

GCE



Chief Examiner's Report
Religious Studies

Summer Series 2017



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Education (GCE) in Religious Studies for this series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCE RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Chief Examiner's Report

Introduction

The quality of response generated by candidates in this new specification was very encouraging. Candidates appear to have been well prepared by their centres especially regarding time management considering the new assessment weightings. In most cases, responses were very evenly balanced between the (a) and (b) parts of questions. It was also apparent that the quality of critical assessment has improved significantly and centres are to be commended for the good work done here. In fact, the overall standard of answering represented a significant improvement on that seen in the legacy specification. The most successful candidates answered the questions directly and comprehensively, invariably picking up on nuances in the set tasks. The most important advice to candidates is that they should target the actual question on the exam paper and address it directly in their answer. Overall, the various papers provided successful platforms for all candidates to respond positively to the tasks set, while also allowing the stronger candidates to differentiate themselves. The Ethics module was by far the most popular unit. There was also some increase in candidates taking the Philosophy of Religion and Islam modules.

Assessment Unit AS 1 An Introduction to the Gospel of Luke

Questions 1 and 3 proved to be the most popular on the paper. Overall, candidates accessed the full range of bands and there was no evidence of candidates having insufficient time to complete their answers. Candidates appeared to be well prepared for the change in question weightings with most candidates providing answers of equal length and depth of detail. There were a minority of rubric violations. The main reason why many candidates did not access the top bands was because they failed to fully address the question set. Question 1 was answered well by most candidates and still proves to be a popular area of study. In Question 2 some candidates were unable to discuss both the finding and presentation in the Temple which the question required. Question 3 responses displayed the greatest differentiation. Question 4 exhibited some excellent responses, showing great depth of understanding of Salvation History.

Section A

- Q1 (a)** This was a very popular question with the clear majority completing this question in Section A. Those candidates who accessed top bands displayed comprehensive understanding of Lukan authorship and could differentiate clearly between internal and external sources. Higher band responses focused clearly on the two aspects of the question and addressed them fully with relevant examples from the text. Some candidates were unable to give evidence of Luke as a Doctor and/or companion of Paul thereby not answering the question and limited marks available for their response. Overall, the question was answered well and candidates were clearly able to access the top bands when they focused fully on the requirements of the question.
- (b)** Candidates who accessed the higher bands demonstrated excellent critical analysis proposing a counterclaim to the statement. Those candidates who discussed Luke's theological outlook or gave evidence for lack of historicity such as the difficulties with the census in Luke did very well. Some candidates struggled with the question and tried to use Lukan sources unsuccessfully as evidence that Luke was a historian. Some described Mark, "Q" and "L" but did

not use this knowledge to critically evaluate the statement. Some candidates gave reasons why Luke gave a historically accurate account of the life of Jesus, however they failed to critically evaluate the knowledge given and thus could not access the top bands.

- Q2 (a)** This was not a popular question among the candidature and most who attempted it were unable to draw out the religious purposes and provided basic responses. Candidates who could produce a highly-integrated answer demonstrating knowledge and the significance of the finding and presentation in the Temple achieved highly. Those candidates who outlined the narrative only were unable to access the higher bands.
- (b)** Candidates who attempted this question generally answered it more successfully than Part (a). Some candidates did not offer a counterclaim simply writing about women in the Gospel in general much as one would approach a question on the theme of women. Those candidates accessing higher bands could critically argue why women did or did not occupy the central role in the Infancy Narrative and debate successfully that Jesus was the key figure.

Section B

- Q3 (a)** This was a very popular question in Section B. It was generally attempted well, with higher band responses providing excellent focus on the question. Most candidates identified the Calming of the Storm and Feeding of the 5000 although some only provided a narrative account of both. Other candidates could provide commentary and understanding of the nature miracles including the Great Catch of Fish and were therefore able to access the top bands. Some candidates discussed only one miracle displaying knowledge while some gave an overview of the content of miracles in general. Those candidates who achieved lower band marks often did not mention nature miracles and made no attempt to discuss the religious significance of them. In general, this question was answered very successfully by most candidates.
- (b)** Band 5 answers provided very good critical analysis and links to other aspects of Human Experience. Those candidates accessing top bands gave a variety of examples including the Bible, Qur'an and Torah, with a focus on religious texts and the issue of literal interpretation. Some candidates misinterpreted the question and provided an overview of human experience examples without linking them to the question. There were many references to Islamic extremism and while valid to some extent, those candidates accessing lower bands were unable to connect it to the issue of religious texts.
- Q4 (a)** This question was quite popular and those candidates who attempted it answered it very well and appeared to be well prepared. Higher band answers clearly demonstrated knowledge and comprehensive understanding of the approaches of H. Conzelmann and J. A. Fitzmyer. There were many responses that were clearly Band 5 and exhibited accurate and knowledgeable analysis of other approaches to Salvation History other than the two main ones. Some responses tended to reflect a lack of basic knowledge. Lower band responses tended to focus on universal salvation without any real reference to an understanding of Luke's presentation of Salvation History.
- (b)** This question generated some good answers. Some candidates struggled to understand what the question was asking and therefore responses were varied and didn't always answer the question. Some candidates failed to address the aspect of the secular world and thus could not access top bands. Many had learnt a list of human experience examples and failed to link them to the actual question.

Assessment Unit AS 2 An Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles

In light of the new specification and assessment weightings candidates appear to have been well prepared and the questions gave the opportunity for the candidates to adequately express what they knew. In the main this was done to a good standard and excellently at times. There was a greater emphasis placed on critical analysis and the majority of the candidates responded well to this change in approach. The questions that were asked did not prove prohibitive in facilitating candidates from achieving the full range of marks. Candidates of differing abilities had the opportunity to respond positively to the questions. There were some responses that struggled to give for example, evidence from the text in Question 1 (a) and identify and specify Paul's difficulties with the Jews in Question 3 (a). The vast majority of candidates could select two questions, one from Section A and one from Section B. Most candidates had ample time to complete the paper. All four of the questions were attempted although Questions 2 and 4 were more popular than others. The most successful candidates answered the questions directly and comprehensively. Candidates should be aware that there is no stipulation to use scholarly quotes. However, if candidates choose to use them they should aim to do so with greater accuracy.

Section A

- Q1 (a)** This was not a popular question. The most successful responses drew on evidence from the text that supported the traditional purposes for the writing of Acts, for example, Stephen's speech promoting universalism. Other responses provided little evidence from the text but dealt well with the reasons for the writing of Acts. The least successful responses were rather general in their comments about the purposes for Acts, providing correct material but often with little understanding.
- (b)** This question provided a wide variety of responses. A small number of responses approached the task purely from the perspective of the historical accuracy of Acts whilst others only gave examples of the work of the main leaders like Peter and Paul. Neither of these approaches to the question facilitated candidates accessing the full range of marks. The most successful responses dealt with both aspects of the question.
- Q2 (a)** This was a very popular question and prompted a large number of responses. The majority of responses were very good. The most successful responses answered all aspects of the task, providing not only a very good level of knowledge of the Pentecost event, including Peter's speech, but also a high level of understanding and analysis of the event, for example, the Old Testament connection with the symbols of wind and fire and the three suggested interpretations for 'speaking in tongues'. Furthermore, the best responses provided analysis of the significance of Pentecost for the first Christians and its importance for the early Church. The least successful responses provided a purely narrative approach to the task.
- (b)** This task was dealt with well in the main and successful responses provided evidence and example in their argument. Many identified a symbiotic relationship between preaching and miracles and their importance in the spread of the Gospel. The healing of the lame man was a popular example of how the apostles continued the healing ministry of Jesus.

Section B

- Q3 (a)** This question was not as popular. There were a variety of levels of response. The most successful clearly answered the question, making specific reference to Paul's experience with the Jews on his first missionary journey e.g. in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch and provided a high level of knowledge and understanding of the other events of the journey. Less successful responses took a narrative approach only and displayed some confusion e.g. that the Lystrans were Jewish.
- (b)** The most successful responses showed confidence in answering the question and providing relevant human experience such as the difficulties religious believers can have in expressing their views in public e.g. the controversy surrounding Pastor James McConnell's views on Islam or Asher's Bakery. Many responses showed a good ability to establish an argument and provide critical analysis in the context of human experience. Some less successful responses provided examples without analysis or argument.
- Q4 (a)** This was a very popular question. Candidates with a range of abilities could identify the role and importance of Philip. Many provided a very good emphasis on the consequences of Philip's role as a deacon and evangelist in Samaria for the spread of the Christian message and his encounter with the Ethiopian official, displaying high levels of knowledge and understanding the text. The most successful responses displayed a balance in addressing the different elements of the question. The least successful answers were narrative driven and some focused solely on the meeting with the official.
- (b)** This was a new question and stronger candidates were able to utilize well their skills of critical analysis, making good reference to other aspects of human experience. The strongest responses focused on a variety of sacred texts giving very good evaluation of their impact both positive and negative on the lives of religious believers. Other strong responses dealt with the Bible alone. A small number of responses were unable to access the full range of marks as they gave little analysis of the points they made.

Assessment Unit AS 3 An Introduction to Themes in the Old Testament

Most candidates appeared to find the questions accessible and in general produced answers relevant to the tasks set. In addition, there was evidence that appropriate and equal time had been devoted to Parts (a) and (b), indicating that candidates had been well prepared for the new specification. Question 2 was most popular by a considerable margin, Questions 3 and 4 attracted a comparable number of candidates, while Question 1 proved least popular. It may be noted that in several cases, candidates performed better in the AO2 task than in the AO1 task. Overall, the paper provided a successful platform for all candidates to respond positively to the tasks set, while also allowing more able candidates to differentiate themselves.

Section A

- Q1 (a)** Virtually all candidates demonstrated knowledge of details of the call of Isaiah and his criticisms of Judah. Stronger candidates could discuss the relevance of these in greater depth. Consequently, they were better able to show that essentially Isaiah was called to failure. They were also more specific about Isaiah's criticisms of Judean society, including how serious they were, resulting in Judah being compared to Sodom and Gomorrah. Less successful candidates tended to use generalities that could have applied to any literature of prophetic criticism. Few, if any, candidates examined how Isaiah's call was significant not only for the historical Isaiah of Jerusalem but also for the later Isaiah tradition, or how Isaiah Chapter 1 introduces the theme of social justice for the entire book.
- (b)** The most common way to approach this question was to sequentially work through a range of covenants, commenting individually on their level of exclusivity. Taking this approach, a significant number of candidates competently categorized covenants in terms of their primary orientation on an exclusive to inclusive axis. More nuanced answers noted those elements within covenants that tended towards exclusivity, and those that tended towards inclusivity. While all candidates had evidently been taught the nature of covenant, in addressing this task the most sophisticated incorporated discussion of a wider range of texts, including Amos 9, Isaiah 19, and Isaiah 56, and understood that these texts of quite radical inclusivity stood in tension with the extreme exclusivity of the Ezra-Nehemiah covenant renewal movement.
- Q2 (a)** While this question mentioned David in the initial quotation, its focus was on the reasons for the rise of kingship in Israel. Its scope was therefore wider than the material pertaining to David and required more than a discussion of the career of David. Less successful candidates certainly demonstrated knowledge of the rise of David, but did not put this into a wider context. Taking this approach, a variety of materials about David were cited, not all of which were meaningfully related to a discussion of the rise of kingship. Stronger candidates explored external and internal factors contributing to Israel's demand for a king, before tracing David's consolidation of power as he superseded Saul and initiated measures that began to overcome reservations about kingship.
- (b)** It was encouraging to note that all candidates who answered this question were aware that David was a flawed character, and consequently presented arguments representing both sides of the debate. On the positive aspect of David's character, nearly everyone referred to his defeat of Goliath, while on the negative mention was consistently made to his relationship with Bathsheba. Using the Bathsheba narrative, candidates regularly took the opportunity

to identify the commandments David violated, and some noted how this signified that he fell short of the ideal king envisaged by Deuteronomy 17. Less competent answers tended to go into too much unnecessary narrative detail rather than using sufficient text based evidence to build a case. The most engaging and best developed answers consisted of well supported, balanced arguments that had a clear perspective. These were often written with energy and a degree of engaged passion. Every answer would have been strengthened by reference to how David was remembered in Deuteronomistic thought (1st Kings 15:5), and discussion of this as part of the Deuteronomistic History.

Section B

- Q3 (a)** In addressing this task, many candidates deployed the narrative of Elijah's competition with the priests of Baal and the story of Naboth's Vineyard as key examples of confrontation with royal power. Working from this material, stronger answers identified the problem of apostasy and syncretism, leading to injustice in society, as central to Elijah's motivation. Less successful answers relied too much on narrative detail without adequately putting this in a wider discursive framework. Overall, answers would have been strengthened by locating the roots of Elijah's confrontation with royal power in Mosaic covenantal faith, which tended to be hostile to monarchy and the type of society it invariably created.
- (b)** Most candidates engaged with the task relevantly and enthusiastically. Drawing from what appeared to be a well-prepared store of largely contemporary examples in which politics and religion were perceived to have created a dangerous mix, a variety of examples of human experience were cited. The most popular of these included same sex marriage, abortion, and the ISIS Caliphate. Cogent arguments were made both in support of faith-based involvement in politics and against. Stronger candidates differentiated themselves by being able to present both sides of a debate before indicating their view. Less successful answers tended to give opinions rather than provide evaluation.
- Q4 (a)** This was a popular question, and answers indicated a good level of knowledge in most cases. Candidates showed that in general they were conversant with the socio-economic background to the prophecy, the social injustice this gave rise to, and details about Amos' call. While virtually everyone could assess Amos as a prophet of doom, more able candidates identified how God's initial relenting in the "five visions" eventually culminated in a condemnation from which there was to be no last-minute reprieve. The most able candidates put discussion of doom in the context of Amos' subversion of the concept of the "Day of the Lord." A lot of answers knew how Amos ended on a note of hope, and the best of these included discussion of the final redaction of the book and the reasons for this.
- (b)** Nearly all candidates attempting this task did so by agreeing that true religion will always involve social justice. In addition to Liberation Theology and justice oriented development agencies such as Trócaire, Tear Fund and Christian Aid, figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Oscar Romero, Gandhi, and Nelson Mandela appeared prominently in many answers. Stronger candidates were more successful in exploring the religious motivations of these organisations and individuals. It should be noted that in this task, while examples of arguments supporting true religion always involving social justice were strong, the counter-argument tended to be less well developed or, in a few cases, non-existent.

Assessment Unit AS 4 The Origins and Development of the Early Christian Church to AD 325

The vast majority of candidates successfully completed two questions. A small number broke the rubric and completed two questions from the same section of the paper. This is the first year of the revised specification and it is encouraging to see that teachers have prepared their pupils well for this. In most cases, responses were evenly balanced between the (a) and (b) parts of each question. Question 1 was significantly more popular than Question 2. Questions 3 and 4 were equally popular.

Section A

- Q1 (a)** This was a popular question for which candidates were well prepared. Most could refer to a broad range of political and religious factors which led to the rapid growth of the church. Less sophisticated answers tended to focus too much on one factor and were characterised by listing the factors rather than explaining their significance as a cause of growth. They failed to show that some factors were more significant than others. Some candidates lost focus and described the geographical spread of Christianity. The best answers could demonstrate that political and religious factors were intertwined.
- (b)** The best answers gave a balanced response offering a wide range of evidence and examples of individuals from all levels of society. Less successful responses tended to be general in nature and talked about the perception of Christianity as a religion of the poor, of women and of outcasts. These responses were often one-sided and did not produce specific examples.
- Q2 (a)** This question was attempted by only a small number of candidates, often from the same centre. There were some excellent responses which focused on the two specified sources but these were in the minority. Most responses were very general and showed signs of a rehearsed response on the development and practice of the Eucharist, referring superficially to all the sources which had been studied. The least successful responses failed to engage in any way with the contribution of Hippolytus or Cyprian. Candidates need to be prepared to identify the focus of a question and guide their response towards the precise demands of the task.
- (b)** This question was generally well answered, more so than Part (a). Top band responses gave a range of evidence to support the statement and considerable analysis about the importance of other aspects of worship e.g. baptism. Less successful responses engaged in discussion about the importance of the Eucharist today, which was not the focus of the question.

Section B

- Q3 (a)** There were many excellent responses to this question. Most candidates were able to identify the main themes of unity, heresy and martyrdom and to explain their significance in the context of the early second century. The best responses referred to specific letters and included a wide range of accurate, relevant quotes. Less successful responses showed an awareness of the themes but had limited or no discussion. A small number of candidates confused Ignatius and Justin.

- (b)** Responses varied in quality. Less successful responses did not distinguish between persecution and martyrdom. Some simply agreed with the claim and seemed totally unaware of the existence of persecution or martyrdom in the world today. Good responses were able to make a comparison between western society and parts of the world where religious faith can lead to persecution and martyrdom. Mature responses often referred to Islamic State and the issue of suicide bombers. Some candidates also wrote about other challenges faced by Christians e.g. nominalism or secularisation.
- Q4 (a)** Most candidates could write in reasonable detail about the two accounts of Constantine's conversion. Most could differentiate the two sources. However, only a small number of responses related the influences of his earlier life to his conversion. Many simply wrote about his rise to power or his religious policy, which was not the focus of the question. Top band responses could trace how earlier events in his life may have influenced his conversion and also to analyse the nature of the conversion experience and its influence on his later decisions.
- (b)** There were some very good responses where candidates made the distinction between a sudden dramatic conversion experience and a more gradual realisation of faith. These were well illustrated with relevant examples. The best answers were well balanced and highlighted the fact that religious conversion is a very personal experience, often peculiar to the individual concerned. Less successful responses were largely narrative and made little attempt at evaluation.

Assessment Unit AS 5 The Celtic Church in Ireland in the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Centuries

Candidates appeared to have no difficulty selecting two questions. In Section A of the paper a clear majority of candidates chose to answer Question 1 while in Section B Question 3 was slightly more popular. There were a number of highly competent answers across all questions in the paper. It was clear that a minority of responses did not sufficiently address the focus of the question asked. The importance of reading the question and tailoring the response to the focus of the question asked is crucial. Most candidates managed their time effectively and were able to answer all questions required in the allocated time. In addition, candidates appeared to successfully divide their time across the paper in line with the marks awarded for questions.

Section A

- Q1 (a)** This was a highly popular question. Stronger responses were those that clearly dealt with the task focusing on how the social and religious background that existed in pre-Patrician Ireland influenced Christianity. Excellent responses clearly identified how specific aspects of the social and religious background directly and indirectly influenced the development and spread of Christianity in Ireland. Some of the less successful responses did not address the question fully. These responses focused exclusively on outlining the social and religious background with no reference to how that background influenced Christianity.
- (b)** The task was answered quite well with candidates clearly understanding what the question required of them. The stronger responses used references in the early sources regarding the mission of Palladius as evidence to critically assess the view that Patrick took the credit for the work of Palladius. A minority of candidates found this question challenging. Some of the less successful responses examined in a very general way the work of Palladius and Patrick. These responses made little or no reference to the early sources concerning the mission of Palladius or indeed the suggestion that Patrick took the credit for the work of Palladius.
- Q2 (a)** This was the least popular question in Section A. A majority of candidates chose to focus on the contribution of Enda of Aran and Finnian of Clonard to explain the development of monasticism in Ireland. Most responses revealed a good knowledge and understanding of the monastic founders chosen. There were some excellent responses which combined detail on the two monastic founders chosen with how these individuals made a specific contribution to the development of monasticism in Ireland.
- (b)** This question was well answered. Most candidates were able to critically assess the view that Celtic monasticism was both limited and negative in its influence. There were some excellent answers that critically outlined how some could argue that Celtic monasticism was limited and negative while others could argue it was both influential and positive. These responses were notable in the way they used evidence and examples to support arguments made.

Section B

- Q3 (a)** It appeared that a number of candidates found this task to be challenging. The stronger responses focused on the task in terms of outlining the ways in which the Penitentials are important sources that reveal information about life and religious practice in the Celtic Church. These responses took evidence and examples from the various Penitential texts to illustrate points made. Some of the less successful responses focused on either outlining the background to the Penitential texts or giving a basic overview of the features of the Penitentials.
- (b)** There were some excellent responses where candidates made reference to a wide variety of other aspects of human experience with many offering meaningful critical assessment. Candidates outlined examples from a variety of religious traditions highlighting a variety of practices and individuals in relation to self-denial and asceticism. While there were many high level responses illustrating a clear grasp of the task, a small number of responses appeared to struggle to identify any positive aspects of self-denial and asceticism for the religious life.
- Q4 (a)** This was a well answered question. Candidate responses had a good understanding of Muirchu's Life of Patrick. The stronger responses were those that dealt with the task set out by examining the importance of Muirchu's Life of Patrick while addressing the issue of whether or not it seeks to edify and enhance the religious authority and sanctity of Patrick. Less successful responses were unable to deal with the quotation and confined discussion to the importance of Muirchu's Life of Patrick generally.
- (b)** The stronger responses made reference to other aspects of human experience while critically assessing the view that religious writings are no longer relevant or important in a secular age. Candidates explored the relevance and importance of a range of religious writings across a variety of religious traditions. Less successful responses were either unable to move beyond exploring the importance of hagiography as a religious writing or did not address the focus of the question by examining the relevance or importance of religious writings in a secular age.

Assessment Unit AS 6 An Introduction to Islam

The majority of candidates were able to select two questions, one from Section A and one from Section B. Most candidates managed to complete the paper in the time allocated. It was interesting and encouraging to see that candidates had divided their time equally in order to give time to the AO2 task. There was a marked improvement in the way in which AO2 tasks were handled. All four of the questions were attempted although some questions were more popular than others. It was clear that candidates were well prepared for the examination and the questions were accessible to them. The examination did allow candidates to respond at their own level.

Section A

- Q1 (a)** This was a popular question. There were some comprehensive answers where candidates were able to focus their response on the question and were able to describe the rituals of Hajj in detail as well as dealing with the more challenging aspects of the question which were to explain the importance of the rituals and comment on how it was both an outer physical journey as well as a personal internal journey. These responses demonstrated both detailed knowledge and understanding, which was often underpinned by scholarship. Weaker responses demonstrated a very basic, narrow or general knowledge of Hajj, did not address the importance or did not acknowledge the quotation.
- (b)** Some candidates were able to refer to a wide range of evidence in order to evaluate whether or not the Pillars are easily observed in an Islamic society. Most agreed with the statement and suggested reasons why living in an Islamic society would be helpful e.g. most of the people would be following the same rituals, public holidays, living amongst Muslims who have an understanding, schools and employers would be sympathetic. Some answers defended the claim by saying that it is much more challenging to observe the Pillars if living in a non-Muslim society due to being misunderstood, being in the minority, lack of understanding from schools and employers. Very few responses considered possible difficulties of observing the Pillars when living in a Muslim society e.g. the pressure to conform. The strongest responses were those where alternative or counter-arguments were used and there were clear, critical and developed arguments. Weaker responses tended to describe the Pillars, offer very few arguments, were one-sided, were repetitious or lacked development.
- Q2 (a)** This was a popular question and in the main was handled well. Comprehensive responses were able to target the four aspects of the question e.g. the practice of prayer, the significance of prayer and comments relating to both the individual and the community. Some responses, however, only outlined aspects of prayer but did not address the deeper part of the question which was to do with significance. A number of responses did not address 'individual' and 'community' at all which was necessary to access the higher bands. The weaker responses tended to present knowledge in a partial or generalised way or did not offer any explanatory comments to demonstrate understanding.
- (b)** Some candidates were able to refer to a range of arguments in order to evaluate the extent to which the mosque is more essential to the Islamic faith than the Imam. Most candidates could offer a balanced argument where they began by agreeing with the statement, for example, the mosque provides a centre for worship, a social centre and a place to access advice and education. Many candidates then looked at alternative or counter-arguments and considered the diverse roles of an Imam. The strongest responses were those where there

were clear, critical and developed arguments. Weaker responses tended to only offer descriptions of the features and functions of a mosque or of the roles of an Imam without making use of this material to write a critical analysis. Some answers offered a limited number of arguments, which were repetitious or lacked development.

Section B

- Q3 (a)** This was a popular question. Comprehensive answers offered a detailed summary of both aspects of the question and described aspects of Muhammad's life after the Hijra which demonstrated that he was a 'prophet' and a 'statesman'. The most successful responses were able to offer accurate information from the correct section of Muhammad's life and explanatory comments throughout. The responses which accessed the upper bands were able to target all aspects of the question. Some answers were quite general or did not draw on the correct section of Muhammad's life or did not address 'prophet' or 'statesman'. A considerable number of answers were able to deal with 'statesman' more easily than 'prophet'. There was a wide range in the quality of the answers to this question. The level of detail, explanation and development served to differentiate between the responses.
- (b)** Some answers considered reasons why religious and political leadership could create opposition and the examples of William Wilberforce, Martin Luther King and David Ford were used to defend this. Some responses considered possible counter-claims to the statement, arguing that religious and political views may well be closely related and wrote about Islamic countries where Shariah is the legal and political system. Some answers gave examples from the debate over homosexuality, slavery and social injustice. Some responses indicated that the question was difficult to interpret and respond to. The majority of responses did try to draw arguments from other aspects of human experience, which was encouraging. However, there can be a tendency to describe stories related to key people rather than using them to produce a strong critical assessment. The most successful responses were those which were able to focus on the question, focus on critical assessment, offer a counter-argument and make a number of points which were defended with human experience. Candidates need to be careful not to allow taught course material to dominate their responses as it limits their time and the overall quality of the response.
- Q4 (a)** This was a popular question and, in general, it was handled well. The most successful responses were those which focused on the two aspects of the question e.g. the process of the compilation of the Qur'an and the importance of the final structure. Comprehensive answers demonstrated both knowledge and understanding. Some responses struggled with presenting a detailed and precise outline of the process. A number of responses did not address the 'importance of the structure', which was the most challenging part of the question. It was encouraging to see that candidates were aware of the Meccan and Medinan Surahs and how this was relevant to structure. Very few responses were aware of the law of abrogation where later revelations supersede earlier revelations and the difficulties connected with this when the structure does not reflect the chronology. The quality and coherence of the responses did distinguish between the answers offered.
- (b)** Candidates coped quite well with this question although some found it challenging. The most successful answers were those where there was clear critical analysis. A number of responses were able to consider why it is difficult to preserve religious belief and identity in a secular age and referred to how

society has changed, for example, the challenge of atheism; the disputes over wearing religious symbols; changing attitudes to morality, gender, sexuality; society as less religious and how it is more materialistic. There were references to the Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter. Some responses did not seem to fully understand the word 'secular' or address it adequately which influenced how the question was interpreted and responded to. Many answers were able to integrate other aspects of human experience in a relevant way and reinforce the points being made. The most successful responses were those which focused on critical assessment, offered a counter-argument, made a number of points and then defended these with examples drawn from human experience. Candidates need to be careful not to allow taught course material to dominate as it limits access to higher mark bands.

Assessment Unit AS 7 Foundations of Ethics with Special Reference to issues in Medical Ethics

The feedback from the examining team was that in general candidates made a commendable effort given the perceived rigour of this unit. Overall, candidates performed well with the overall standard of answering representing a significant improvement on that seen in the legacy specification. For a start, candidates were producing much more balanced answers throughout their paper. In most cases, responses were evenly balanced between the (a) and (b) parts of each question. It was also apparent that the quality of critical assessment has improved significantly and centres are to be commended for the work done here. Time management was an issue for only a few candidates. Questions 1, 2 and 3 were the most popular. There seemed to be continuity between candidate's question choices and their centre. To improve, the most important advice to candidates would be to target the actual question on the exam paper and address it directly in their answer.

- Q1 (a)** Nearly all candidates could draw links between the moral teaching of the Decalogue and medical ethical issues. Most tended to focus their answer on 'Thou shall not kill' and the issues of abortion and euthanasia. Stronger candidates made a range of links between medical ethics and commandments around: 'worship only God', 'honour your father and mother', 'do not commit adultery' and 'do not covet'. Some candidates were very creative and linked respect for parents to an anti-euthanasia stance and 'do not covet' to the issue of designer babies. Very few candidates made no reference at all to medical ethics. Only the strongest candidates could address whether the Decalogue was in fact 'morally binding'. Very few gave straight exegesis on the Commandments.
- (b)** Most candidates showed awareness of Natural Moral Law and while there were some who gave a largely knowledge based account of the theory (these being the weaker responses), most attempted to assess if it was the best ethical approach for guidance on ethical dilemmas. Stronger candidates looked at alternative ethical approaches to Natural Law and provided supporting examples.
- Q2 (a)** The responses to this question were generally good but a considerable number failed to address the angle 'with particular reference to the nature of love'. Most candidates hit the 'nature of love' by default through the recounting of their knowledge and understanding of the theory. The best answers were focused on the entirety of the question throughout and made a clear and well considered effort to outline the centrality of agape and how it can be applied to ethical dilemmas. A small number of very good responses compared agape to other types of love to clarify the specific nature of agape love.
- (b)** This task elicited some very good responses which argued that theories such as utilitarianism and situation ethics allowed too much freedom and were therefore dangerous as abortion and euthanasia would be deemed acceptable. There were good counter arguments as well, for example, Situation Ethics is underpinned by the Christian understanding of love so therefore how could it be unchristian. Also, Natural Moral Law could be perceived as dangerous and unchristian due to its absolutist stance on moral issues, for example homosexuality and contraception. Less successful responses tended to focus on one side of the argument. Some simply compared teleological and deontological approaches. Better candidates were able to provide clear analysis of the teleological approach and a more balanced response. Strong answers included specific reference as to why teleological approaches may be considered 'unchristian' and were able to give some alternative approaches.

- Q3 (a)** While this was a popular question the quality of response varied considerably with the performance very dependent on whether the candidate knew the acts/omissions doctrine. Many candidates simply gave an account of the issues in the euthanasia debate with a number hitting the question by default due to their awareness of the passive/active distinction. However, there were some highly impressive answers which displayed clear awareness of the acts/omissions doctrine, Rachel's problems with it and how the doctrine is central to the passive/active distinction in the debate. A small number of candidates referred to the views of Helga Kuhse, a utilitarian moral philosopher and bioethicist who agrees with Rachel's. Some candidates drew attention to other central issues in the debate, for example, the Sanctity of Life principle, the slippery slope argument.
- (b)** Most candidates demonstrated an awareness of the distinction between absolutism and relativism and were therefore able to provide a coherent response. While there was some very good critical assessment offered, unfortunately there was in many cases limited reference to other aspects of human experience. Less successful responses resorted to taught course material, for example, giving a synopsis of Natural Moral Law and/or teleological approaches such as Utilitarianism and Situation Ethics. The best responses included examples from other aspects of human experience, which could support and sustain points of analysis. A small number of candidates argued that Narrative Ethics provided a much better option in terms of how ethical issues should be approached today.
- Q4 (a)** This appeared to be the least popular question on the paper. This question required candidates to draw connections between differing views on embryo status and bioethical developments. Stronger candidates could do this with ease and some gave clear reference to official church teaching and secular views as well as scholarly opinion, for example, Singer. They made a direct link between these views and how they could inform the morality of a whole range of bioethical issues. However, there were some candidates who only focused on either the stages of embryonic development or the morality of new bioethical developments. Surprisingly, some candidates appeared to lack awareness of the personhood debate. There was some confusion between being human and being a person.
- (b)** This task was generally well answered. Most candidates focused on the question and could assess how NRTs may undermine the equal dignity of individuals. Top responses included reference to the dignity of parents, children and others involved in the reproductive process with reference made to case studies from wider human experience. There were some excellent attempts to link arguments to the case studies as opposed to generally discussing, for example, saviour siblings and designer babies. Mid-range answers focused primarily on the dignity of the mother and child. Some lower band responses gave a general analysis with no reference to wider human experience.

Assessment Unit AS 8 An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion

There was a relatively small candidature for this module. However, a good range of examination centres was evidenced. Most candidates appeared to find the questions accessible and in general produced answers relevant to the set tasks. In addition, there was evidence that appropriate and equal time had been allocated to answer the respective Part (a) and (b) tasks. There was a marked improvement in the way AO2 tasks were managed.

Section A

- Q1 (a)** This was a very popular question with some very strong responses to this task. Many candidates explored Aquinas' Three Ways in some depth. Differentiation was primarily seen in precision of responses, with some candidates identifying some but not all of the premises which comprised each of Aquinas' Three Ways. The most popular analogies cited were those of wood and fire, and the archer. In some cases, candidates referenced the influence of Plato and Aristotle on Aquinas' view of the Unmoved Mover. A number of candidates explored the subsequent use of Aquinas' Cosmological argument by Copleston in his BBC radio debate with Russell. Several candidates noted that the Kalam argument avoided the issue of infinite regression. While some candidates also opted to critique the argument, this was not compulsory. Top band responses provided a structured and coherent account of Aquinas' Cosmological argument using very relevant technical vocabulary, quotations and scholarly views.
- (b)** Some candidates opted to respond to this question by focusing on Aquinas' Three Ways and whether these could successfully convince the unbeliever. Others opted to widen their debate to evaluate one or more Classical arguments including, most commonly, the Cosmological argument and the Ontological argument. Both approaches to the task were equally valid. Most candidates opted to both support and challenge the stated claim with the views of named critics such as Hitchens, Dawkins and Hume cited by some candidates. Other candidates explored the problem of evil and the existence of miracles as part of their responses, and while wider challenges were useful the primary focus of the question was on whether the 'proofs' for the existence of God failed to convince the unbeliever. Most candidates argued that the lack of empirical evidence meant that all arguments would fail to convince committed atheists.
- Q2 (a)** This was a less popular question. Most candidates opted to explore the writings of Camus and/or Dostoyevsky in their responses with most exploring the issue of the suffering of children. Camus' depiction of a child dying of the Plague and Dostoyevsky's account of the abuse of a young girl were explored by a number of candidates. Some candidates also referenced the views of contemporary thinkers and writers such as Richards Dawkins and Stephen Fry on the issue of Divine benevolence in the face of human suffering. The views of theistic writers including Peter Vardy, Richard Swinburne and C.S. Lewis were also mentioned. There was some differentiation of levels of response to this question with some answers summarizing atheistic views in broad terms but lacking specific writings or teachings to sustain their response. In some cases, candidates simply retold the Irenaean and/or Augustinian theodicy. However, this was the focus of the AO2 task and the primary focus of this question was the work of modern writers.

- (b)** There were some very good responses to this task with the majority of candidates opting to compare the Irenaean and Augustinian theodicies. In some cases, candidates spent time detailing two or more responses to the problem of evil and suffering rather than evaluating them as the task demanded. Among the solutions explored by candidates were the Irenaean and Augustinian theodicies, the Freewill Defense and/or the views of Process theodicy. Most candidates provided an argument for and against the stated claim. Common criticisms included the lack of Biblical foundation within the Irenaean theodicy. Issues associated with Irenaeus' view of universal salvation were cited in a number of responses.

Section B

- Q3 (a)** This was the most popular question in Section B. Differentiation of levels of response was seen primarily in candidates' exploration of Christian views of miracles. In some cases, candidates produced lengthy challenges to the Christian view of miracle and while some critique may be valid the primary focus of the question was on the Christian understanding of miracles. Among the scholars cited were Aquinas, C.S. Lewis, Holland and Wiles. Biblical evidence was cited by a number of candidates within their response to support their exploration of Christian views. Some candidates differentiated between realist and anti-realist views of miracles.
- (b)** This debate was particularly well handled by candidates who had clearly prepared contemporary atheistic challenges to the concept of miracles. However, in some cases candidates cited the views of scholars explicitly named on their taught course including for example Hume's rejection of miracle and it is important to note that candidates must move beyond taught course materials in their Section B debates to explore other aspects of human experience. Most candidates provided both support and counterclaim to the statement supplied. Healing miracles including those reported and investigated at Lourdes were commonly cited in support of the continued existence and validity of miracles. A number of candidates explored "weaker miracles" including the Hudson river plane landing and the Chilean miners rescue. Several candidates argued that the question could itself be challenged as it implied that science and belief is inevitably in conflict, a very valid point to draw. The miracle of creation was explored by a number of candidates together with the impact of the Big Bang and evolutionary theories on theistic views of creation.
- Q4 (a)** While this was a less popular question there were some very detailed responses provided, with a number of candidates able to explore Hick's views on pluralism in some considerable depth. Relevant analogies such as the three blind men and the elephant and that of the mountain were recorded by some candidates. In some cases, candidates recorded simply a biography of Hick's life and work rather than exploring his views on pluralism. In a small number of cases candidates simply explored what pluralism in general was and while some contextual overview of pluralism was valid, nonetheless the focus of the set task was on Hick's views.
- (b)** Most candidates opted to explore Humanist views within their debates with a number exploring the views of the British Humanist Association and Richard Dawkins. A number of candidates noted that many theists were unhappy with the concept of pluralism, including both inclusivists and exclusivists. Pluralism by seeing all faiths as equal, theists argue, may in fact devalue all faiths. Some candidates noted that many British corporations and institutions including the BBC opted for a pluralist approach. There were some good evaluations with a number of candidates able to provide a fluent and well informed assessment of modern pluralism, notably in the face of religious fundamentalism.

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