

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/11

Paper 1

General Comments

This paper was of a similar standard to previous years and was accessible for the majority of candidates. Rubric errors were rare and only a few failed to complete the required sections. The Christianity section was the most popular part of the paper.

Section A Christianity

Question 1

- (a) (i) There were some very good answers to this question explaining that Bethlehem was the birthplace of the Messiah and that people went there to be close to their God and to reflect on the early days of the Christian message. Some also spoke of the coming of the Magi and the significance of this belief for gentiles. Weaker responses erroneously thought that Jesus had grown up in Bethlehem and had worked miracles there which was the reason for the pilgrimage.
- (ii) The majority of candidates who attempted this question gained full marks. There were many world-wide places of pilgrimage chosen by candidates. A few candidates named the same place in two different ways; for example Nazareth and Galilee.
- (b) There were many good answers explaining the main reasons Jesus had to suffer, citing the salvation and forgiveness of mankind. A significant number of candidates discussed prophesy in the Old Testament indicating that the suffering was part of God's plan. Other candidates also explained the belief that Jesus had to suffer due to the sin brought into the world by Adam and Eve.
- (c) A significant number of candidates chose to focus their responses for and against Easter as the most important festival. Many answers demonstrated a lack of understanding that the Easter season is different from the Lent season. This meant that they spent very little time on the importance of the resurrection and what followed and instead described lenten practices. Many candidates gave Christmas less detailed responses simply explaining its importance as 'There would be no Easter if Jesus had not been born'.

Question 2

- (a) (i) Many candidates had a good understanding of the role of a priest in a marriage ceremony, though many missed his / her role as a witness on behalf of God and the community. Most were able to explain the priests role in the rite and his / her helping with the vows and promises.
- (ii) Most candidates who attempted this question achieved full marks giving a good account of both the traditional vows associated with marriage and some more modern versions appropriate to changing times.
- (b) Many responses demonstrated a good understanding of this issue explaining the reasons why couples make vows in a marriage ceremony. Some weaker answers repeated their response to **Question ii** rather than discussing why the vows are made therefore they listed each vow and what it means but not why it is important in the context of the ceremony. Better responses chose material such as the vows being taken in front of God. They also explored the importance of witnesses and often the importance of this commitment for the future of any children the couple might have. Some also mentioned the strength they would find from this public commitment when there were difficult times in their marriage.

- (c) This question elicited a high number of one sided responses. Many candidates discussed the teachings being out of date as there are a higher number of polygamous marriages in Africa, failing to recognise that this is not a modern issue and therefore less relevant in an 'out of date' question.

This was a common confusion with this question, where candidates discussed modern life without any reference to the actual teachings and whether they are out of date or not. It is important that candidates realise that they are limiting the amount of credit available to them if they do not recognise that there is another opinion.

Question 3

- (a) (i) Candidates who attempted this question generally responded with detailed and accurate answers. Some spent a little to much time on the positioning of the animal having its throat cut and giving more graphic detail than was necessary which left them less time to describe the required distribution of the meat.
- (ii) Most candidates responded well to this question demonstrating a sound understanding of the story of the near sacrifice of Isaac. A few responses mistook the intent of the question and instead of answering the question discussed Muhammad (pbuh) and Islamic history.
- (b) The majority of candidates understood this question and demonstrated a sound grasp of the importance of prophets. Many gave examples of Old Testament and New Testament prophets and how they are integral to Islam. A few answers only focused on Muhammad (pbuh), although often thoroughly, with no reference to other prophets.
- (c) This is another question which often elicited one sided responses. Candidates often failed to distinguish obligation from personal sacrifice. Better answers could explain how the expectation on Muslims to fast, give Zakah, Hajj, etc. could be seen as excessive however these sacrifices are not personal and bring them closer to God. Some candidates developed the idea of personal sacrifice by explaining sadaqah and greater Jihad.

Question 4

- (a) (i) The vast majority of candidates who attempted this question demonstrated a sound understanding of the expectation of Sawm. Some also listed the exceptions which while credited could not be given full marks if the rules were not also included.
- (ii) Some candidates limited their responses to a discussion of the end of Ramadan in general terms citing the cleaning of one's house, or cooking rather than the Night of Power included within the retreat and spending time in the mosque.
- (b) Most candidates had a clear understanding of Sawm and Zakah. A significant number of candidates seemed to show more understanding of Zakah and discussed this in relation to the ummah more so than how Sawm strengthens the ummah. Weaker responses simply described the Pillars with no attempt to address the actual question.
- (c) There were many good answers to the question which demonstrated a clear understanding of Sawm and Zakah. Some candidates seemed to show more understanding of Zakah and discussed this in relation to the ummah.

Question 5

- (a) (i) Many candidates understood that the ketubah is a marriage contract. Fewer answers included the promises/being read out at the synagogue/signed by witnesses.
- (ii) This question had a very mixed set of responses. Some were very good giving detailed accounts of the features of a Jewish marriage while others lacked detail, for example many knew that the Rabbi gives a blessing but few knew of the two or seven blessings.
- (b) Many candidates showed a sound grasp of reasons that having a Jewish partner might be important; for example, because it helps practice of the faith to develop within a family and makes the upbringing of children more consistent within the faith. Candidates could have made reference

to other forms of Judaism where marriage to a Jewish partner is less important because the religion can be passed on by either parent.

- (c) This question on the effect of strongly held beliefs on marriage elicited a wide range of responses. Many showed a sound grasp of which areas of religion might raise problems for some marriages. Others answered using irrelevant material and others did not give their own opinions.

Question 6

- (a) (i) Most candidates who addressed this question demonstrated a good understanding of what the Tefillin are and where they are worn on a man's body. Some were able to point out that they contain verses of the Shema.
- (ii) Many answers mentioned the tassles/fringes although many also repeated the question by saying that it was a prayer shawl used in prayer. Candidates could have mentioned the tallit that is worn under clothing.
- (iii) Many repeated in their response that this is a skull cap and had little else to say. The best answers made reference to the religious reasons for wearing this cap.
- (b) Many candidates approached this question with no difficulties, discussing children, central to faith, how the Shema is recited daily and at birth/death. Some candidates misunderstood the question and discussed the 613 Mitzvot rather than the Shema.
- (c) Many candidates only addressed one side of this issue. They, for example, looked at how important celebrating festivals with children is without exploring those celebrations which are more appropriately celebrated by adults.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/12

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Section A Christianity

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- (b) There were many good answers explaining the main reasons Jesus had to suffer, citing the salvation and forgiveness of mankind. A significant number of candidates discussed prophesy in the Old Testament indicating that the suffering was part of God's plan. Other candidates also explained the belief that Jesus had to suffer due to the sin brought into the world by Adam and Eve.
- (c) A significant number of candidates chose to focus their responses for and against Easter as the most important festival. Many answers demonstrated a lack of understanding that the Easter season is different from the Lent season. This meant that they spent very little time on the importance of the resurrection and what followed and instead described lenten practices. Many candidates gave Christmas less detailed responses simply explaining its importance as 'There would be no Easter if Jesus had not been born'.

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- (a) (i) Many candidates had a good understanding of the role of a priest in a marriage ceremony, though many missed his / her role as a witness on behalf of God and the community. Most were able to explain the priests role in the rite and his / her helping with the vows and promises.
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- (c) This is another question which often elicited one sided responses. Candidates often failed to distinguish obligation from personal sacrifice. Better answers could explain how the expectation on Muslims to fast, give Zakah, Hajj, etc. could be seen as excessive however these sacrifices are not personal and bring them closer to God. Some candidates developed the idea of personal sacrifice by explaining sadaqah and greater Jihad.

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to other forms of Judaism where marriage to a Jewish partner is less important because the religion can be passed on by either parent.

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/13

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/21

Paper 2

Key Messages

Generally, across the whole ability range, candidates achieved an equal performance across two religions which demonstrated that the syllabus had been equably and fairly covered. This is an important aspect of this Syllabus. Without it candidates cannot achieve the higher grades.

General Comments

The overall performance was very good. The majority of candidates demonstrated good understanding of the questions and the relevant skills needed to meet each assessment objective.

Candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the chosen religions and a number of candidates consistently achieved full marks on part (a) and (b) of questions. In recent years there has been an improved performance on part (c) evaluation questions and this upward trend has continued. Only a minority of candidates experienced difficulty in understanding questions.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A: Christianity

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates gave good and very good answers to this question on the core Christian belief of the Trinity. Most responses were interesting and coherent and showed knowledge of all three aspects of the Trinity and the concept of 'three in one'. Weak answers on this question were in a minority.
- (b)(i) Advent. Understanding of the reason for the celebration of Advent varied. Most answers contained some correct explanation but some wrongly identified it as part of Easter.
- (ii) Ascension. A common misunderstanding in some answers was to focus on the crucifixion and resurrection rather than the ascension of Jesus as a separate festival.
- (c) In response to this question, candidates were required to assess the value to Christians of studying the gospel stories of the life of Jesus. Arguments in favour of a detailed study of the gospels were often strongly and well expressed. Unfortunately, many candidates did not then extend their response to include arguments against the statement, or, only made a slight reference to some study of the Old Testament. Better answers addressed how much of the gospels is needed to provide a sound foundation for Christian life and some candidates made a comparison between the gospels and the practical usefulness of the letters of Paul.

Question 2

- (a) Generally, the question was answered well. A variety of Christian practices carried out on Sunday were described in detail. These were connected to both the religion and family values.
- (b) The reasons for the special place of Sunday in both Christian worship and practice were also well known. There was, generally, a strong performance on this question.

- (c) Arguments against Christian attitudes to Sunday being out of date were often strongly and coherently expressed. However, providing good reasons for different views appeared to be more challenging and some responses only weakly identified 'laziness' or 'other temptations' as reasons for not going to Church. Good answers suggested better reasons to consider the traditional Sunday to be out of date; such as easy access to worship and Bible study through the internet and television and the need for people in some occupations to work on Sunday. Also, the prevalence in some denominations of worship on other days of the week.

Question 3

- (a) The performance on this knowledge question was not as strong as on **Questions 1(a)** and **2(a)**. The hierarchical position of a Bishop within some Christian denominations was ignored by the majority of candidates. Many responses only described the duties of a Minister or Priest. It may be that the term 'Bishop' is defined differently by Christians but candidates should also have knowledge of the different ministerial roles in the more traditional denominations.
- (b) The majority of answers were well expressed and offered detailed explanations of the role of a leader in religion and worship and the benefits for the Christian community of leadership inspired by God.
- (c) In answers to this question, candidates' evaluations were based upon general/personal motives for prayer either for oneself or for others. Most offered an assessment of different views and many quoted biblical text on prayer to support their arguments.

Section B: Islam

Question 4

- (a) The best answers outlined the special features of Jummah prayers. Some weaker answers described the features of Salah in the mosque but failed to include the special features of Friday mid-day prayers.
- (b) Overall, a weaker performance than on other part (b) questions.
- Quiblah. Some candidates confused the 'quiblah' with the word Ka'aba. Other candidates mistakenly attributed the direction of the quiblah to 'Mecca, the holy city' when, more accurately, it should be to the Ka'aba.
- Mihrab. This was often confused with 'minbar'.
- (c) Most answers encompassed different views on the benefits of both congregational and private prayer. There was, generally a good performance on this question with very few weak responses.

Question 5

- (a) Generally, good answers on the practice of spending the last 10 days of Ramadan in the mosque in retreat and meditation (I'tikaf) and especially praying all night on Lailat ul-Qadr (Night of Power), to commemorate the revelation of the Qur'an. There were very few weak answers.
- (b) Some candidates confused Madinah with Makkah but the majority of answers were good or satisfactory.
- (c) There was, generally, a good performance on this question. Candidates considered the relative importance of historical places to their understanding of the history and nature of Islam. Some perceptive points were made about the probability that not all Muslims had the ability to visit historical places. Most candidates made the connection between historical places and Hajj, as a Pillar of Islam.

Question 6

- (a) Most answers contained some accurate description of the features of the Qur'an that make it a sacred text. The better candidates who answered this question were confident in their knowledge

of the unique features of the Holy Qur'an. Some weaker answers began well but lost the focus of the question and developed the answer to include special treatment of the Qur'an.

- (b) Very good answers explained the importance of Shariah in the life of Muslims and as a justice system within Islamic States. Responses often referred also to ijma and qiyas being used to make Shariah relevant. Some weaker answers were too general and explained Shariah only as 'guidance for Muslims' without reference to the concept of 'Law' or its constituent components.
- (c) Many answers were well balanced and thoughtful. The essential role of the Qur'an was assessed and balanced against evidence for Islam as the original religion from the beginning of creation. However, many candidates were only able to perceive that without the Qur'an Islam would not exist. Many of these arguments were well expressed but did not gain the higher level of marks because only one view was explored.

Section C: Judaism

Question 7

- (a) Some good responses but, generally, answers here were mainly satisfactory or weak. The majority lacked specific details of the measures taken to relieve poverty and knowledge of Jewish international aid programmes was vague or weak.
- (b) The overall performance on (b) was stronger. Answers demonstrated good understanding of Jewish teaching on charitable giving and its practical application.
- (c) Candidates provided interesting answers to this question on whether helping the poor is more important than worship. The evaluations were usually well expressed, with good reasons provided to support the different views. Many, perceptively, argued that helping the poor was also a form of worship.

Question 8

- (a) The celebration of Rosh Hashanah proved to be an accessible question for all candidates who chose to answer it. Most candidates correctly identified the festival and demonstrated good knowledge of the practice in both synagogue and home.
- (b) This question was also answered well. However, a minority of candidates misread the question, or, were mistaken about the assessment objective and they argued as to whether or not festivals should be celebrated in the home.
- (c) Attempts to answer this question were mostly good or satisfactory. Some answers were only an explanation of the difference between a fast and a festival and there was little attempt to assess the relative importance of the two for the believer.

Question 9

- (a) Candidates offered comprehensive descriptions of the kosher food laws and gained credit, mostly in the higher levels of marks.
- (b) In general, answers to this question appeared not to have been given enough thought. Some of the responses were very vague or too brief. A study of Judaism should involve wide understanding of how all the religious acts a Jew performs are linked to the Covenant. Many candidates only described the Abrahamic covenant and circumcision.
- (c) A common trend across the whole ability range was the misreading of the statement at the commencement of the question. Many candidates gave answers which missed the point of the question. Candidates who did read and interpret the statement correctly usually made good evaluations of the significance for Jews of the interaction between obedience to God's law and the necessity/desire for independent thought.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/22

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- (a) Generally, the question was answered well. A variety of Christian practices carried out on Sunday were described in detail. These were connected to both the religion and family values.
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- (b) Overall, a weaker performance than on other part (b) questions.
- Quiblah. Some candidates confused the 'quiblah' with the word Ka'aba. Other candidates mistakenly attributed the direction of the quiblah to 'Mecca, the holy city' when, more accurately, it should be to the Ka'aba.
- Mihrab. This was often confused with 'minbar'.
- (c) Most answers encompassed different views on the benefits of both congregational and private prayer. There was, generally a good performance on this question with very few weak responses.

Question 5

- (a) Generally, good answers on the practice of spending the last 10 days of Ramadan in the mosque in retreat and meditation (I'tikaf) and especially praying all night on Lailat ul-Qadr (Night of Power), to commemorate the revelation of the Qur'an. There were very few weak answers.
- (b) Some candidates confused Madinah with Makkah but the majority of answers were good or satisfactory.
- (c) There was, generally, a good performance on this question. Candidates considered the relative importance of historical places to their understanding of the history and nature of Islam. Some perceptive points were made about the probability that not all Muslims had the ability to visit historical places. Most candidates made the connection between historical places and Hajj, as a Pillar of Islam.

Question 6

- (a) Most answers contained some accurate description of the features of the Qur'an that make it a sacred text. The better candidates who answered this question were confident in their knowledge

of the unique features of the Holy Qur'an. Some weaker answers began well but lost the focus of the question and developed the answer to include special treatment of the Qur'an.

- (b) Very good answers explained the importance of Shariah in the life of Muslims and as a justice system within Islamic States. Responses often referred also to ijma and qiyas being used to make Shariah relevant. Some weaker answers were too general and explained Shariah only as 'guidance for Muslims' without reference to the concept of 'Law' or its constituent components.
- (c) Many answers were well balanced and thoughtful. The essential role of the Qur'an was assessed and balanced against evidence for Islam as the original religion from the beginning of creation. However, many candidates were only able to perceive that without the Qur'an Islam would not exist. Many of these arguments were well expressed but did not gain the higher level of marks because only one view was explored.

Section C: Judaism

Question 7

- (a) Some good responses but, generally, answers here were mainly satisfactory or weak. The majority lacked specific details of the measures taken to relieve poverty and knowledge of Jewish international aid programmes was vague or weak.
- (b) The overall performance on (b) was stronger. Answers demonstrated good understanding of Jewish teaching on charitable giving and its practical application.
- (c) Candidates provided interesting answers to this question on whether helping the poor is more important than worship. The evaluations were usually well expressed, with good reasons provided to support the different views. Many, perceptively, argued that helping the poor was also a form of worship.

Question 8

- (a) The celebration of Rosh Hashanah proved to be an accessible question for all candidates who chose to answer it. Most candidates correctly identified the festival and demonstrated good knowledge of the practice in both synagogue and home.
- (b) This question was also answered well. However, a minority of candidates misread the question, or, were mistaken about the assessment objective and they argued as to whether or not festivals should be celebrated in the home.
- (c) Attempts to answer this question were mostly good or satisfactory. Some answers were only an explanation of the difference between a fast and a festival and there was little attempt to assess the relative importance of the two for the believer.

Question 9

- (a) Candidates offered comprehensive descriptions of the kosher food laws and gained credit, mostly in the higher levels of marks.
- (b) In general, answers to this question appeared not to have been given enough thought. Some of the responses were very vague or too brief. A study of Judaism should involve wide understanding of how all the religious acts a Jew performs are linked to the Covenant. Many candidates only described the Abrahamic covenant and circumcision.
- (c) A common trend across the whole ability range was the misreading of the statement at the commencement of the question. Many candidates gave answers which missed the point of the question. Candidates who did read and interpret the statement correctly usually made good evaluations of the significance for Jews of the interaction between obedience to God's law and the necessity/desire for independent thought.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/23

Paper 2

Key Messages

Generally, across the whole ability range, candidates achieved an equal performance across two religions which demonstrated that the syllabus had been equably and fairly covered. This is an important aspect of this Syllabus. Without it candidates cannot achieve the higher grades.

General Comments

The overall performance was very good. The majority of candidates demonstrated good understanding of the questions and the relevant skills needed to meet each assessment objective.

Candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the chosen religions and a number of candidates consistently achieved full marks on part (a) and (b) of questions. In recent years there has been an improved performance on part (c) evaluation questions and this upward trend has continued. Only a minority of candidates experienced difficulty in understanding questions.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A: Christianity

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates gave good and very good answers to this question on the core Christian belief of the Trinity. Most responses were interesting and coherent and showed knowledge of all three aspects of the Trinity and the concept of 'three in one'. Weak answers on this question were in a minority.
- (b)(i) Advent. Understanding of the reason for the celebration of Advent varied. Most answers contained some correct explanation but some wrongly identified it as part of Easter.
- (ii) Ascension. A common misunderstanding in some answers was to focus on the crucifixion and resurrection rather than the ascension of Jesus as a separate festival.
- (c) In response to this question, candidates were required to assess the value to Christians of studying the gospel stories of the life of Jesus. Arguments in favour of a detailed study of the gospels were often strongly and well expressed. Unfortunately, many candidates did not then extend their response to include arguments against the statement, or, only made a slight reference to some study of the Old Testament. Better answers addressed how much of the gospels is needed to provide a sound foundation for Christian life and some candidates made a comparison between the gospels and the practical usefulness of the letters of Paul.

Question 2

- (a) Generally, the question was answered well. A variety of Christian practices carried out on Sunday were described in detail. These were connected to both the religion and family values.
- (b) The reasons for the special place of Sunday in both Christian worship and practice were also well known. There was, generally, a strong performance on this question.

- (c) Arguments against Christian attitudes to Sunday being out of date were often strongly and coherently expressed. However, providing good reasons for different views appeared to be more challenging and some responses only weakly identified 'laziness' or 'other temptations' as reasons for not going to Church. Good answers suggested better reasons to consider the traditional Sunday to be out of date; such as easy access to worship and Bible study through the internet and television and the need for people in some occupations to work on Sunday. Also, the prevalence in some denominations of worship on other days of the week.

Question 3

- (a) The performance on this knowledge question was not as strong as on **Questions 1(a)** and **2(a)**. The hierarchical position of a Bishop within some Christian denominations was ignored by the majority of candidates. Many responses only described the duties of a Minister or Priest. It may be that the term 'Bishop' is defined differently by Christians but candidates should also have knowledge of the different ministerial roles in the more traditional denominations.
- (b) The majority of answers were well expressed and offered detailed explanations of the role of a leader in religion and worship and the benefits for the Christian community of leadership inspired by God.
- (c) In answers to this question, candidates' evaluations were based upon general/personal motives for prayer either for oneself or for others. Most offered an assessment of different views and many quoted biblical text on prayer to support their arguments.

Section B: Islam

Question 4

- (a) The best answers outlined the special features of Jumma prayers. Some weaker answers described the features of Salah in the mosque but failed to include the special features of Friday mid-day prayers.
- (b) Overall, a weaker performance than on other part (b) questions.
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