

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/01

Paper 1

General Comments

Most candidates responded well to this paper. It is important to read the question carefully so that answers are focused on the issues asked about in the question. Candidates seemed to be much more comfortable with Christianity and Islam.

Question 1

- (a) This was a very straightforward question and almost all the candidates knew the answer.
- (b) Again this question received mostly excellent answers giving a wide variety of ways of worshipping in a Church from the celebration of the Eucharist, through Christmas and Easter services to differences such as quiet prayer, singing or dancing.
- (c) It was important to say that the altar can be a variety of kinds of table which sit on the sanctuary and not to confuse the altar with the sanctuary. Better responses explained the history of the altar being for physical sacrifice of animals and now a symbolic memorial of and thanksgiving for Christ's sacrifice once and for all.

Question 2

- (a) This was a very straightforward question and almost all the candidates knew the answer.
- (b) Some candidates answered this question by saying that Muslims prepare for prayer by performing *wudu*, referring to this as ritual washing. Better answers gave a more detailed account of the kind of washing this involves. Some mentioned the making of 'your intention' before performing *wudu* and many mentioned the removal of shoes before entering the mosque.
- (c) Candidates were able to give a wide variety of ways in which the Qur'an is shown respect by Muslims. Popular amongst the responses were: the idea that the Qur'an should never be put on the floor; when not in use, it should be wrapped in silk and placed on top of the highest piece of furniture in the room, above all other books so as to be closer to Allah; and that before the Qur'an is read, the reader should wash the hands, feet, face, mouth and hair.

Question 3

- (a) A number of candidates knew that this was a prayer from Deuteronomy 6 which is said several times each day by Jews. The question required more than it is part of the Torah or that it is used during a Jewish service.
- (b) Candidates who answered this question were able to give a good list of festivals. It is important to know that Yom Kippur is not a festival.
- (c) Some candidates were able to give a good account of the *mezuzah* describing it by saying it is a small case in which a small hand written scroll of parchment (called a *klaḥ*) is placed. The scroll was also described by some candidates. Some were also able to say that every time a Jew passes through a door with a *mezuzah* on it, they kiss their fingers and touch them to the *mezuzah*, expressing love and respect for God and His commandments.

Question 4

- (a) Those that read this question carefully (it was not a question about the way Pentecost might be celebrated today) and knew what Pentecost was produced some outstanding answers. They were able to give a good account of where and why the Apostles were hiding which led to an excellent description of the arrival in their midst of the Holy Spirit experienced by them as a strong wind and tongues of fire on their heads. They were then able to describe the gifts which the Apostles put to immediate use in the streets by starting the preaching of the good news. Some were aware of the fact that the speaking in tongues and general behaviour led the crowds to belief that the Apostles were drunk.
- (b) The best responses to this question were able to explain that, for many Christians, Pentecost is seen as the birthday of the Church. Some then went on to explore the way the festival highlights the importance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which were given on that day and were essential to the founding and spreading of the Christian Church. Some candidates were also able to explain the attraction to some Christians of the livelier kinds of liturgy associated with Pentecost.

Question 5

- (a) Candidates who chose to answer this question gave a good account of Salaat-ul-Jumma or Friday Prayer. They explored the way work is stopped and the prayer is offered in congregation. They described how each week on Friday, Muslims are required to take a bath, dress in their best clean clothes, wear perfume and assemble in the mosque for Friday Prayer. They also pointed out that if a Muslim spends Friday in the remembrance of God Almighty, supplicating before their Lord, they are abundantly rewarded by Allah. Some candidates also pointed out that it gives Muslims an opportunity to meet together to discuss and solve their individual as well as community problems, and develop unity, co-operation and cohesiveness among Muslims. Friday Prayer is also a demonstration of Islamic equality. Some were also able to discuss the way it gives the Imam a chance to advise all Muslims at the same time on urgent matters that face them. The Imam's sermon gives them guidance in Islamic teachings. Many pointed out that Friday Prayer is an obligatory Prayer for every adult male Muslim. They were also aware that those who are sick, blind or disabled, those on a journey, and women, are exempt from the obligation of attending the mosque.
- (b) Many candidates began this answer by saying that prayer (*salat*) is the first pillar of Islam and that the Prophet (pbuh) mentioned it after mentioning the testimony of faith, by which one becomes a Muslim. Many were aware that Muslims pray at least five times a day. Some developed their responses by writing that prayer in Islam is considered to be the foundation of the religion. Any Muslim who fails to do his prayers and have no reasonable excuse is committing a grave offense and heinous sin. This offense is so grave because it is not only against God, but also against the very nature of man to adore and love God.

Question 6

- (a) Most of the candidates who attempted this question were able to say that Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year festival and commemorates the creation of the world. It lasts 2 days. They then went on to say that Rosh Hashanah is also a judgement day, when Jews believe that God balances a person's good deeds over the last year against their bad deeds, and decides what the next year will be like for them. Some also explained that Jews believe God records the judgement in the Book of Life, where he sets out who is going to live, who is going to die, who will have a good time and who will have a bad time during the next year. The book and the judgement are finally sealed on Yom Kippur. Many candidates also said that one of the synagogue rituals for Rosh Hashanah is the blowing of the *Shofar*, a ram's horn trumpet.
- (b) Some candidates started by explaining that Rosh Hashanah is considered to be one of the two most sacred Jewish holidays known as the "High Holy Days". The importance of Rosh Hashanah is not only in celebrating the New Year, but also in remembrance and judgement. Some explained that unlike most holidays, the origin of this holiday is strictly religious, and has nothing to do with any historical events. Some developed their answer by saying that the significance of Rosh Hashanah was in it being the Day of Judgement. Better answers could have included the food rituals during this feast. Most candidates knew about the eating of apples and honey as a blessing for a sweet year.

Question 7

- (a) This was the more popular of the **Section C** questions with candidates demonstrating a good knowledge of the variety of ways these different religions bring up their children. Depending on the religion the descriptions began at different places. In Islam, for example, candidates tended to refer to the saying of part of the Qur'an into the ear of a new born child. In the Judaism responses candidates tended to focus more on the preparation for Bar and Bat Mitzvah. In Christianity they often referred to baptism and confirmation. All religions were described as seeing religious teaching as important whether that was done through specific classes based on their sacred writings or through the more formal school systems in different countries.
- (b) This question, probably more than the others, allowed candidates to approach their responses in a more general way putting together the reasons that members of the community tend to be important throughout religions. Many spoke about the importance of children in religious teachings and how adults should be seen as examples to be followed. Others talked about the responsibilities of those who are seen as leaders within these communities, often focussing on their responsibility towards all members of their communities.

Question 8

- (a) This was not a popular question. There was some confusion about what took place in each religion.
- (b) This part was answered well as candidates were able to use their knowledge of a number of historical events which are celebrated by these religions to demonstrate both their importance and significance within the beliefs of these groups.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/02

Paper 2

General Comments

Candidates made the most of the single question options this year, giving the overall impression of a higher standard.

It is important to read the question carefully and focus on the issues it asks about.

Question 1

- (a) This question allowed candidates with a good knowledge of both Christmas and Id ul-Adha to outline excellent descriptions of the different ways in which these feasts are celebrated. The best responses demonstrated an awareness of the religious practices associated with these celebrations; for example, mid-night mass for Christians and the sacrificing of an animal in commemoration of Ibrahim's sacrifice in Islam.

It was important not to focus on the secular side of Christmas for Christians and in Islam it was important to place Id ul-Adha in the context of Hajj.

- (b) In this question it was important to know what the festivals were in order to achieve the highest marks. There were some excellent accounts of the importance of these celebrations for the groups concerned. The Christmas account for example gave the full range of meaning from fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy through the birth of the Messiah to the idea, coming from the Magi, that the message was for the whole world and not just for Jews. Those who wrote mainly from a secular perspective tended to write generalised statements about peace and love.

Many of the candidates, addressing the second half of part **b**, made good use of the issue being about the command to share with the poor as well as the significance of obedience and unity. They gave a good account of the world wide nature of this unity with Muslims from around the globe sacrificing an animal at the same time as those who were on Hajj.

Question 2

- (a) This was a popular question as only one religion had to be addressed. A significant number were able to give a very good account of all that Muslims are expected to do in order to complete Hajj. Others gave an account of travelling to Makkah and circling the Ka'ba. The best responses went on to give an account of the trip to Mina and Arafat for the *wuquf*, collecting the stones and returning to stone the Jamrah. They also gave a good account of the symbolic meaning of this stoning. Finally they were able to describe the respect a Muslim gains from becoming Hajji.
- (b) Candidates approached this question from a number of equally valid directions giving excellent accounts of the benefit of going on Hajj. Some, for example, starting with the desire to fulfil the pilgrimage and explaining that not only do they visit these important places for their faith but the process is one of submission to the commands and will of Allah. As well as the unity, which many had outlined in **Question 1**, they were also able to explore the spiritual dimensions of Islam and the extent to which it helps the participants to follow their religion more devoutly.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates gave good accounts of the kinds of things which Christians are expected to do on a Sunday, often focussing their answers on the church practices. Some also addressed the way some denominations make Sunday special by wearing their best clothes, while others add to the liturgical practices by also attending bible study sessions.

The Jewish responses more often dealt with the home and the way that the religious practices on this day tend to focus on the family and support the individuals in the prayers and studies expected among Jews. A great deal was made of the importance of not working and the readings from the Torah in the synagogue.

- (b) The best responses demonstrated a good understanding of why both Jews and Christians have a day of rest each week. It is important to know that both Jews and Christians celebrate the 7th day of the week on different days. Most thought that both days, not just the Jewish Sabbath, were to do with God resting on the 7th day from creating the world. Some were aware that Christians celebrate the first day of the week, Sunday, as they remember the day Jesus rose from the dead.

Question 4

- (a) This was the other single religion question but not as popular as the Islam question. Those who did attempt to discuss the religious practices which take place at the end of a Jew's life were mostly able to give a good account of the rituals; particularly the saying of Kaddish and the use of a plain wooden coffin. Some also gave an accurate description of the way the deceased's body is never left alone before the burial and rituals associated with Shiva.
- (b) Better responses were aware that the practices are aimed at supporting the living; for example candidates discussed the bringing of food to the bereaved by their neighbours and the comfort which is offered by accompanying people through Shiva. Candidates should be careful not to repeat information from part (a).

Question 5

- (a) While this question elicited answers which tended to look like lists, many candidates gave a good account of the types of literature found in the relevant sacred writings. It was important to describe 'types' of literature and not the way sacred writings are used in Christianity and Judaism.
- (b) In part (b) some of the better answers integrated those areas where both religions held the writings to be important for the same reasons; for example, both Christianity and Judaism hold their sacred writings to be the 'Word of God'. Both writings contain rules for living good lives and for treating everyone as equal. They are also sometimes similar and at other times different when recording historical accounts of God's action in the world.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/04

Alternative to Coursework

General Comments

The overall performance on this paper was very good and there were some exceptional answers. A number of candidates could describe, explain and analyse the issues very well, and they wrote with authority and accuracy. Many candidates demonstrated a high level of skill in selection and explanation of the religious teachings and attitudes inspired by the sources.

Many candidates gained a high level of achievement in **Questions 1 to 3**. Other candidates could have improved the quality of their answers by answering in an individual way rather than reiterating or paraphrasing the words of the sources.

Some of the answers to **Question 4** showed that candidates were capable of producing a commentary of commendable depth and detail on all of the sources. These answers showed both understanding and interpretation of the roles of men and women in religion. Some, otherwise very good answers, omitted to explore the meaning of the picture sources which would have improved their achievement. There were candidates whose answers were largely copied or paraphrased from the three written sources and omitted or copied the commentary on the picture sources J and K.

On **question 5**, there was pleasing evidence of independent thought in many of the answers. Some candidates might have improved their answers if they had written at greater length or explored more balanced arguments. This should be one of the areas on which Centres and candidates continue to focus to improve their skill.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The majority of candidates produced good answers on the teachings on the creation of men and women, given in source A. The best answers showed knowledge of the Christian and Muslim teachings but also the slight difference in emphasis in the Jewish teaching.

Question 2

The majority of candidates drew on all of the three named Sources B, C and D for their answer. In the best answers, the excerpts from the sacred texts were known and understood and the teachings accurately described. Most answers were a reasonable attempt to deal with the information. The teachings from across **all** the sources were needed for the highest level of marks.

Question 3

This was a very well answered question. The main points about family life, from both sources E and F were fully described by the majority of candidates. To improve their answers candidates needed to check that all parts of the sources had been covered. The commandment 'Honour your father and mother.' which was at the beginning of source E, needed to be used.

Question 4

Some excellent candidates showed considerable skill in selecting and interpreting information to explain how the roles of men and women have developed in religious life today, as shown in sources G, H, I, J and K.

The majority of candidates tackled the sources systematically and this appeared to be the best approach. The assessment target is to understand and interpret the relationship between religious belief and practice, as described or shown in the sources. It was obvious that a large number of candidates understood that this was the level of skill being tested. The general level of achievement on this particular question was very good.

In some answers, the achievement could have been improved by more attention being paid to the understanding and interpretation of the picture sources J and K. Performance on the written sources was often excellent but candidates needed to consider all the sources, including the pictures, to gain the highest marks.

A deeper level of understanding was needed, rather than copying or paraphrasing the sources.

Question 5

Some excellent responses contained detailed arguments and an awareness of different opinions in the debate about the equal importance in religion of men and women.

In the best answers, the arguments were clear and detailed, making good use of the texts and information used in the various sources.

Other responses needed to consider a balance of arguments rather than making one-sided arguments or judgements. Some answers presented a very good one-sided defence about e.g. the equality of women. This type of answer might have been improved by recognising the complexity of the issue e.g. in different religions and between traditional and reform groups.