

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/12
Paper 12

Key messages

- It is important that candidates focus on the question asked in order to respond to it fully.
- To ensure this focus, candidates need to be familiar with the command words used across the paper and the specific demand of these words.
- While generic material which is equally true of any religion can be both relevant and creditable, it is crucial that religion specific references are made in candidates' responses.
- It is important to practice exam skills such as time management, which includes using the number of marks available for the question as an indicator for answer length and/or amount of time to spend on it.

General comments

There was sometimes a disparity in performance between the first and second religions chosen. There was also significant use of technical terms from one of these religions to answer questions on the other. Overall, responses seemed stronger on Christianity and Islam compared with the Judaism questions.

Some candidates appeared to have found it challenging to judge how much was required to adequately answer a question, giving more extended responses to a **(i)** and **(ii)** at the expense of later questions than to **(b)** or **(c)**. While most candidates were able to identify relevant knowledge for the specific questions they were answering, there were some who did not take the command word of the question into account. This was most common with **(b)**-part responses which require explanation rather than description of knowledge.

With regard to the **(c)**-part evaluation questions, many candidates seemed to have difficulties in developing arguments rather than stating a few points on either side. The skill of thinking through to a considered conclusion, based on evidence and consideration of other ideas, was displayed unevenly, with some candidates able to demonstrate it on one question but not others, or in relation to one of the two religions studied rather than both.

Comments on specific questions

Section A – Christianity

Question 1

- (a) (i)** This was a well answered question. Most candidates identified events within Holy Week, although this was not required by the question. Incorrect responses most commonly included the resurrection of Jesus and/or the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.
- (ii)** Most responses correctly stated that the resurrection means rising from the dead and many named Jesus or Lazarus as an example of this happening. A few candidates were able to develop this further, referencing the separation of body and soul or the relationship between the idea of resurrection and the salvation promised to believers. Some candidates described the events surrounding the resurrection without explicitly giving the meaning of the term, and these tended to be less successful since the question is specifically about that meaning. The most common error made with this response was to confuse the resurrection with the ascension.
- (b)** A significant number of candidates did not appear to recognise the difference between the cross and the crucifix, and instead gave generalised accounts of the importance of the cross as a symbol in Christianity. These generally included some relevant material but since none of it was applied to

the question asked, those responses were less successful. Similarly, some candidates turned the question around and gave reasons why the crucifix might be preferred to the cross; again, this included some relevant material, but did not fully answer the question. There were also some responses attempting to evaluate which was the 'better' or more important symbol. Candidates are reminded that discussion is not an element of the **(b)**-part questions.

Strong responses included ideas about the potentially distressing imagery of the crucifix, the hope symbolised by the empty cross and the risk of idolatry inherent in images of Jesus.

- (c)** Most responses gave some description of events that occurred in Jesus' life, with the corresponding implication that his life must be important because these things would not have occurred without it. Some then contrasted this with the importance of the sacrifice and thus of his death. Reference to his resurrection and/or to the promise of salvation his death gives to Christians was less common, and some responses made the simple statement that life has to be more important because death is the end of it, without any consideration of relevant religious material.

Question 2

- (a) (i)** Most candidates had some familiarity with the content of the Apostles' Creed, but responses consisting of a list of beliefs with no context for them were not fully successful as this did not answer the question.
- (ii)** This was a well answered question, with responses drawing on a broad range of material and including the presence of the Spirit in everyday life as well as gifts given during Charismatic worship. Some responses presented the effects as wholly negative and/or demonic, suggesting that it possesses Christians and controls their actions.
- (b)** Responses to this question tended to be almost wholly descriptive and ranged across a broad area. Some consisted of a description of the death and resurrection of Jesus, without relating that to salvation; some wrote about original sin and atonement without relating it to the death of Jesus. The concept of sacrifice was not often explicitly identified and, although some candidates quoted John 3:16, it was not often developed in an explanatory way, as required by the question.
- (c)** There were some good responses to this question, with most candidates able to identify two sides or viewpoints and to support these with some religious knowledge. Some candidates seemed to have some confusion about the term 'good works', arguing that while 'good works' would not result in salvation, showing love or helping others (examples of good works) will do so. Most responses contrasted good actions within the secular world with religious duties such as church attendance or baptism. Explicit reference to faith as the means of achieving salvation was not commonly made, although it was sometimes implied.

Section B – Islam

Question 3

- (a) (i)** Most responses to this question named Makkah and Medinah/Yathrib. Some gave Madinah and Yathrib as two of the three responses asked for, others named places linked to the Hajj. Other common incorrect answers were Jerusalem, Ethiopia and Pakistan.
- (ii)** The most common responses focused on the reasons why the Prophet (pbuh) was persecuted, which is not what the question asked for. There were also responses giving detailed descriptions of the Hijrah – some of these including the name of Cave Thawr, even when this was absent from the **(a)(i)**. Reference to the people plotting his death was the most common correct response, gaining some credit. This was usually mentioned in passing as part of a description of Hijrah. There was also a large number of responses stating that the Prophet (pbuh) was killed in Makkah.
- (b)** Generic responses were common here, with general material about private prayer being between the individual and God and a matter of personal choice. Religion specific material about the nature of private prayer in Islam was not commonly included. Where the importance of the practice was explicitly addressed it was most often considered in relation to the sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh).
- (c)** This was a well answered question overall. Most candidates understood the role of the muezzin and contrasted it with that of the imam, considering whether knowing the time of prayer is more

important than having someone to lead the prayers. Some expanded beyond this, suggesting that the broader role of the imam is more important than the specific role of the muezzin or pointing out that one person might fulfil both roles within their community.

Question 4

- (a) (i) Most candidates successfully answered this question. A few responses named artefacts like prayer mats or a compass, rather than features of the mosque itself.
- (ii) This was a well answered question with most candidates making reference to elements specific to salah, such as its obligatory nature, the five daily times, the required rakahs and the need for wudu.
- (b) Most responses were able to give an account of the nature of angels and the roles that they play within Islam. The example of Angel Jira'il in the revelation of the Qur'an was a common example, but others were also given. Some candidates focused wholly on describing the roles of different angels, but many also explicitly addressed importance by considering the inclusion of angels in the Articles of Faith, and some expanded on the importance of angels as servants of God in an explanatory way. Overall, this was a well answered question.
- (c) There was some confusion between the Five Pillars and the Six Articles across the ability range, however relevant discussion was still possible where this occurred, with candidates arguing that all elements of Islam are equally important because they all come from God. Different points of view were not always given, but some candidates identified one Article of Faith (usually Tawhid) and argued that since it is the foundation of all the others, it must be the most important. Others expanded complementary views on different articles having greater importance in different contexts, which was creditable.

Section C – Judaism

Question 5

- (a) (i) This question was not well answered. Most candidates attempted a response, but named the elements of the Tanakh rather than any sections of the Talmud.
- (ii) The question asked about clothing in general rather than ritual clothing. However, many responses focused entirely on ritual clothing which was credited, although simply listing the names of different items limited the response. Some described the clothing rather than the rules about it. The majority of responses were very generic, saying that Jews need to be neat, clean and/or modest. Some responses gave examples of rules relating to modesty, but these were often incorrect and there was a common confusion with Islam, with many responses saying that women must be completely covered up.
- (b) A lot of candidates repeated their (a)(ii) response here and where the material was relevant, this could be credited. However, explanation of the significance of any of the identified items of dress was limited. Some candidates seemed to have taken the reference to 'dress' at face value and described a dress that they believed all Jews have to wear to go to the synagogue.
- (c) Candidates were able to access the question and to express different views on the importance of the Ten Commandments in Judaism. Most candidates observed that there are many other laws as well, although some implied that the Ten Commandments was a wholly distinct list, and Jews would choose them or the 613 mitzvot. There were some responses arguing that the Ten Commandments are the most important because they come from Jesus, because Jesus followed them and/or because 'love your neighbour' is part of them.

Question 6

- (a) (i) In this question, repetition was the most common reason for responses not being fully successful, such as giving two examples of rites of passage ('rites of passage' is one use of a synagogue and an example of one was credited as a reference to this, but two examples does not constitute two distinct uses). There seemed to be frequent confusion with Christianity, with candidates referring to the church, the vicar and the Bible.

- (ii) This question was not well answered. A few responses made reference to it being divided into sections or topics, but development of this was uncommon. This was the question most often left unattempted.
- (b) A majority of candidates misunderstood this question, focusing their response either on how Jewish people can achieve unity with God or on uniting the Jewish community. Some wrote about the importance of God in general terms and this sometimes included some relevant material. The concept of monotheism was rarely seen and where it was present it was undeveloped. Some who recognised what the question was about, seemed to have confused Jewish and Christian views of God and wrote about the importance of the Trinity.
- (c) Most responses included some reference to tradition and its relationship with the modern world and, although some were generic, others identified the loss of the Temple and the impact of this and societal change on specific mitzvot. Most responses were able to identify and support multiple viewpoints.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/13
Paper 13

Key messages

- It is important that candidates focus on the question asked in order to respond to it fully.
- To ensure this focus, candidates need to be familiar with the command words used across the paper and the specific demand of these words.
- While generic material which is equally true of any religion can be both relevant and creditable, it is crucial that religion specific references are made in candidates' responses.
- It is important to practice exam skills such as time management, which includes using the number of marks available for the question as an indicator for answer length and/or amount of time to spend on it.

General comments

There was sometimes a disparity in performance between the first and second religions chosen. There was also significant use of technical terms from one of these religions to answer questions on the other. Overall, responses seemed stronger on Christianity and Islam compared with the Judaism questions.

Some candidates appeared to have found it challenging to judge how much was required to adequately answer a question, giving more extended responses to a **(i)** and **(ii)** at the expense of later questions than to **(b)** or **(c)**. While most candidates were able to identify relevant knowledge for the specific questions they were answering, there were some who did not take the command word of the question into account. This was most common with **(b)**-part responses which require explanation rather than description of knowledge.

Comments on specific questions

Section A – Christianity

Question 1

- (a) (i)** Most candidates identified the key term as relating to a kind of story and were able to develop this in relation to truth and/or to the purpose behind telling such stories.
- (ii)** Almost all candidates choosing this question identified the division into Old and New Testaments and named the event that divides the two. Fewer responses included reference to other types of literature or to the further division of the Testaments into other books. Listing the names of books without additional development limited some responses.
- (b)** Almost all candidates choosing this question demonstrated knowledge of the Trinity as being the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and most were able to explain this as a way in which Christians understand God. However, few gave detailed explanations of each member being fully God and that the three are one God overall. Some responses described the different roles or qualities of each member of the Trinity, which was broadly relevant but often needed to be more clearly focused on the question asked.
- (c)** Most candidates were familiar with the concept of reconciliation, relating it to the Catholic idea of confession to a priest and contrasting it with other ways of repenting and seeking forgiveness. Most responses gave two clear Christian perspectives on the statement.

Question 2

- (a) (i) Most candidates identified prayer and Bible study, but some did not name a third form.
- (ii) Responses to this question were not fully successful, with some candidates writing about the ceremony of Baptism as a whole rather than focusing specifically on the use of the artefacts named in the question. Responses were often very extended, with a corresponding reduction in the time given to later questions.
- (b) Candidates seemed to have found this question challenging. The question asked for an explanation of the importance of the Bible in church services, but most responses considered only one element of that: some responses gave detailed descriptions of different ways the Bible might be used, which included reference to church services, but did not focus on the importance of the text in this context (as required by the question). Others wrote in general terms about the importance of the Bible overall.
- (c) Where this question was understood it was well answered, with candidates exploring why it might be important to Christians to be grateful to God. However, a significant number of candidates read the question as asking about the US holiday of Thanksgiving, which is not specifically a Christian religious practice and limited the possible inclusion of relevant material.

Section B – Islam

Question 3

- (a) (i) Most responses correctly stated that men attended and that there is a khutbah/sermon. Weaker responses focused more on salah in general than on practices specific to Jummah.
- (ii) Almost all responses identified the title 'Seal of the Prophets' as a reference to being the last prophet sent. Development beyond this was less consistent; some responses explicitly referred to the line of previous prophets and the idea of God's message being incomplete or corrupted, while others did not develop the initial point at all or followed it with descriptive material about Muhammad's life or the First Revelation. The idea that Muhammad (pbuh) was the first prophet was the most common incorrect response.
- (b) The meaning of Tawhid is given in the question, but many responses opened with a definition of the term; this needed to be expanded beyond the wording given in the question to be creditable. There were incorrect definitions of Tawhid offered as well, with the unity of the Ummah being the most common. The most developed responses were able to relate Tawhid to other important principles in Islam such as shirk and/or to the history of the religion and the practices of polytheism in Makkah.
- (c) This was a well answered question with most responses considering multiple perspectives on the question. The most common approach was to consider whether it is positive to be motivated by the hope of reward or whether this devalues the good deeds a person does.

Question 4

- (a) (i) This was not a well answered question. Many candidates stated what the adhan is, which was given in the question and so could not be credited. Some went on to describe the process of giving the adhan, including who makes the call and where it is made from. Some of these correctly referenced the Shahadah or that the call tells Muslims to come and pray. However, the question was about the statements made in the call and only a few responses focused wholly on that.
- (ii) A conflation of Christian understanding of clergy and the roles they have in worship with the role of a Muslim imam was very common. However, most responses received some credit for general points such as teaching others and leading worship.
- (b) Candidates generally knew that qiblah was about the need to face Makkah, but not all demonstrated that they knew why this was important. The better developed responses connected it with the Ka'abah and sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). Only a small number of responses referenced the need to know qiblah in any context other than salah prayer, e.g. burial practices.

- (c) This question led to some good discursive responses, with candidates considering motives for different kinds of prayer, obedience to divine commands and relationships with God. Some incorrect understanding of the structured content of salah prayer led to discussion about privacy of confession and other, more Christian, ideas but these were not wholly irrelevant to the discussion.

Section C – Judaism

Question 5

- (a) (i) Most candidates identified the key term as relating to a kind of story and were able to develop this in relation to truth and/or to the purpose behind telling such stories.
- (ii) Almost all candidates choosing this question identified the division into Old and New Testaments and named the event that divides the two. Fewer responses included reference to other types of literature or to the further division of the Testaments into other books. Listing the names of books without additional development limited some responses.
- (b) This was not a well answered question, and candidates who had chosen Judaism did not attempt a response. Most responses gave some description of the ways in which the Torah scroll is treated and kept, and this was relevant knowledge. However, few went on to relating that knowledge to the idea of importance.
- (c) Most responses included both a for and an against view in relation to the statement. Some of these were very general points identifying some Jews as Orthodox and others as not. Better responses were able to identify some areas of Torah law that are subject to different interpretations in practice.

Question 6

- (a) (i) This question was not well answered, but it was unclear whether candidates were confused about what the Shema is or by the idea that it contains instructions for Jews. Most responses correctly identified the requirement to accept only one God. A common incorrect response was 'love your neighbour'.
- (ii) This proved a challenging question with very few successful responses. Most responses included some reference to the need to preserve the content of an oral tradition when the world changed in ways that threatened it; some made reference to the part played by rabbis in both preserving and developing that material.
- (b) A lot of the responses to this question were very generalised, giving a definition of 'covenant' or telling one of the stories about how the Covenant was made. There was usually some relevant material in these responses, but the idea of a relationship between God and the Jewish people being created by the Covenant was not often explicitly addressed and so the responses were limited.
- (c) This question also led to a lot of generic responses, where the points made were broadly correct but equally applicable to any religion; Judaism specific knowledge relevant to the question was seen more rarely.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/22
Paper 22

Key messages

- Candidates need to be familiar with command words and what they ask for. For example, when 'explain' is the command word, candidates should provide further development and/or application of knowledge in their answers.
- It is important that candidates demonstrate a good understanding of religious teachings and the relationship between belief and practice.
- It is important to include more than one viewpoint in answers to **part (c)** questions.
- Stronger answers to **part (c)** questions did not rely on a formulaic response. Candidates should develop their opinion with appropriate detail and avoid repeating material.

General comments

The performance overall was good. Candidates of all abilities were able to access the questions. A range of skills was displayed, which was evident across the part questions to a varying degree. Some responses to questions demonstrated great flair.

There were a considerable number of rubric infringements, which reduced the amount of time that candidates had for answers that could be credited. Candidates are also reminded to focus on the question asked, rather than write everything they know about a topic.

Section A and **Section C** (Christianity and Judaism) were the most popular combination of questions. **Section B** (Islam) attracted slightly fewer candidates overall.

In **part (a)** questions, most candidates were able to select the correct areas of knowledge. Many achieved higher levels in these questions, some writing more extensively than was necessary. Other candidates would be able to produce more successful answers if they provided more detail and made their responses less like a list. There were responses which were purely generic; this affected the levels that candidates were able to access.

In **part (b)** questions, most candidates selected the relevant and correct body of knowledge from the syllabus. It is the application of this knowledge and further development that allows candidates to access the higher levels. 'Explain' is generally the command word used in these questions and candidates need to tailor their responses accordingly. Weaker responses can become stronger responses when the candidate adds understanding to the knowledge that they provide.

Part (c) questions should be discussed from more than one perspective, and many candidates were able to do so. Stronger answers were not constrained by a formulaic response. An opinion ought to be substantive, rather than being purely the reiteration of material already included in the response. This opinion can be complemented by a number of different reasons.

Comments on specific questions

Section A Christianity

Question 1

- (a) Stronger responses identified key aspects of an infant baptism ceremony. These included vows to renounce evil, the recitation of the Apostles' Creed and the pouring of holy water onto the child's

head. Candidates are reminded that in 'describe' questions they are not required to explain why things happen; some candidates lost time because they explained their responses. Weaker responses gave only a list of what might happen in bullet point form.

- (b) Many responses were able to show that confirmation is the personal affirmation of a Christian to the Christian faith. Stronger responses were able to include other explanatory features of confirmation. Most were able to refer to the commitment that accompanies the decision to become confirmed. Excellent responses were able to show the symbolic significance of confirmation. This includes the fact that kings used to be anointed with oil and that the laying on of hands symbolises the transference of the Holy Spirit.
- (c) There were many excellent responses to this question which included a wide variety of perspectives. Some candidates argued that infant baptism does make a big difference to the child's future as it marks the child's entry into the Church. Other suggested that it makes no difference as the child was too young to remember the ceremony. Some responses contrasted infant baptism with adult baptism, which was a valid approach.

Question 2

- (a) Stronger responses gave several ways in which Christians can give. This included volunteering one's time to help or to listen, becoming a missionary or donating items to those who are in need. Excellent responses described the practice of tithing in detail. Some candidates interpreted the question slightly differently and focused on why giving might be different depending on the circumstances of the giver and receiver. Some others recognised that one can give by offering a prayer for others. Weaker responses were characterised by a lack of understanding of what tithing is.
- (b) Stronger responses recognised that there are many reasons why Christians show love and concern for others and explained rather than stated why this is the case. There were many references to Jesus' concern for others with some allusion made to stories in the New Testament. Some excellent responses used agape in their answer. Reference could also have been made to the idea that all human beings are equal and so all should be treated as such.
- (c) Weaker responses interpreted the statement as being about money. This meant that some candidates said that as not all Christians have enough money to give, then giving to charity is not the most important practice. Whilst this is a perfectly valid conclusion, an answer limited to this was restricted. Stronger responses recognised that a Christian could give to charity in many ways. One example is that they could give their time to charitable organisations. Excellent responses were able to debate the issue concerning faith and works.

Question 3

- (a) Stronger responses covered all aspects of this topic, referring to nurture of the young, care of the elderly, roles and responsibilities of women and men and marriage. Some were able to give Biblical sources for this, especially the commandment to 'honour your parents'. Weaker responses were often vague and generic in nature and took 'the Christian family' in its corporate sense only. Excellent responses could have considered the Church as the Christian family.
- (b) Stronger responses linked Christian beliefs and teachings to the idea that getting married can be considered to be a Christian duty. Excellent responses stated that the command to join together is given by God in the book of Genesis. Others said that because Christians should not indulge in pre-marital sexual relations, marriage is the logical outcome. Weaker responses focused more on the marriage ceremony rather than on the reasons behind it.
- (c) Stronger responses recognised that many Christians live in secular communities and thought that this might make it difficult for Christians. Others said that strong faith will be able to overcome any challenges, however difficult. Weaker responses were characterised by a lack of knowledge of what traditional teachings on family life are. Some others made it a question solely about traditional teachings and ignored the reference to family life. Candidates could have considered the changing roles and practices within Christian family life and whether Christians can adapt to these.

Section B Islam

Question 4

- (a) Stronger responses were able to describe a range of component parts of the Muslim marriage ceremony. These included where it might take place, the dowry, the vows and the role of the witnesses. Stronger responses also limited their answer to a description rather than including an explanation of why certain things happen which is not required for this question. Weaker responses were only able to name one or two aspects of the ceremony.
- (b) Stronger responses covered all aspects of this topic and referred to the importance of nurturing the young and caring for the elderly as well as the roles and responsibilities of women and men in Muslim family life. Many candidates were able to suggest that this is instructed by the Qur'an but fewer were able to cite specifics. Some recognised that this was instructed by The Prophet (pbuh). Weaker responses were purely generic and did not include any specific Muslim detail.
- (c) Stronger responses were able to give a variety of perspectives in response to the statement with most emphasising points in disagreement. This included reference to Muslims being a minority in a community or to prejudices that might exist. Other candidates, however, noted how family-orientated Islam is. These responses suggested that being born into a Muslim family with traditional values makes it easy to raise a child in the Islamic faith today. Rituals from birth and a sense of identity could have been included in responses.

Question 5

- (a) Stronger responses were able to describe how and when Shariah (law) is used. These responses acknowledged that Shariah has sources which are the Qur'an, Sunnah and Hadith. Considerable use could have been made of the content of these sources leading to a more comprehensive response concerning Shariah as a code of behaviour. Many responses were able to refer to haram and halal, with examples. Weaker responses gave only a small amount of detail on Shariah law and commented only on halal and haram. Others simply stated that it is law.
- (b) Responses that were able to show knowledge and understanding of the effect of belonging to the ummah on the lives of Muslims were successful. The overwhelming majority referred to the wellbeing and care given to all members of the ummah. Stronger responses could have considered that the ummah displays a sense of togetherness and generates a feeling of unity amongst Muslims. Weaker responses made this into a question about what the ummah is or about the importance of the ummah.
- (c) Stronger responses were able to comment on the effectiveness of Shariah (law) as a complete code of behaviour for Muslims today. Some candidates pointed out that Shariah is a complete code of behaviour as all new rulings ultimately derive from similar or parallel cases in the Qur'an or Sunnah. Others said it is not a complete code of behaviour simply because new rulings are made all the time. Weaker responses made this into a question about rules in general and did not address the required Muslim aspects relating to Shariah.

Question 6

- (a) Stronger responses demonstrated knowledge of an Islamic aid organisation with many candidates describing the work of either Red Crescent or Muslim Aid. Candidates are encouraged to research the current projects of an aid organisation. This would allow for a response based on what the organisation is doing which can change depending on what is happening in the world at any particular time. Weaker responses were often generic and demonstrated little knowledge of a specific Islamic aid organisation.
- (b) Stronger responses were able to show why the giving of zakah is important by referring to its position as one of The Five Pillars of Islam and explaining why this makes it important. Other connections between beliefs and practices also made for successful responses. Some candidates were able to show that Muslims believe that everyone is created equal and so the giving of zakah is important. Excellent responses could show that the giving of zakah is considered to be a means by which a Muslim can attain Allah's mercy. Weaker responses simply defined zakah and identified it as one of The Five Pillars of Islam.

- (c) Most responses said that giving sadaqah (voluntary contributions) is the best charitable act for Muslims as it is voluntary. Many recognised that sadaqah does not have to be in monetary form, suggesting that anyone can give sadaqah. Some responses were able to compare the benefits of giving both zakah and sadaqah. A common suggestion that needed refining was the idea that zakah means less than sadaqah because it is compulsory. Excellent responses could refer to the importance of intention in any action.

Section C Judaism

Question 7

- (a) Few candidates were able to describe the concept of righteousness and the idea that Judaism highly rates that which is fair and morally correct. Weaker responses suggested that tzedaka (righteous giving) can only take a monetary form, missing the opportunity to refer to the giving of one's time or energy. However, a good use of the monetary aspect of tzedaka would have been to offer a description of righteous giving deposited in pushkes. Stronger responses could have given a comprehensive description of what tzedaka might involve and recognised the variety of forms that it might take.
- (b) It was common for responses to this question to refer to the teaching as outlined in **part (a)**. However, stronger responses explained how and why this teaching influences daily actions. Following the mitzvot is a religious obligation which results in many Jews becoming involved in poverty relief. Furthermore, Jews feel that they have a responsibility to be 'the light amongst nations' as they believe they are The Chosen people. Weaker responses were generic in their explanation of why a religious person might work for the relief of poverty.
- (c) The majority of responses disagreed with the statement. Most suggested that it is equally important to help both the local and the international community. However, many candidates also argued that helping the local community is easier and more important as the results will be more clearly seen and it includes people that one might know. Excellent responses could consider that the importance of help might be dictated by conditions at a particular time. This takes into account any local or international crisis.

Question 8

- (a) Most candidates knew when a Bar Mitzvah ceremony happens, what it involves and the role of the rabbi. Excellent responses should be able to cover more varied aspects regarding the Bat Mitzvah ceremony. This was too often subsumed under Bar Mitzvah. This could include, for example, the difference of opinion in liberal communities regarding the use of tefillin. Candidates are reminded that the command word 'outline' requires them to set out only the main points; some candidates wrote such a complete description that their time-management suffered as a result.
- (b) Jewish nurture of the young, rituals and views on marriage could all be used to good effect in responses to this question. Some candidates recognised that traditional Jewish family life can give a young person a moral framework within which to behave. Weaker responses did not adequately address the question since they did not specifically refer to Judaism and instead gave general reasons as to why a religious upbringing might be of benefit. Many candidates did not explain why certain features of traditional family life would benefit a young Jew.
- (c) Many candidates missed the nuance of the ketubah as a legal contract. Candidates could then have considered what Jewish marriage is in addition to being a legal contract. Some responses were able to suggest that marriage is a religious duty, and excellent responses cited this reference from the book of Genesis. Candidates could have referred to the role of G-d in marriages.

Question 9

- (a) Successful responses were able to give a wide range of things that happen on the day of a Jewish funeral. Stronger responses included the role of the Chevra Kaddisha. Weaker responses tended not to be clearly ordered.
- (b) Stronger responses knew what happens when Jews observe Shiva (mourning ritual) and demonstrated an understanding of why these rituals might help the bereaved. Ideas included the

acceptance of death, pressure being taken from families by the Chevra Kaddisha and the symbolic meanings behind the actions performed. Weaker responses gave generic responses which did not address the specific features of seven days of mourning. Some simply described what Shiva is and did not address the other demands of the question.

- (c) Successful responses to this question referred to several ceremonies in the life of a Jewish male. Stronger responses remembered that circumcision seals the Covenant with Abraham. This makes this ceremony crucial as, without it, the boy is not a member of that Covenant. However, it is also important for a boy to undergo a Bar Mitzvah ceremony as the next step in his religious education. Marriage is also an important religious duty for Jews as it is the right relationship into which children can be born. Most candidates suggested that all ceremonies are important for a Jewish male.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/23
Paper 23

Key messages

- Candidates need to be familiar with command words and what they ask for. For example, when 'explain' is the command word, candidates should provide further development and/or application of knowledge in their answers.
- It is important that candidates demonstrate a good understanding of religious teachings and the relationship between belief and practice.
- It is important to include more than one viewpoint in answers to **part (c)** questions.
- Stronger answers to **part (c)** questions did not rely on a formulaic response. Candidates should develop their opinion with appropriate detail and avoid repeating material.

General comments

Candidates of all abilities were able to access the questions. A range of skills was displayed, which was evident across the part questions to a varying degree. Knowledge of one religion often tended to be greater than the candidate's second option. Some responses to questions demonstrated great flair.

There were a considerable number of rubric infringements, which reduced the amount of time that candidates had answers that could be credited. Candidates are also reminded to focus on the question asked, rather than write everything they know about a topic.

Section A and Section B (Christianity and Islam) were the most popular combination of questions. **Section C** (Judaism) attracted slightly fewer candidates overall.

In **part (a)** questions, most candidates were able to select the correct areas of knowledge. Many achieved higher levels in these questions, some writing more extensively than was necessary. Other candidates would be able to produce more successful answers if they provided more detail and made their responses less like a list.

In **part (b)** questions, most candidates selected the relevant and correct body of knowledge from the syllabus. It is the application of this knowledge and further development that allows candidates to access the higher levels. 'Explain' is generally the command word used in these questions and candidates need to tailor their responses accordingly. Weaker responses can become stronger responses when the candidate adds understanding to the knowledge that they provide.

Part (c) questions should be discussed from more than one perspective, and many candidates were able to do so. Stronger answers were not constrained by a formulaic response. An opinion ought to be substantive, rather than being purely the reiteration of material already included in the response. This opinion can be complemented by a number of different reasons. Weaker responses often resulted in too much description and not enough evaluation.

Comments on specific questions

Section A Christianity

Question 1

- (a) Stronger responses were able to describe a range of ways in which a Christian community could help people in need. These included financial help, the giving of one's time and the offering of

prayers for others. Perceptive responses could have focused on 'community' rather than just how individual Christians might help. Some candidates responded by describing specific features such as tithing. Candidates should remember to give slightly more detail than a one-word bullet point response.

- (b) Stronger responses were able to cite Jesus' example with reference to stories from the Bible. The Two Greatest Commandments were frequently used to good effect. The idea that wealth is ultimately God's could have also been used in responses. Many candidates focused on the idea of 'different' forms of giving and suggested that the type of giving depends on the situations of the giver and the receiver. Weaker responses made this a question about the practice of giving without explaining why Christians might do this.
- (c) There were a variety of ways in which this question was answered and many responses were comprehensive. Candidates were generally able to give more than one argument in discussing the statement. Some responses suggested that love is a key concept within Christianity and that because of this, all that a Christian needs to do is to love others. Stronger responses were able to make specific Christian references to love, such as agape or Jesus' command to 'love one another as I have loved you'. Weaker responses were often generic.

Question 2

- (a) Most responses were able to describe some of the component parts of a Christian funeral service. Stronger responses were direct and specific whilst weaker responses made generic references to ideas such as 'hymns are sung, and prayers are said'. Candidates could have suggested the reading of 1 Corinthians 15 and/or Psalm 23 to make responses less general.
- (b) Candidates acknowledged that for some Christians this form of baptism is important as it is the time when they personally and publicly acknowledge their commitment to Christianity. Many candidates said that it is important because Jesus chose to be baptised as an adult. Weaker responses merely described what happens during a believer's baptism instead of using it as a prompt to explain why it is important for some Christians.
- (c) Many responses suggested that one's earthly life is profoundly important because it is this which determines one's afterlife. Others said that because life after death is so important it overshadows life on earth. Excellent responses could have considered Jesus' resurrection in more detail. It could be suggested that the most important part of Jesus' ministry is that he conquered death. This allowed for the resurrection of Christians, thus making earthly existence merely a preparation for the life to come.

Question 3

- (a) Stronger responses to this question commonly referenced The Two Greatest Commandments. There were also many references to The Ten Commandments and the fact that obedience to these shows concern for others. Excellent responses could have quoted Genesis in that all humans are made 'in the image of God'. Weaker responses simply gave a generic answer regarding concern for others.
- (b) Stronger responses explained why becoming a missionary might be important to some Christians. Reasons given included the idea that missionaries are inspired by the command to spread the Gospel to all parts of the world. For others it is important to live in the world and strive to improve that world in the name of Jesus who involved himself with all parts of society. Weaker responses simply stated what a missionary is.
- (c) Many responses agreed with the statement as they only examined the financial aspect of giving. This was a valid response, but it needed to be complemented by other lines of inquiry for candidates to access higher levels. Stronger responses recognised that most people can give a little of their time to others or can show concern and compassion. Some suggested that not giving anything to others is selfish and runs contrary to the religious lifestyle.

Section B Islam

Question 4

- (a) Most responses to this question gave generic answers which did not comment on the specific roles and responsibilities of Muslim women and were often stereotypical in nature. Large numbers of responses made this a question about the rights of Muslim women which was not what the question asked. Muslim dress, responsibilities regarding Friday prayer and the dowry could all have been used in this response to allow candidates to give specifically Muslim references. Changing roles could have also been considered.
- (b) Responses were mostly familiar with the fact that Muslims endeavour to marry. Less well acknowledged was the fact that marriage is decreed in the Qur'an and that it follows a Sunnah of The Prophet (pbuh). Stronger responses said that Muslim marriages are arranged and so getting married fulfils a duty that is endorsed by your family. Many responses also knew that Muslims feel it is a duty to marry as sexual relations should not take place outside of marriage.
- (c) Specific references to Muslim birth rites and the extent to which they may or may not be of benefit to the child were required for candidates to access the higher levels in this question. Some responses said that the symbolic element of whispering the adhan into an ear makes the birth ritual very beneficial. This is because it is among the first things that a child hears. Others commented that rituals do not benefit a child at all as children are too young to remember them. Many responses were generic in nature and therefore limited.

Question 5

- (a) Some responses looked at a wide variety of ways in which Muslims can help people in need through their local mosque. Stronger responses were able to refer to more than just zakah distribution, although this was a valid response. Some were able to suggest the role of the mosque as a refuge, particularly in the aftermath of a natural disaster. Excellent responses could describe how a mosque could organise prayer which can be given to help people in need.
- (b) Stronger responses were able to explain sawm and the significance of performing this Pillar of Islam. The circulation of wealth, derived from the concept of wealth belonging to God, was a feature of such responses. Weaker responses often described only what sawm is and did not comment on its significance.
- (c) The majority of responses agreed with the statement and many candidates referred to both zakah and sadaqah. Fewer responses referred to Muhammad's (pbuh) example. Weaker responses gave only one perspective and did not include other viewpoints. Other important parts of Islam such as the belief in one God were required to access the higher levels.

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates demonstrated an awareness of the importance of the nurture of the young in Islam. Many responses described the birth rites in Islam. Whilst weaker responses tended to be limited to this, stronger responses also recognised how the young are nurtured in terms of education and family life. The teaching of the Arabic language and the Qur'an as well as the role of parents could also have been referenced.
- (b) Weaker responses answered this question in a purely generic fashion. Whilst generic points regarding care for the elderly were relevant, responses needed to focus on Islam. Weaker responses also tended to describe how the elderly might be cared for rather than why they are cared for. Stronger responses could have highlighted that it is because the elderly have carried out their nurturing role that they should be cared for when they are old.
- (c) The majority of responses agreed with the statement. Stronger responses answered with a specific focus on Islam and were able to suggest that happiness and love are closely connected. Most responses attempted to show the advantages of a marriage based on love but suggested that arranged marriages can also involve love which may develop based upon mutual respect. Weaker responses tended to be stereotypical.

Section C Judaism

Question 7

- (a) Many responses were generic and showed little knowledge about the work of a Jewish agency in relieving poverty. Instead, many candidates described general ways that any agency can help. Stronger responses needed to include information on a specific local or international Jewish agency.
- (b) The majority of responses answered this question in a general fashion, referring to the importance of relief work rather than relief work's importance within Judaism. Stronger responses introduced the Jewish teachings of tzedakah and/or gemilut hasadim. Excellent responses could refer to the importance of social justice in Judaism and the belief that everyone was created equal.
- (c) Many responses to the statement were generic. To access the higher levels in these questions, candidates need to offer material that is specific to that religion. There were numerous ways that candidates could have referred to Judaism in their answers. Jews believe they are 'the chosen people' and that they should therefore be a light amongst nations, showing that all people deserve to be helped. This is furthered by the belief that G-d created everyone equal and so everyone deserves help. Conversely it could be suggested that if one has broken a central tenet of one's religion then that person will face judgement and so they do not deserve to be helped due to their sinful nature.

Question 8

- (a) There were a few very good responses to this question and most candidates knew how a boy prepares for Bar Mitzvah. The inclusion of some development of the preparations would have been useful. For example, if a response said that a boy must learn some Hebrew, this could be developed by saying that this allows him to recite a specific portion of the Torah. The laying of tefillin and the learning of the portion from the Torah were very popular as answers. Less well referenced was that the boy might be taught the history and traditions of Judaism and that this is an important preparation for his religious education.
- (b) Stronger responses distinguished between Bat Mitzvah and Bat Chayil, and this allowed for more discussion of the aspect of 'importance'. Excellent responses referred to the importance of women in Judaism and were able to highlight other areas that demonstrate this. The role of women in the home and in the raising of children were particularly pertinent. Weaker responses only described what happens at a ceremony to mark a girl becoming a woman in Judaism.
- (c) Most responses were able to discuss the statement from a variety of perspectives. Many said that some Jewish communities might find it challenging to source kosher items. Stronger responses were able to refer to items of clothing rather than just to kosher food. Others were able to suggest that in most Jewish communities keeping kosher is simply the way of life and that it is not difficult at all. It could also be suggested that the laws are very clear making them easy to follow.

Question 9

- (a) Many responses described a wide variety of features of a Jewish marriage ceremony. To help with time management, candidates should remember that they do not have to explain why those features are present. Stronger responses had a methodical way of describing the features. A good memory aid is to start from the beginning of the ceremony and work through in sequence to the end. Weaker responses gave only a list of features in bullet point form.
- (b) Weaker responses were purely generic. Whilst some generic reasons for the importance of the nurture of the young gained credit, stronger responses included specific aspects of Judaism. One line of explanation could be that it is incumbent upon many Jews to have children and to nurture them appropriately so that the religion is perpetuated. This became particularly important after The Shoah. Excellent responses could refer to the importance of the young being taught their Covenantal responsibilities.
- (c) Weaker responses had a narrow focus and tended to be stereotypical in their discussion of women in Judaism. Stronger responses recognised the importance of women in some areas of Jewish life. Others were able to state that Jews believe that everyone was created in G-d's image and

therefore everyone is equal. It would have been useful to for candidates to show recognition of the differing roles ascribed to men and women in Judaism. This could then be used for at least one line of argument in response to the statement. It could be suggested that the role of men in public worship is very different to that of women. This was seen by many as the key aspect of inequality.