in other part (b) questions was for candidates to be too descriptive and write out a list of events and activities that take place in a synagogue without fully explaining how these might be important in the community e.g. how they might contribute to or benefit the religious and communal life of Jews. The best answers showed understanding of the need for social gathering, advice and teaching to strengthen the community in their faith and to improve quality of life.
- (c) Most responses attempted to compare public and private worship and offer reasons why both might be of value. Good answers considered personal and religious reasons why Jews might prefer worshipping together or in private. Some candidates considered whether it was possible for different sects of Judaism to overcome their differences to worship together. Some pointed out that, in Orthodox Judaism, worship in the synagogue segregated the sexes but that this did not happen in the home. Personal opinions on this issue were clearly expressed but were sometimes repetitive.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Paper 0490/22

Paper 2

## General Comments

This year, the performance on Paper 2 was generally good. It was noticeable that candidates had, for the most part, carefully read questions and interpreted them correctly. The demands of particular questions were usually addressed with the correct skills and good quality of expression.

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## Comments on Specific Questions

### *Section A: Christianity*

#### Question 1

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- (c) There were many competent and interesting answers to this question. In the evaluation, the focus for answers was very varied. Some responses addressed equality in general terms such as race, gender and age. Other responses concentrated on equality between men and women, following on from the answer to (b). Equality and inequality was also seen in terms of varying degrees of Christian commitment, devotion, sacrifice and hierarchies of holiness.

Some candidates were able to argue cogently that all believers in all religions, including Christianity, are equal because of common elements in all religions. However, some, who offered good reasons in support of this view found it difficult to provide reasons to be critical of the view and did not consider any alternative view.

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### Question 4

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- (ii) Generally, the answers on Muslim belief in Angels were much more accurate and detailed.
- (b) There were some good responses to this question, which showed how a belief in life after death might influence attitudes and actions in everyday life. The best responses developed the answer to give examples of religious commitment and behaviour towards others. However, the majority of answers were vague and repetitive and candidates seemed unable to interpret how a desire to achieve enough good deeds/rewards to gain a favourable judgement and Paradise might be fulfilled although some of these did make reference to obeying God's commands and the Five Pillars.
- (c) Most candidates were able to analyse why a belief in life after death might be difficult to accept in today's world and in the majority of answers the alternative view offered was that such a belief was a matter of faith and not to be questioned by Muslims. As is usual with evaluation questions, the development of arguments to show reasons and evidence to support different views differentiated between the satisfactory answers and those which were very good.

### Question 5

- (a) This question on Muslim belief about the nature of God was well answered by a number of candidates. However, generally candidates found this question challenging. The stronger answers demonstrated religious knowledge about the nature of God and selected and presented details of Muslim belief about God's attributes, as described in the Qur'an. Some credit was gained by describing the attributes of God, as believed by all monotheistic religions and a significant number of answers did this but there was often no reference to Muslim belief in particular in these answers.
- (b) Although some candidates made a good attempt to answer this question, generally, candidates did not explain clearly the importance of the Qur'an. Answers were often limited to one aspect of the Qur'an as a guide for Muslims e.g. as a guide to right and wrong or following the Five Pillars. Answers were mostly descriptive and lacked understanding and interpretation of the significance of the Qur'an as the revealed word of God, unchanged and uncorrupted and the inspiration and security of faith it provides for the believer. The Qur'an as the basis for Shari'ah law was also usually omitted.
- (c) Generally candidates produced good answers to this question. The majority of responses were sympathetic to arguments on both sides. Most recognised the benefits of retaining the Qur'an in Arabic to preserve its authenticity and accuracy but also showed awareness that allowing translations provided accessibility and enhanced the understanding of Muslims in non-Arabic speaking countries. Most candidates provided several reasons to support the different views and offered a balanced personal view as a conclusion.

### Question 6

- (a) This was the most popular question in this section. Overall, the performance on (a) was commendable. The majority of responses gave accurate descriptions of all Five Pillars and a significant number of candidates produced very strong answers.
- (b) This question on the significance of Makkah required an understanding of both the religious and historical importance of the city. The best answers were well developed and explained both aspects. A number of answers demonstrated knowledge and some understanding of the Ka'ba as a focal point for the Hajj and the direction faced during prayer but they were less accurate about the historical events associated with Makkah.
- (c) A number of candidates had difficulty in evaluating which Pillar most unites Muslims and tended to give an outline of all five without expressing a view or making any comparative assessment.



### Section C: Judaism

#### Question 7

- (a) Responses on Yom Kippur generally concentrated on what happens in the home or the synagogue despite the question asking for a description of both. Only a minority of candidates were able to give a full description. Some demonstrated knowledge of the ancient Temple tradition of the scapegoat but were vague on the present day rituals associated with Yom Kippur. Some confused the customs with those of Rosh Hashanah.
- (b) This question produced stronger answers than part (a). The importance of the Day of Atonement as a special day each year and the significance of a day of repentance and the opportunity it affords for spiritual and physical renewal was well understood. Many candidates also showed an awareness of the reparations made with others during the days leading up to Yom Kippur.
- (c) Good, perceptive answers showed an appreciation that observing special days is obeying God's law in the same way as keeping a kosher home or observing other mitzvot. Some candidates observed that different levels of importance might be applied to both different festivals and different kinds of laws.

#### Question 8

- (a) Most responses directly responded to the question with a full description of funeral customs. Many fully detailed and accurate answers showed a strong understanding. A small minority of weaker answers confused Christian and Jewish rituals. Some responses also described Shiva, at length, but showed little knowledge of the funeral rites.
- (b) There were a number of strong answers to this question. However a common mistake in responses to this question was for candidates to spend a great deal of time describing Shiva rather than providing an explanation for how the practice of Shiva might be of benefit to mourners. In preparation of candidates for the examination, it should be emphasised that the skill being assessed in part (b) questions is the ability to explain and show understanding. This might mean that some brief description is needed but it should only be an introductory sentence or two leading into an explanation.
- (c) Answers showed good understanding of the purpose of funeral and mourning rituals and the Jewish concern to observe the correct funeral rites and to show respect for the dead. Some answers also discussed the emphasis on providing help and support for the mourners to help them to cope and move on with their lives, in order that they might continue to live in obedience to God's laws. In general, answers showed good preparation on this topic.

#### Question 9

- (a) Most candidates could accurately identify three religious features of a synagogue but answers varied in the amount of accuracy and detail provided for each one. The best answers involved some description of the purpose of the feature and how it is used in worship. The Ark, Sefer Torah, Bimah and Menorah were the most commonly identified features.
- (b) As mentioned previously, a common weakness here, as in other part (b) questions was for candidates to be too descriptive and write out a list of events and activities that take place in a synagogue without fully explaining how these might be important in the community e.g. how they might contribute to or benefit the religious and communal life of Jews. The best answers showed understanding of the need for social gathering, advice and teaching to strengthen the community in their faith and to improve quality of life.
- (c) Most responses attempted to compare public and private worship and offer reasons why both might be of value. Good answers considered personal and religious reasons why Jews might prefer worshipping together or in private. Some candidates considered whether it was possible for different sects of Judaism to overcome their differences to worship together. Some pointed out that, in Orthodox Judaism, worship in the synagogue segregated the sexes but that this did not happen in the home. Personal opinions on this issue were clearly expressed but were sometimes repetitive.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Paper 0490/23

Paper 2

## General Comments

This year, the performance on Paper 2 was generally good. It was noticeable that candidates had, for the most part, carefully read questions and interpreted them correctly. The demands of particular questions were usually addressed with the correct skills and good quality of expression.

The majority of candidates performed marginally better on part **(a)**: Knowledge and **(c)**: Evaluation questions than they did on part **(b)**: Understanding and interpretation. In part **(a)** questions, many strong answers gave detailed descriptions showing good knowledge of the topic. There continues to be a good understanding among candidates of the necessity of considering different points of views and opinions in the answering of part **(c)** questions. In part **(b)** questions, however, many candidates provided descriptive answers when they should have been explaining the importance or significance of beliefs and their application in everyday life. Some of the responses to **(b)** questions were too brief, vague or repetitive.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### *Section A: Christianity*

#### Question 1

- (a)** Good answers were descriptive and detailed. All versions of infant baptism ceremonies were credited. The majority of elements included the common elements of water, blessings, naming and promises/vows. Some answers provided details of words and actions of priest, parents and Godparents but others were vague about these roles. A minority of candidates answered, sometimes at length, on the meaning of baptism for Christians rather than describing what actually happens in a ceremony and in doing so were not answering the question.
- (b)** Many responses described the visit of the Magi and their gifts. The best answers developed a brief description into an explanation of the significance of the event as the revelation/displaying of the new-born Saviour to the Gentiles. They also placed the celebration of their visit within the festival of Epiphany and noted the significance of this for Christians. Some of the weaker answers were brief and descriptive only, lacking both detail and development.
- (c)** There were some excellent and a number of very good answers to this question. Candidates considered different viewpoints and often came to a balanced conclusion that was also an expression of their personal opinion. The role and influence exercised by Godparents was well understood and assessed as being dependent upon the good character of the people involved as much as the advantage of having a strong Christian belief. Many answers were coherently and perceptively argued. Some responses considered only one point of view in favour of the statement and although well argued, missed the opportunity of developing a stronger response as the evaluation was not balanced with other views.

#### Question 2

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