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Examiners' Report

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6771: Coursework

Religious Studies coursework is an invaluable component of the specification that provides candidates with an opportunity for independent learning. It is clear that many candidates have seized the chance to research a topic of interest to them and as a result produced an interesting, scholarly piece that exemplified a high level of sustained critical investigation and analysis. The increasing number of candidates who are achieving an excellent mark witnesses to the seriousness with which coursework is approached by the centre and the student.

Successful candidates maintained a reasonable balance between the demands of Assessment Objective 1 (AO1) and Assessment Objective 2 (AO2). There was evidence of thorough investigation for AO1 that was presented in a scholarly fashion fully justifiable through a sound referencing system and bibliography. It was encouraging to note obvious interest in the subject evidenced through reading and research. Candidates were engaged with their topic and encouraged to produce good quality work using a range of appropriate resources. The standard of work produced by the best candidates showed that previous years' high standards have been maintained and in some cases raised.

A larger number of centres are offering a broader range of titles and this suggests that candidates have a wider choice that meets the creative needs of more able candidates. There are some centres that offer a selected range of titles and a standard methodology however, generally these centres were able to produce a good range of marks which included the highest marks available.

Essays that achieved the higher levels of AO1 used a range of sources and candidates demonstrated clear understanding of the issues involved through the perspectives/structure brought to their work. Higher levels of AO2 clearly argued a case throughout the essay which culminated in a thoroughly justified conclusion.

Less able candidates tended to tackle the AO2 component in an 'add on' fashion which resulted in a one paragraph conclusion. A number of good candidates produced good research but failed to answer the question set. There is room for improvement in both assessment objectives - this might involve choosing a question that steers clear of unnecessary biographical detail or improving research through using resources that are aimed at a higher level. Too many candidates at the lower end used material that is intended for GCSE work or downloaded material from the internet which they used in a cut and paste style. Internet sites should be used critically to avoid using material that is difficult to digest or that clearly does not meet AS requirements.

There are study skills issues that emerge each year that merit attention and would help to improve the quality of work of many candidates. Some essays can be improved by a systematic attempt to improve paragraph techniques that avoid brief paragraphs devoid of analytic content. On the other hand candidates who write very long paragraphs, which show a lack of discrimination in the selection of material, would benefit from learning how to sign post their paragraphs efficiently to relate to the overall essay plan.

Good practice was clearly evident in that centres have been marking efficiently and professionally referring to the AO1/AO2 objectives in the mark scheme either on the essay or on the assessment form. These centres fully justified their marks and there was strong evidence of internal moderation.

Administration

Most centres sent their work in to meet the deadline and followed the procedures accurately with a minority of these centres showing an exemplary standard of administration.

However, there was a range of administration issues, which centres should be aware of, that created problems for the moderation process. These included:

- The coursework was not sent until requested by the moderator. Coursework should be despatched to arrive with the moderator by the deadline published each session on the examinations timetable.
- Work sent to the wrong address, please send work only to the address provided with the OPTEMS forms.
- The work of the highest and lowest candidate not sent if they were outside the pre-selected sample. Please ensure that the work of the candidates with the highest and lowest mark is included with the sample if it is not already part of the sample.
- OPTEMS forms. The top OPTEMS form should be sent Edexcel and the yellow copy should be included with the sample sent to the moderator.

The justification of marks would be clearer if there was some annotation on scripts. In many cases annotation was limited to the final mark only with no indication of AO1 /AO2 breakdown. The Principals and Procedures of marking document found at the start of the published mark schemes indicates how examiners annotate written scripts, these principals can also be applied to the annotation of coursework.

Conclusion

It is a unique privilege to be involved in coursework assessment and to enjoy the excellent range of work produced by candidates who clearly are engaged with the subject and who want to excel in their work. Indeed any candidate who produces work that matches the best of their ability is to be congratulated for acquiring skills that will enable further progression. The hard work and dedication of centres empowers candidates to engage with religious studies and coursework itself provides the opportunity for in depth engagement that short exams cannot provide.

Comments on Specific Topics

Philosophy Of Religion

Popular topics included mind-body topics, existentialism, psychology and sociology of religion with some candidates focussing on an in-depth study of an important scholars related to these areas such as Descartes, Kierkegaard, Marx, Freud and Jung. In this section the studies offered were of a consistently high standard with the best works being of undergraduate level. Less able candidates generally penalised themselves in the AO2 section rather than on the AO1 element.

There were more essays on Religious Experience this year which reflects a growing interest in this subject. Most of these were written to a high standard.

Old Testament/Jewish Bible

Candidates at the top end produced impressive pieces of work with commendable scholarship and use of an outstanding range of academic material. Middle/lower range candidates used material that they did not understand or found it difficult to critically analyse.

There was a significant increase in the number of candidates who dealt with Religion and Science topics this year. The best candidates produced a well researched piece of work and the middle/lower range candidates produced work which could be improved by the use of scholars who are currently contributing to this debate.

Religious Ethics

As in recent years the coursework in this field ranged from high standard work to that which made little progress beyond GCSE level. The best essays were well informed and explorative and offered a scholarly exegesis of how religious teachings and philosophical influences impact on ethical issues.

Essays on abortion and euthanasia still predominate. It is often in these essays that candidates present a great deal of information, but fail to focus on the philosophical and ethical arguments related to the debates and depending on the demands of their selected study. Some candidates presented too much biological information or a range of definitions and pictures that were a prelude to a piece of work hovering around GCSE level. Many essays could have benefited from the use of an ethical structure that lent itself to better quality analysis of key concepts such as autonomy, quality of life, sanctity of life, ensoulment and personhood.

Candidates answering the Martin Luther King and Malcolm X questions tended to be too biographical/historical and did not include enough theological assessment in the evaluation and comparison of their lives. This topic required attention to the ethical issues surrounding human rights and equality - again the bibliography used by many candidates was of GCSE level.

New Testament

As in recent years the coursework in this field was of a high standard, with excellent presentation and generally good use of scholarship and resources. The most popular topics were homosexuality and miracles. There were very few pieces on the ordination of women.

Candidates at the higher end produced scholarly work with an impressive attention to detail and focus on argument. Candidates (in the minority) at the lower end relied on sources that are of GCSE standard.

Christianity

The topics presented were varied, with good knowledge on aspects of church teaching. There were some outstanding essays on the influence of Christian thought, which employed a range of sources and arrived at a substantial conclusion. Roman Catholicism was studied with rigour and essays were well informed and argued. Candidates at the lower end struggled to move beyond generalised views and found it difficult to distinguish between denominational views.

World Religions

A large number of candidates produced very well researched essays and the best candidates supported their argument with careful critical scholarship. There was an awareness of different points of view, however, in titles which demanded a balanced knowledge of two religions there was a great deal of depth shown on one view and a limited view for the comparison religion - this one sided approach meant that the demands of the question could not be fulfilled. This was particularly evident in essays that were comparing the teachings of Islam with another world faith. Many candidates also included much irrelevant detail that was not required for the question they were answering.

In some cases there was a tendency to offer too much doctrinal belief at the expense of available scholarship. A proselytising approach might be very well informed but does not fulfil the requirements for AO2 and candidates were warned about this last year. That said, a great majority of candidates appreciated differences in belief and their research conveyed the desire to understand in greater depth a view they did not ascribe to. The candidates offering an essay in World Religions produced work reflecting a serious interest in religious belief that was generally supported by well-informed teaching and good resources

Final Comments

Congratulations to so many candidates who display excellent powers of investigation, competent referencing and bibliographical skills. There was great evidence of genuine interest in Religious Studies and rigorous attempts to pursue this in greater depth. Coursework offers an opportunity for rewarding independent research that short exams cannot begin to verify. Good practice is evident in the majority of centres and candidates are aware of the dangers of plagiarism and have progressed in their efforts to substantiate their argument with properly referenced sources . Many candidates know how to address explicitly AO1 and AO2 objectives. Areas for improvement have been noted and centres should feel proud of their achievement in the summer 2006 session.

6772: Philosophy of Religion

Question 1

This was the most popular question on the paper and many candidates presented clear and accurate information on the topic. Most candidates followed through the three-part structure. A few combined together parts (a) and (b) and occasionally all three parts and provided there was explicit evidence of focusing on the demands of the question these various structures were credited by examiners.

It was important to provide explicit evidence of the answering the specific demands of the question so as to identify its strengths (part (a)) and its weaknesses (part (b)). It is pleasing to report that increasingly candidates have been able to differentiate between an account of an argument and its strengths. Some candidates were much better at examining the weaknesses of the argument than its strengths. The mark scheme stipulated that a mere account of the argument without a focus on the demands of part (a) and (b) would not proceed beyond level 2 for AO1. Some candidates simply inserted the expressions 'strength' and 'weakness' at various places without the backing of substantive points. For example, some wrote a basic account of Paley's version adding that it is a strong argument without providing evidence and reasoning for this verdict. The candidates who did well examined *inter alia* the effective use of analogical reasoning, the benefits of cumulative arguments coupled with evidence that appears to contradict design and legitimate alternative explanations rather than 'design'. The coherence of an answer was sometimes hindered by a rather muddled chronology, for example, not just Paley before Hume but also Hume and Paley debating evolution or responding to Dawkins.

In part (c), most candidates kept to the wording of the question in terms of commenting on the view that this is a valid argument, noting that there are various legitimate stances to this issue. The better quality scripts unpacked and analysed the expression 'valid argument'. Some represented what they considered to be the strongest argument with reasons or kept a clinching argument back in reserve for part (c). Those candidates who relied on formulaic responses tended to bypass the key demands of this part and merely repeated some earlier material or wrote a synopsis of strengths and weaknesses. Some wrote about scholars they believed had the stronger arguments but without any explanation as to why they considered this might be the case. Some resorted to the stance that both sides of the argument are equally balanced and it is up to personal opinion, apparently unaware that this is an interpretation that requires justification.

Question 2

This was the second most popular question. It was evident that many candidates had studied this topic in some detail and there were some excellent answers. However, some candidates did not focus adequately on the strengths and weaknesses; choosing instead to outline the argument and then point out its flaws. Some good scripts addressed the strengths and weaknesses in a two-part style answer while other very competent answers dealt with a strength and then presented its weaknesses or objections in an integrated answer. A few candidates were so focused on the strengths of the argument that they ended up presenting little knowledge that was specifically related to the cosmological argument, but wrote about *a posteriori* arguments in general. Other candidates felt more

confident with the weaknesses and so rushed their consideration of the strengths, for example presenting basic explanation of the first three ways rather than explaining what was strong about them.

The AO2 demands of this question tended to attract better quality answers than the corresponding AO2 requirements of question 1. The better answers revealed a fuller understanding and showed both sides of the argument and thread the theme of the question throughout this part of the question. Others did not address the issue of 'evenly balanced arguments' and presented simplistic accounts, often repeating parts of their earlier answer, and being dismissive of one side or the other.

Question 3

A few candidates have prepared and investigated this topic with commendable scholarly acumen. These had a wealth of information and a proficient use of key terms and presented their answers in a thoughtful and reflective manner. Other candidates however, displayed the minimum understanding of the area. The result was of simple and sometimes misleading viewpoints, lacking in precision. For example some assumed that the only religious interpretation was a literal understanding of aspects of Genesis. It can be noted that some centres approached this topic from the perspective of a specific religious tradition, such as Judaism, and provided the answers were well formulated this was of course entirely acceptable.

Question 4

This was a popular question and attracted a variety of responses. Some ignored the quotation and wrote basic accounts of the problem of evil and suffering. It can be noted that quotations in questions are important and must be addressed in an explicit manner. Other candidates wrote answers at a simple level and re-stated the quotation. Some presented drawings of the inconsistent triad that by itself did not add anything substantial, whereas an explanation would have been more effective. However, a significant number of candidates addressed the issue in the quotation including issues about the attributes of God, with some particularly fine work on natural evil. In part (a) some candidates examined possible explanations for the reality of evil including for example monism and process thought and the implications of these approaches. Although this structure was not essential it was legitimate and credit worthy. These were seen as potential solutions and the candidates then focused in on one of these, as the question required in part (b).

The best candidates were able to answer part (b) without the need for repetition. There were some very competent answers evaluating the success or otherwise of the selected theodicy. It was good to see a number of candidates who focused on the issue of whether or not the problem is resolved, sometimes with a comparison with other theodicies and sometimes with a consideration of the definition of theodicy itself. Very few candidates ignored the requirement of selecting one theodicy, and many legitimately focused on one and compared this to one or more other solutions as a way of discussing its strengths and weaknesses. It can be noted that some centres approach this topic from a variety of religious traditions including Hindu and Jewish and provided the material is relevant this is of course credit worthy.

Question 5

There were some answers that had the hallmarks of prepared answers regardless of the demands of the question. These tended to write down as much as they knew in general about miracles with scant regard to focal points such as ‘against experience’ and ‘rational belief’.

This was the question that saw some of the poorest structuring of candidates’ answers. Some attempted part (b) in (a) and some hit upon (c) in (b). One of the principles the examiners has is to credit relevant material to the whole question no matter where it may be found in an answer, but we do not credit the same material twice. However, in many of the cases for this question, the poor structuring indicated a tenuous understanding of the material. The responses to part (a) either saw a very brief outline of Hume’s definition or a more competent analysis of a variety of definitions and the implications of Hume’s views about laws of nature. Some addressed Hume’s objections in part (b) with reasons to disbelieve accounts that went against experience.

Part (c) attracted some very good answers, including some analysis of ‘rational’ belief. Some argued about the exceptional nature of a miracle performed by a deity and in that sense could be interpreted as rational. Some made effective use of cumulative arguments and also the principles, of credulity and testimony. Some discussed the views of scholars such as Holland, Swinburne Ward and Wiles to good effect. However, others were weaker and repeated material from their earlier parts. These stated their conclusions without supporting them with arguments and reason.

6773/01: Old Testament/Jewish Bible

There were a number of very good scripts and centres are to be congratulated on the high standard of preparation among their candidates.

Most candidates did question 1, and about 75% of candidates answered questions 1 and 5 together.

Candidates who achieved the highest marks produced two essays of 5-6 sides each and made points concisely and were able to quote and use a range of scholarship. The level of background knowledge and understanding of the material was impressive.

To access the higher marks candidates they should:

- Pace themselves properly and not spend too much time on their first question.
- Not concentrate too much on the factual aspect and display sufficient discussion and evaluation (AO2).
- Answer the question set rather than 'write all they know about...'

Candidates at the lower end of the mark range did not write in sufficient depth or detail and answers were sketchy, tending toward a simple re-telling of the biblical text.

A number of centres entered candidates who all attempted the same two questions and all wrote pretty much the same answers. This often means that candidates churned out what they had prepared without actually addressing the question set.

Question 1

This was the most popular question. The best answers displayed a detailed knowledge of the textual narrative, together with the ability to select relevant incidents and to apply biblical scholarship. The real discriminators were, firstly, the amount of useful detail included in the answer, based on a sound knowledge and secondly, fluency of expression and argument.

Question 2

Few candidates answered this question, but those that did, answered very well. The finest answers displayed good textual knowledge and an appreciation of the background and symbolism. Better candidates were able to recognize the nature of the covenant relationship.

Question 3

A fairly popular question which attracted a variable range of answers. Part (a) was sometimes used by weaker candidates as an opportunity to write about Moses in general though the better candidates were able to be selective and discussed the issues well. Part (b) produced variable responses. Some did well, others however, speculated, rather than referring to text and scholarship.

Question 4

This question, as always, was attempted by a limited number of candidates, most of whom knew the material very well indeed - excellent answers!

Question 5

A very popular question. The best answers displayed considerable knowledge of the text and an awareness of scholarship, though few made reference to the pro- and anti-monarchy issues. Most of the weaker candidates simply told the story. There were a number 'pre-prepared' answers, which did not really address the question. A number based their answer almost verbatim on a recent article in 'Religious Studies Review'.

6773/02: Religious Ethics

General Comments

The standard of work for this unit is slowly improving, most noticeably this year in responses to the ever popular questions 7 and 8. It appears that centres and candidates have been listening to advice with regard to making responses to these questions more theoretical and less case study based, and although this is not yet universally the case, the trend has shifted significantly. Responses to question 6 also showed an increased awareness of a range of arguments regarding the relationship between religion and morality. Although there were relatively few responses to question 9 (sexual ethics) the form of the questions seemed to allow for stronger answers than in previous years. Question 10 on war and peace was the least popular question this year.

Where major weaknesses occur they still tend to reflect an over reliance on pre-prepared answers, which do not allow candidates the flexibility to tailor their material to the question set, and a lack of scholarly rigour in matters of ethics. Candidates fail to achieve the higher levels if they rely on generalisations and common sense or man in the street thinking. The best candidates are able to produce some impressive work, drawing on a range of ethical theory and scholarship and writing specifically to the demands of the question.

The continuing overwhelming popularity of questions 7 and 8 was noted by all the examiners marking this unit. Well over 70% of candidates chose to answer both these questions, and of the remainder, most answered question 7. It was good to see use of recent articles in Religious Studies Review (Philip Allan Updates) which offer candidates an opportunity to explore non-standard approaches to these topics.

A trivial, but nevertheless noteworthy, observation, is that candidates frequently cite helping an old lady across the road as an example of a moral action, it would be good see alternative examples offered next year.

Question 6

This was well answered by the more able candidates who were able to offer a good range of material drawn from a range of scholarly sources. The strongest candidates offered an analysis of Theonomy, Autonomy and Heteronomy, whilst Kant, Owen, Russell and Newman featured prominently at all levels, as did the Euthyphro Dilemma. Weaker candidates were less able to balance the arguments for and against the link between religion and morality or failed to observe the two separate claims. Stronger candidates were able to offer new material in response to part (b), whilst weaker candidates relied on repeating material from part (a). It is well worth practicing several possible evaluation questions to ensure that candidates are flexible enough not to rely on reproducing material from earlier parts of the question.

Question 7

This is still enormously popular and this year those candidates who ventured into realms beyond Bentham and Mill were less rare. Some centres have clearly made a point of developing candidates' awareness of Sidgwick, Hare and Singer amongst others, as well as giving candidates a solid foundation in the social and cultural background to the development and application of Utilitarianism. Nonetheless, amongst many candidates there is still much surmising about what actions Utilitarianism supports and a heavy dependency on the same examples and quotations. However, the reduction in responses of this kind was very welcome and should be encouraged. The best candidates were able to respond to part (b) in the spirit of the question and draw a conclusion as to whether Utilitarianism is a reliable guide to ethical decision making or not although weaker candidates simply listed criticisms.

Question 8

As with question 7 it was good to see even more candidates relying less on prepared material which was inaccurate or vague, and drawing more on an understanding of the background to Situation Ethics and on genuinely scholarly critical material. Although some weaker candidates are still asserting questionable understandings of *agape* and basing their answers on case studies, there was a discernible upturn in responses. Candidates seemed to find it easier to assess whether the strengths outweighed the weaknesses than they did to evaluate Utilitarianism and overall the best candidates were able to draw on a range of scholars - Tillich, Robinson and Barclay, for example - and developed an analytic response to the question.

Question 9

The format of this question seemed to invite better responses than in previous years, and there were some good answers to part (a), concerning ideas about the conscience which suggest that this topic has been well covered by centres. Dilemmas in sexual ethics tended to revolve around issues of homosexuality, although some candidates still fell back on the issue of abortion. If they choose this issue they should really be able to justify why they consider it an issue in sexual ethics rather than, say, medical ethics. Whatever dilemma they choose should be examined from an ethical perspective and ideally, show a consideration of religious ethical concerns. In response to part (c) many candidates took the question as an opportunity to assess the dilemma raised in part (b) rather than the more general issue of whether sexual ethics should allow room for human freedom of choice, but such answers were legitimate.

Question 10

This was a little disappointing, as many candidates were determined to offer a standard prepared Just War theory essay and blatantly ignored the wording and intention of the question in favour of doing just that. This inevitably undermined their responses since they failed to address the question asked. Responses to part (b) were further undermined if part (a) had not been specifically targeted. The best candidates recognized the absolutist nature of the two claims and discussed whether either claim, on those grounds, could be considered justifiable.

6774: New Testament

There were a considerable number of excellent scripts and centres are to be congratulated on the high standard of preparation among their candidates. The overall standard was in line with recent years.

Candidates who achieved the highest grades generally produced two essays of 5-6 sides each and made points crisply and were able to quote and use a range of scholarship. The level of knowledge and understanding of the textual and background material was good.

To access the higher marks candidates they should:

- Pace themselves properly and not spend too much time on their first question.
- Not concentrate too much on the factual aspect and display sufficient discussion and evaluation (AO2).
- Answer the question set rather than 'write all they know about...'

Candidates at the lower end of the mark range did not write in sufficient depth, with answers tending towards a simple re-telling of the biblical text.

It was common to find that every candidate from a given centre answered the same two questions. This often meant that candidates simply wrote what they had previously prepared without actually addressing the question set.

As last year, there has been an increased use of underlining, highlighting and writing in different colours. Whilst the former is useful, the use of colour and highlights are unnecessary.

Section A: The Gospel according to Luke

Question 1

This was a popular question and generally well answered. Most candidates had a clear knowledge and understanding of all the main elements, although some struggled to evaluate much in part (b).

Question 2

This was well answered on the whole, with much less story-telling than before. The more able candidates were able to examine the narratives and highlighted the symbolism and continuity with the Old Testament. In the lower range responses, most candidates stuck firmly to the textual narrative and offered little evaluation of the issues.

Question 3

There were surprisingly few responses to this question. Most mentioned parables and incidents but some were able to offer anything on the Sermon on the Plain. Candidates in the middle and lower range were vague on what Jesus taught and there was a distinct lack of scholarship and critical awareness. Answers in part (b) were vague and often little more than story-telling.

Question 4

This was a popular question and those at the top successfully linked scholars to the textual narrative. Candidates in the middle and lower ranges relied heavily on the textual narrative and offered little in-depth analysis. Many at the lower end seemed to know little about John the Baptist and often repeated birth narrative material.

Question 5

Only a few candidates chose this question. The less able simply retold the textual narrative, whilst those at the top had sufficient knowledge and understanding to make a reasonable attempt to respond to part (a). Part (b) was generally well done, although the status of women still seems to be an area of uncertainty. There is good source material on this area in 'Advanced Religious Studies'.

Section B: The Fourth Gospel

Question 6

As ever, the most popular question. Most answers did well and some were excellent. Many were too long but, at last, candidates are realising the need to pace their time properly. Scholarship was evident and generally well-used.

Question 7

This was a popular question. Most candidates answered part (a) quite well, although many struggled to score significantly in part (b). It was encouraging to see fewer candidates in the middle and lower range making sweeping generalisations concerning the place of women in Jesus' time. There is good source material on this area in 'Advanced Religious Studies'.

Question 8

This was a popular question and many candidates scored quite well on Jesus' teaching, but less so on the Holy Spirit. There was some evidence of both scholarship and the textual narrative, together with useful background discussion. Less able candidates stuck closely to the textual narrative and were unable to offer in-depth analysis of important issues.

Question 9

This question produced a number of very good answers from well-prepared candidates who knew a considerable amount concerning the teachings. In particular, there were many very good critical awareness answers in part (b). Many displayed evidence of background knowledge and understanding of the connection with the Old Testament.

Question 10

There were few answers to this question. Many answered well in part (a) but a number of the weaker candidates tended to 'tell the story' without comment. In part (b) many candidates resorted to speculation and there was limited evidence of scholarship or evaluation of issues at the middle and lower end.

Section C: The early Church as reflected in Acts and 1 Corinthians

Question 11

This question was a popular one and was well tackled by most candidates and a range of useful information and scholarship was offered, although evaluation of the evidence was sometimes lacking in depth.

Question 12

This was a popular question that was very well answered by the more able candidates, who displayed considerable textual knowledge and scholarship and highlighted the most important issues. There were a number of middle-range answers that emphasised the textual narrative and simply re-told the story.

Question 13

This questions produced a few excellent answers, covering the full range of issues but, on the whole, most answers were lacking in depth, both in textual knowledge, and in the evaluation of the issues. Part (b) produced many speculative answers in the mid-range which drew little evidence from the text or scholarship.

Question 14

This was a popular question and, although there were a number of pre-prepared answers, candidates were in command of the material. There were some excellent scholarly responses in which the issues facing the Council were clearly outlined and there were interesting and scholarly discussions.

Question 15

Very few candidates attempted this question; those that did knew the material for (a) well. The answers to part (b) were good at the higher level, with interesting scholarly evaluation and discussion. At the lower levels, candidates relied on telling the story.

6775: Christianity

Although Section A remains the most popular option on this paper, the numbers entered for Section C have increased by 15% since 2005.

There are many excellent responses to this paper, however there will be many candidates who are disappointed, the reason is simple, they did not answer the question set. Fewer candidates write everything they know on a topic, but instead they reproduce a pre-prepared essay which may or may not address the question set or, a new development, the answer is a learned quotation from a text book which, again, may or may not answer the question set.

Candidates need to be aware that they need to substantiate their responses with relevant facts and scholarly opinion. They also need to be up to date with current issues that reflect the topics they have been studying.

Section A: Church History and Christian Thought: The Reformation

Option A: England

Question 1

This was a very popular question. Most candidates were able to name the abuses and refer to specific examples. Better answers questioned the assumption in the title and referred to evidence that the Church in England was popular with the people. Part (b) was less well answered. Many candidates tried to argue that the Reformation in England was the result of Henry VIII's desire for a divorce rather than a Protestant Reformation, which was not the question asked. Examiners were looking for knowledge and understanding of the spread of Protestant views in England.

Question 2

There were some good answers to this question but many would have been improved by greater detail and discussion of the Acts of Uniformity and greater knowledge of other aspects of the reformation under Edward VI.

Question 3

This was a popular question answered well by candidates who knew the details.

Question 4

Candidates knew the measures taken against Roman Catholics and the response of the Roman Catholic Church but, perhaps, did not fully appreciate the wider significance of these actions. In part (c) most candidates argued that the Roman Catholic Church in England was harshly repressed during the reign of Elizabeth I better answers referred to the strength of Roman Catholicism in England at Elizabeth's death and discussed possible reasons for this.

Option B: Europe

Question 6

This was a very popular question. The quality of the answers has improved over the years as very few answers just string together lists of abuses without specific examples or explanation. Better answers questioned whether there was a need for administrative reform rather than doctrinal reform. In part (b) candidates gave a wide range of factors which may have contributed to the development of the Reformation. For a good AO2 mark candidates needed to explain how the factor may have contributed to the development of the Reformation.

Question 7

Parts (b) and (c) of this question were answered well but many candidates were unable to discuss Christian Humanism more widely in part (a).

Question 8

This was a very popular question on which most candidates achieved a good mark.

Question 9

Part (a) of this question was usually answered well with a well-structured account of the reform in Zurich considering a range of factors. Some candidates did give a biography of Zwingli rather than an answer to the question set. Answers to part (c) were poor generally making statements generally true of Christian teaching rather than discussing Zwingli's teaching in specific detail.

Question 10

The examiners were surprised by the quality of response to this question considering that the topic is often asked about with reference to Luther and Zwingli separately. Many candidates seemed to be unable to put the two aspects of the question together.

Section B: Church History and Christian Thought: The Nineteenth Century to the Present Day

Option A: Christian Thought and Development in Europe

Question 11

Many of the responses to this question were very generalised lacking detail. For example, few candidates referred to the 'Aryan Paragraph' and explained its significance. In part (b) many candidates were muddled and seemed to think that the Confessing Church was Roman Catholic and so wrote about Bonhoeffer and the Protestant response. Very few candidates referred to the stance of the Roman Catholic Church on this question at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century.

Question 13

This was a very popular question but on the whole the responses were disappointing. Bonhoeffer's teaching was explained very simply and there were very few higher band answers. In part (b) most candidates wrote very generally about the concept of discipleship and how Bonhoeffer lived out the ideal. Very few candidates put Bonhoeffer's work in the context of the persecution of the Christian Churches by the Nazis.

Option B: Christian Thought and Liberation Theology

Question 16

Many of the responses to this question were very generalised lacking detail. For example, few candidates referred to the 'Aryan Paragraph' and explained its significance. In part (b) many candidates were muddled and seemed to think that the Confessing Church was Roman Catholic and so wrote about Bonhoeffer and the Protestant response. Very few candidates referred to the stance of the Roman Catholic Church on this topic at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century.

Question 18

This was a very popular question but on the whole the responses were disappointing. Bonhoeffer's teaching was explained very simply and there were very few higher band answers. In part (b) most candidates wrote very generally about the concept of discipleship and how Bonhoeffer lived out the ideal. Very few candidates put Bonhoeffer's work in the context of the persecution of the Christian Churches by the Nazis.

Question 19

This was very popular question but many candidates were let down by poor factual knowledge considering only a limited range of factors which contributed to the development of Liberation Theology.

Section C: Christian Belief and Practice

Question 21

The responses to this question tended to be very generalised, tending to state the obvious. Better answers discussed whether God being personal would affect his divinity - make him too human, yet acknowledging that God had to be human to suffer in Jesus to save mankind. The better answers used Martin Buber's teaching. The answers to part (b) tended to be simplistic giving definitions of prayer and discussing the idea of prayer in the sense of talking to someone.

Question 22

The answers to this question tended to be basic and generalised. The candidates did not, for example, discuss the ways in which modern science, generic engineering, for example, challenges Christian beliefs, man being made in the image of God, for example. Answers to part (b) did not go beyond ideas such as the literal interpretation of Genesis and religious myth.

Question 23

There were some good answers to this question. Some answers had great potential but needed to focus on the question asked rather than giving a summary of relevant ideas.

Question 24

Some candidates were careless about detail and explanation of the practices. Answers neglected to explain the symbolism and often got it wrong. In part (b) better answers referred to scholarly opinion and Biblical differences of teaching. Few candidates linked part (b) with part (a).

Question 25

Better answers were able to refer to Biblical teaching and able to distinguish between Roman Catholic and the differing Protestant views. In part (b) answers tended to be sociological rather than religious, very few candidates were able to discuss the response of the Churches or scholars.

6776: World Religions

Section A: Buddhism

There was increasing evidence of the use of scholars and this characterised the higher band scripts.

Question 1

This question was not answered very well on the whole. This is surprising since questions about the background of the life of the Buddha have often appeared in previous papers and there are plenty of good resources now available. Many candidates were content to go through biographical details concerning the life of the Buddha, particularly the 'four sights'. It appeared as if candidates were answering a question they hoped that was there, rather than the one that they actually faced.

Question 2

There was a wide range of answers to this question. The better candidates focused on the respective and reciprocal roles of the dharma and sangha within the context of the three refuges. Weaker candidates provided limited range and little detail. The stronger candidates answered part (b) by addressing the question that had been set. They examined and commented on the significance of the Buddha for Buddhists, using biographical detail to illustrate the points being made. Weaker candidates, once again, wanted to write about the life of the Buddha and failed to use this material to address the question.

Question 3

On the whole, candidates answered this question very well. Some candidates displayed a sound understanding of the types of meditation used in Buddhist practice. Most focused on samatha and vipassana meditation. Part (b) in many ways was not answered as well as part (a). Many candidates who focused on Theravada Buddhism did not make reference to the role of meditation within the magga and its relationship to the other parts of the path. Some students simply found different ways of saying the same thing: meditation is necessary to achieve Nirvana. Other candidates presented informative material on aspects of meditation in Mahayana Buddhism.

Question 4

On the whole part (a) was well answered. Many candidates displayed an in-depth understanding of the subtleties of Buddhist belief in this area. Many were aware of its motivational effect upon ethical behaviour.

Part (b) was not answered as well as part (a). Many students were able to list and describe each of the dimensions of the path, but for example, seemed unwilling to consider the relationship between the three different areas: morality, wisdom and ethics. Moreover, students knew that the path was the way to liberation, but many failed to explain adequately the reasons it is believed to be a way to liberation.

Question 5

Part (a) was answered very well. Students had a very good understanding of the five precepts and were able to explain its features in detail. Many students went further, explaining the relationship between the precepts and their relationship with the wholesome and unwholesome states.

Part (b) was not answered very well on the whole. Candidates seemed eager to answer part (a), but appeared unprepared for part (b). Some candidates were able to relate directly to key teachings for example the Advice to Sigala, but many struggled to write coherently on this subject.

Section B: Hinduism

Question 6

There were some excellent answers to part (a) indicating candidates had prepared well. However, part (b) was less well answered suggesting less knowledge of the Vedic beliefs and/or practices than would have been expected given its place in the Specification. Students may need a more systematic study of Vedas and Gods.

Question 7

There were some excellent answers including for example, in Patanjali's Yoga system showing good knowledge and Samkhya coupled with philosophical background as well as knowledge of the practice. However, other types of Yoga were not so well described.

The purposes were generally well commented upon when candidates were aware of, for example, the place of savikalpaka and nirvikalpaka samadhi.

Question 8

This proved a very popular question with some excellent answers indicating good understanding of key beliefs. The weakest answers failed to do more than list information and present narratives about the three figures.

The best answers in part (b) were on Siva showing awareness of his multidimensional significance and candidates were able to quote from scriptures to support their comments.

Question 9

This question was generally quite well answered and indicated substantial preparation for this topic. However, there was insufficient awareness of scholarly disputes about the topic. Candidates were well aware of the defects.

Question 10

This was the least popular question and answers displayed basic yet clear information but with insufficient awareness of seminal teachings. Where candidates could see the profound ethical significance for family & social justice they answered well and in depth. It can be noted that many of those candidates that did not answer question 9 selected the issue of caste in their answer to 10 (b) and of course this was legitimate.

Section C: Islam

It was pleasing this year to see an increase in the number of students making good reference to scholars in their answers. Some work was of a high standard and reflected good learning and exam technique though it was disappointing to find potentially high calibre work that was too brief.

Question 11

The question was popular and most answers in part (a) reflected a sound knowledge of the historical, religious and social features of pre-Islamic Arabia. For part (b) candidates who produced answers of a high standard developed their arguments well. However, too often, answers described Muhammad's work and only related it to the question with a sentence at the end or else did not focus on the question at all.

Question 12

The question was generally not answered well and students too often simply described the life and work of Muhammad or his call to be a prophet without relating their material to the question in part (a). For part (b) only a few able candidates commented on the view that 'Muhammad as prophet of God is the key to understanding his significance' and selected material to support their comments. Most repeated an agreement of the statement without comment.

Question 13

Some candidates answered the question well, demonstrating good knowledge and understanding. Weaker scripts presented answers that were descriptive and simplistic and material from part (a) was often repeated in part (b).

Question 14

This question was popular and there were many sound answers reflecting good detailed knowledge and an understanding of the significance for the individual and the community.

Weaker scripts sometimes repeated material from part (a) in part (b).

Question 15

The standard of answers to this question was variable. Some were very good and reflected a good knowledge of the selected topic coupled with informed comment. Others however, were generalised and lacked specific detail or comment. In part (b) only scripts of a higher level related the topics to an understanding of Islamic ethics.

Section D: Judaism

The answers to question 16 were well informed with evidence of understanding the material in terms of suitable range and detail. The AO2 demands in part (b), were answered in a competent manner.

The accounts of Moses Maimonides in question 17 (a) were of a better standard than some of the vague answers that examined his context. However, the debates about his influence were of a much better standard.

Answers to question 18 (a) were informative with a fine range of relevant material. Reform Judaism was by far the most popular choice in part (b).

There were too few answers to questions 19 and 20 to receive comment.

6777: Philosophy of Religion

Question 1

The concepts of 'proof' and 'probability' are in the specification but a number of candidates who answered this question either omitted part (a) completely or wrote very vague answers. Some candidates wrote about 'fact' and 'likeness' with no philosophical analysis. Some however, understood these important concepts very well indeed and crafted intelligent, comparative answers. These included a thorough understanding of key terms such as induction, deduction, *a posteriori* and *a priori*. A number of candidates drew on a considerable range of material such as reasoning from general to particular and vice versa, analytic and empirical methods of reasoning, issues of tautology and evidence, distinctive types of argument with different types of conclusions and significance of certainty. Last year's examiner's report highlighted the importance of understanding the terms 'proof and probability'.

In contrast to a number of poor answers to part (a) the remaining material was generally of a high standard. Fewer candidates simply recounted narrative accounts of religious experience and most analysed this material as evidence for the existence of God. Most candidates were adept at managing their material so as to focus on issues about the probability of God. In this particular context, discussions about probability were of a more scholarly standard than similar material in part (a).

Question 2

This was the most popular question. Quotations are important within questions. In this case it was important for candidates to select and adapt their material to the thrust of the quotation. There is no doubt that many candidates were well versed in the intricacies of the ontological argument. They knew in detail the various arguments for and against a considerable range of scholarly debates. What so many lacked was the basic examination technique of answering the set question in an explicit way. No amount of accurate detail on the argument itself will enable candidates to achieve the higher marks if the answer did not focus on the precise demands of the question. For example a number wrote competent and lengthy accounts of the argument and its strengths and weaknesses. The material was of course credited but in order to achieve, for example AO1 level 4, it was crucial to present a full response to the task, which in this case was to focus on the quotation.

However, there were very many candidates who presented carefully selected arguments in a well-expressed manner. These used scholarship well and drew out the elements of the quotation throughout their answers.

Question 3

The same principle applied to this question as to question 2 above. Some candidates interpreted this question as 'write an account of religious language'. In order to achieve the higher levels it was essential to select and adapt the material in order to focus on the quotation, regarding problems of religious language used as a critique of religious belief. Most of the better responses focused on the success of these forms of religious language as either challenges to or defences of the

meaningfulness of religious language. Most candidates had commendable knowledge about the range and detail of religious language although only a minority had adequate examination skills to apply this in practice to the question. Verification was the most popular choice followed by falsification. It can be noted that candidates from a few Centres produced high quality work on myth and symbol. Examiners agreed that the level descriptors would be the means of assessing the work whether candidates selected one or two terms. If a candidate selected two examples it was not essential for them to receive equal treatment.

Question 4

This was quite popular with a number of candidates focusing on resurrection and immortality of the soul, although a good number selected reincarnation. A key factor in differentiation of scripts was that many candidates were able to make effective use of a good range of scholarly opinion whereas weaker scripts were basic and generalised. Those candidates who examined rebirth were aware of its distinctive ideas and were competent in following up a range of philosophical views. Some candidates structured their answers separately; first examining one term and then in the second part addressing the other. This worked well for some candidates, as a platform for writing in depth and detail for each concept. Other candidates examined the two terms as they progressed through their answers and this enabled them to address the prompt to 'differentiate between' more readily. Response to this trigger word was an area that was lacking in a number of answers. Good answers drew upon relevant contextual material such as dualism and monism in their discussions of immortality and resurrection. Many were aware of the issue of identity and this featured well in discussions of the relative merits of each theory. Those candidates who selected rebirth made it clear that the issues of 'identity' took on an entirely different role compared to other belief systems. Some candidates reached the higher levels of AO2 by considering the significance of each concept as a philosophical position in the light and context of a religious tradition.

Question 5

It was important for candidates to treat the question as set and not to substitute the expression 'religion' for 'God'. Focus on this requirement is improving but there remain a few candidates who assume that a critique of religion is synonymous with an argument against the existence of God. The majority of candidates selected one argument for the non-existence of God from a range of possible psychological or sociological critiques. However, there were a few who ignored the question and presented an outline of different critiques of religion. Some referred to one seminal thinker and supplemented this by adapting extra material to the demands of the question, as demonstrated by the example of using a second figure to draw attention to the distinctive contributions of the one main scholar selected. There are clearly a number of examples of arguments against the existence of God. One type of approach used by candidates was to take a classical argument for the existence of God and give it an atheistic thrust. There are many examples but one used by candidates was Findlay on the ontological argument. Another approach was to take the problem of evil and suffering. This was fine provided it was not merely a revisit of AS material giving an account of evil and theodicies. Simply to discuss weaknesses of theodicies does not in itself constitute an argument for the non-existence of God. One theme that could be developed in this area is the notion of the incoherence of 'God' given the existence of evil and suffering.

6778/01: Old Testament

The overall standard was very good again this year and there were a large number of excellent scripts. Centres are to be congratulated on the high standard of preparation among their candidates. The level of knowledge and understanding of the background material and use of scholarship was as impressive as always.

The 'Solomon' question remained the most popular by far, with about 80% of candidates attempting it, usually in tandem with 'Amos' or 'Hosea'.

To access the higher marks candidates they should:

- Pace themselves properly and not spend too much time on their first question.
- Not concentrate too much on the factual aspect and display sufficient discussion and evaluation (AO2).
- Answer the question set rather than 'write all they know about...'

Candidates at the lower end of the mark range did not write in sufficient depth or detail and answers were sketchy, tending toward a simple re-telling of the biblical text.

Question 1

Candidates were well-prepared for this question. Many candidates had written practice essays on previously set questions and a number had based their answers (very successfully) on an article in 'Religious Studies Review'. Knowledge of Solomon's kingship, including the background material, was detailed, accurate and wide-ranging, though not always relevant to the question and, more often than not, far too lengthy. The best answers used examples from the text as illustrations of the arguments being put forward, coupled with useful and informed scholarship.

Question 2

As in previous years, only a few candidates attempted this question, but those that did knew their material well and the quality of answers was universally high. Most seemed to have a good knowledge of the development of Hebrew prophecy and supported their answers with good scholarship and the inclusion of relevant examples.

Question 3

The question on Amos is invariably a popular one, which produces a number of excellent answers. The better candidates knew the textual material well and a number of candidates also offered an interesting analysis of the issues. Less able candidates spent too long telling the story and critical awareness was limited at the lower end.

Question 4

An equally popular question, done slightly better than question 3, perhaps because the images associated with Hosea's family are, perhaps more interesting and easier to relate to. Detailed knowledge was much in evidence amongst the more able candidates, together with useful reference to scholarship. Most candidates knew the textual material and background well. Less able candidates tended to write about everything Hosea ever said and did.

Question 5

This question is becoming increasingly popular and those who attempted this question knew the text well and answered confidently. Most candidates understood the historical context and applied scholarship usefully. Less able candidates again simply told the story, with little critical evaluation.

6778/02: Religious Ethics

The standard of work this year was good, and it seems that centres are settling well into this module. The best answers shine out and make for enjoyable reading, based on a wide range of scholarly material and a confident handling of ethical theory and ideas although the weakest continue to be overly dependent on a limited range of material which is not sufficiently tailored to the question. Question 7 was by far the most popular, closely followed by question 6. There seems to still be some reluctance amongst candidates and centres to explore the full range of the specification and this year this was particularly apparent with regard to question 8 on ethical language. Given the number of centres which offer question 3 for paper 6782, it is surprising that candidates do not take advantage of being able to use their expertise in this area also for paper 6778.

A trivial, but nevertheless noteworthy, observation, is that candidates frequently cite helping an old lady across the road as an example of a moral action and it would be good see alternative examples offered next year!

Question 6

There were some excellent responses to this question, suggesting that centres have enjoyed exploring a range of approaches both to the moral argument and to critiques of the relationship between religion and morality. The range of issues covered particularly in response to part (b) was impressive, and in many cases candidates wrote more extensively on this part of the question than on part (a) despite the mark distribution. Weaker candidates failed, however, to assess whether such critiques were more or less convincing than the moral argument, although stronger candidates kept the demand of the question in mind throughout. There was some occasional confusion between Kant's Moral Argument and other aspects of his moral philosophy, so lengthy discussions of the Categorical Imperative were not particularly useful in this question. The best answers, as for most in this unit, were full and discursive, demonstrating a high level of understanding and evaluation.

Question 7

This was very popular and candidates across all levels managed to show a good working knowledge of deontology. Most made the connection specifically with Kant, although it was legitimate to consider other deontological approaches such as Natural Moral Law or Divine Command Ethics. Discussion of the key characteristics of deontology was, in many cases. There was less confusion this year with the Moral Argument but although W D Ross seems familiar to many candidates, few other scholars featured. Nevertheless, there were many impressively comprehensive and sustained answers to this question and candidates observed the wording of part (b) and responded directly to the question.

Question 8

Very few candidates answered this question, although it was clear that the centres which had made a point of targeting the topic had equipped students well. It is simply a shame that not many centres encourage their candidates to address this topic more fully.

Question 9

Candidates were generally very happy to clarify the key features of natural moral law and did so with relative ease. It was most encouraging, however, to see that they were far less concerned than may be anticipated, with linking it to authority, justice, or law and punishment, suggesting that centres have paid more attention to this than in previous years.

Question 10

This question was relatively popular, with responses on both emotivism and intuitionism being equally well represented. It was good to see candidates coping well with the material required for part (b). Responses were largely on objectivity, but candidates also showed good knowledge of subjectivity and relativism. The good level of response to this question suggested that centres are more comfortable than in previous years with a range of issues in ethical theory.

6779: New Testament

The standard was once again high this year with a considerable number of excellent scripts and centres are to be congratulated on the standard of preparation among their candidates.

Candidates who achieved the highest grades generally produced two essays of 5-6 sides each and made points crisply and were able to quote and use a range of scholarship. The level of knowledge and understanding of the textual and background material was generally impressive. At the lower end there were still a number of 'Sunday School' responses.

To access the higher marks candidates they should:

- Pace themselves properly and not spend too much time on their first question.
- Not concentrate too much on the factual aspect and display sufficient discussion and evaluation (AO2).
- Answer the question set rather than 'write all they know about...'

It was not uncommon to find that every candidate from a given centre answered the same two questions in pretty much the same way. In most cases this meant that candidates simply wrote what they had previously prepared without actually addressing the question set.

Section A: The Gospel according to Luke

Question 1

This was a popular question and was answered competently and well, though there were many 'pre-prepared' answers that dealt with all the possible purposes of Luke, rather than focus directly on the question set. The better candidates were able to offer a range of scholarly insights and ideas.

Question 2

Few candidates attempted this question and the results were variable, with few really having a solid grasp of the material. There was quite a heavy emphasis on the textual narrative in part (a), and in part (b) many candidates resorted to speculation without evidence. Quite a few relied on pre-prepared essays.

Question 3

This was a fairly popular question and the more able candidates were able to give a carefully thought-out answer. Middle ranking candidates included references to scholars, but many seemed unsure of their context and arguments and were often too speculative. The weaker candidates relied heavily on narrative accounts.

Question 4

Relatively few candidates attempted this question. The best were able to link good scholarship with the textual narrative, though a number of candidates used 'pre-prepared' essays. Weaker candidates tended to concentrate just on re-telling the incidents involving prayer or the Sabbath.

Question 5

This question was generally answered well. The best candidates knew the material and there was some impressive reference to the Old Testament and scholarship. The less-able candidates tended to re-tell the story - and a number gave graphic accounts from 'The Passion of the Christ'.

Section B: The Fourth Gospel

Question 6

This was the most popular question. Many answers were excellent and candidates' knowledge and understanding of the Prologue was very impressive. There was, as in the past, considerable evidence of 'pre-prepared' answers and a significant number did not address the question directly.

Question 7

This was a very popular question and most candidates did well. There was evidence of both scholarship and the textual narrative, together with useful background discussion. A number wrote all they knew on every possible purpose, but most kept the point of the question in mind. As in previous years, there were a lot of 'pre-prepared' answers which did not really satisfy the demands of the question.

Question 8

Few candidates attempted this question and the results were variable, with few really having a solid grasp of the material. There was quite a heavy emphasis on the textual narrative in part (a), and in part (b) many candidates resorted to speculation without evidence. Quite a few relied on pre-prepared essays. Few seemed to know much about Judaism in this context. Among the weaker candidates there was little evidence of scholarship or evaluation of issues.

Question 9

This question was well answered and candidates at the top end were clearly at ease with the material. In the mid-range, many answers concentrated a little too heavily on textual narrative and there was a certain lack of understanding concerning the religious reasons behind the conflict. A number of weaker candidates resorted to unsubstantiated speculation and there was a lack of scholarship and evaluation of issues.

Question 10

This is a popular area. The more able candidates were well prepared, had a good knowledge of the text and could offer a range of scholarship and references to Old Testament symbolism. Less able candidates resorted to telling the story without much comment.

Section C: The early Church as reflected in Acts, 1 Corinthians and Romans 13

Question 11

This question was well tackled by most candidates and a range of useful information and scholarship was offered. There was some lack of evaluation and an over-concentration amongst middle and lower-order candidates on simply 'telling the story' of the whole of Paul's journeys.

Question 12

This was a popular question. Candidates seemed generally well aware of Paul's teaching and, in part (b), the best related the incidents with the authorities in the light of Romans 13 and used scholarship to emphasis important conclusions, although a number concentrated too heavily on 'submission' to authority at the expense of other aspects of the teaching. Weaker candidates contented themselves with writing broadly narrative accounts of the incidents with little attempt at evaluation.

Question 13

This question was generally answered well and the knowledge and understanding of the textual material was impressive. The more able candidates offered a range of interesting scholarship and evaluation. Weaker candidates tended to answer briefly and some responses to part (b) were very vague and speculative.

Question 14

This question produced few responses, though the better candidates had been well-prepared and understood the material well. In part (a) the more able candidates wrote interesting studies of the text, though the weaker ones simply summarised the important parts. In part (b) most answers were speculative and lacked scholarship and depth of evaluation.

Question 15

Candidates who attempted this question displayed a good knowledge of the text and background and clearly understood the problems of the Church at Corinth and there was good use of scholarship. Weaker candidates relied heavily on re-telling the textual narrative with little attempt at critical evaluation.

6780: Christianity

Section A remains the most popular option on this paper, the number of entered has increased by 22.3% in the last year.

There are many excellent responses to this paper, however there will be many candidates who are disappointed, the reason is simple, they did not answer the question set. Fewer candidates wrote everything they knew on a topic, but instead they reproduced a pre-prepared essay which may or may not address the question set or, a new development, the answer is a learned quotation from a text book which, again, may or may not answer the question set.

Candidates need to be aware that they need to substantiate their responses with relevant facts and scholarly opinion. They also need to be up to date with current issues that reflect the topics they have been studying.

Section A: Church History and Christian Thought: The Reformation

Option A: England

Question 1

This was a popular question. Most of the answers were balanced covering all parts of the question. In AO2 there was little reference to scholarly opinion.

Question 2

In part (a) some candidates wrote very widely about the cause of the English Civil War and only discovered the Puritans towards the end of their answer.

Question 4

This was a popular question. Very few candidates acknowledged Jewel and Hooker. Most candidates achieved a good AO2 mark in discussing the Calvinist/Arminian debate.

Option B: Europe

Question 6

This question was interpreted by candidates in several ways. The mark scheme intended that candidates should consider the spread of Protestantism throughout Europe as indicated in the first section of the specification. Some candidates took the question to refer to theological development, others took it to refer to the influence of Calvin and others discussed the effects of the Council of Trent. The examiners decided to allow a wide interpretation of the question and gave appropriate credit.

This was one of the questions where some candidates appeared to be using a pre-prepared model answer which did not actually answer the question set.

Question 7

The answers to this question were generally well-crafted essays avoiding a simple biographical account. Some candidates focused on the Catholic/Counter Reformation debate rather than Loyola and the Society of Jesus. The responses to this question showed evidence of pre-prepared answers some of which did not address the question set.

Question 9

This was a popular question. Many candidates built up a good answer by reference to the work of the earlier reformers.

Section B: Church History and Christian Thought: The Nineteenth Century to the Present Day

Option A: Christian Thought and Developments in Europe

Question 11

There were some excellent answers to this question addressing the question set with relevant evidence on both the world-wide and very local scale. However, there were a number of candidates who gave a summary of the development of the Ecumenical Movement from 1910 onwards with only passing reference to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

Question 12

This was a very popular question but many of the answers were disappointing. The teachings of Bonhoeffer were not explained in detail and were often confused particularly the idea of 'religionless Christianity' with candidates saying that Christianity was not religious enough. For high level AO1 marks candidates should have been able to discuss the philosophical and theological influences on Bonhoeffer's work. The mark scheme gives an indication of the way in which the AO2 aspect of the question should have been developed.

Option B: Christian Thought and Liberation Theology

Question 16

There were some excellent answers to this question addressing the question set with relevant evidence on both the world-wide and very local scale. However, there were a number of candidates who gave a summary of the development of the Ecumenical Movement from 1910 onwards with only passing reference to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

Question 17

This was a very popular question but many of the answers were disappointing. The teachings of Bonhoeffer were not explained in detail and were often confused particularly the idea of 'religionless Christianity' with candidates saying that Christianity was not religious enough. For high level AO1 marks candidates should have been able to discuss the philosophical and theological influences on Bonhoeffer's work. The mark scheme gives an indication of the way in which the AO2 aspect of the question should have been developed.

Question 18

While part (b) was often answered well, there were many disappointing answers to part (a) focusing very strongly on Martin Luther King and Malcolm X rather than taking a wider view of the influences on the development of Black Theology.

Section C: Christian Belief and Practice

Question 21

There seemed to be a major confusion here (again) with the word 'modern' - even though this has been explained every year - for the purposes of this paper 'modern' means post-Enlightenment but preferably twentieth and twenty-first century. Many candidates gave a full (and often impressive) account of the development of Trinitarian teaching in the early church. Unless this was made relevant to a discussion of modern teaching, it could not be credited.

Good answers usually gave a range of scholars' views - Barth, Moltmann, Macquarrie and Rahner. Good assessment went beyond the usual comments of 'vulgar tritheism' and 'crude modalism', and tackled some of the key concepts in scholars' views.

Question 22

Not a popular question, but usually well answered. Good answers paid equal attention to the words 'compare, contrast and consider critically'. The teachings of Rahner, Moltmann and Pannenberg were usually well presented. The weak answers did not show much depth of understanding or assessment.

Question 23

This was the most popular question and candidates showed a good knowledge of the different viewpoints. In part (a) there were usually three viewpoints presented and evaluated. In part (b) some candidates seemed to confuse the 'scope of salvation' with 'justification by faith'. But usually the views were accurately and fairly assessed.

Question 24

A popular question which elicited some excellent responses. Candidates either presented a discussion on death, judgement, heaven and hell; or gave an historical account of how views on eschatology have developed. Both approaches seemed equally valid. Weaker responses sometimes slid into giving philosophical arguments - Hick. Stronger answers gave good accounts of the biblical evidence and the views of scholars.

Question 25

A popular question. In part (a) the discussion tended to centre on work and weaker candidates omitted leisure altogether. Some candidates were in too much haste to reach the Protestant Work Ethic and glided over the Biblical teachings. Good answers gave a balanced account of the Biblical evidence and afforded some positive credit to Christian teaching prior to the Reformation.

In part (b) good candidates identified modern challenges and gave specific details of global, national and/or local responses. Weaker candidates on the other hand generalised and discussed only Sunday opening.

6781: World Religions

Section A: Buddhism

Question 1

Some candidates focused on the considerable range of material available concerning the pre-Ashokan era. These candidates examined features of the Mauryan dynasty with its views about rulers and authority; various religious features such as types of Hinduism and Buddhism in this era and their subsequent influence on Ashoka. Most candidates however focused on selected early biographical information about Ashoka and considered this influence on Ashoka. Both approaches were credited although the former focus provided candidates with an even wider range of material. Some combined both pre-Ashokan and biographical approaches. The demands of AO2 attracted some good discussions with candidates weighing up evidence and coming to informed conclusions.

Question 2

There were few answers to this question but these tended to be of a very high standard with ample of material, together with evidence of evaluative skills in the answers.

Question 3

This attracted some outstanding answers with excellent use of the set texts. These candidates were adept in their analysis of intricate details of these beliefs coupled with an intelligent use of the texts. The weaker candidates examined anatta and anicca more or less in isolation from each other and bypassed the requirement of a 'compare and contrast' essay. A feature of good AO2 answers included a discussion of the significance of these terms on a broader front, such as the place of causal analysis within Buddhist thought and implications for Buddhist practice.

Question 4

As with question 3 this textual question attracted a number of high quality scripts. Candidates were confident in their analysis of the details of these doctrines and made effective use of their texts. There were commendable discussions that, for example, considered the view of Buddhism seen with its apparent primary focus on dukkha compared to the significance of understanding dukkha as essential to the way to nirvana.

Question 5

Part (a) attracted variable answers. Some candidates were much better with (i) concerning the context of this doctrine compared to the quality of work regarding the characteristics of two Bodhisattvas. There was however, consistently good quality work in response to part (b).

Section B: Hinduism

Question 6

This was a popular question and evoked some excellent answers from some centres, indicating an in-depth study of both Ramakrishna and Dayananda Sarasvati. Comparisons and contrasts were also often good, although lack of attention to this demand differentiated good quality scripts from other weaker ones. Only a few however, even attempted to discuss Sri Radhakrishna. Although not essential, given their interest some candidates would find the Gospel of Ramakrishna a valuable source of information.

Question 7

This question was not so popular although there were some excellent answers. Although not essential it is clear that many candidates are well-informed about Gandhi and they could develop this by accessing some of his writings. There were some good discussions of the significance of dharma in his teachings. However, some candidates would have answered in greater depth if they had used some of the relevant material from the set texts.

Question 8

This was a popular question drawing forth some excellent answers that indicated a very careful and intelligent study of the set texts and beyond. In addition, there was a good level of understanding of the teaching on Atman and Brahman for example, as outlined by Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhva.

Question 9

There were some excellent answers from students who had carefully studied their set texts and were able to quote intelligently on samsara and moksha. In some cases, the discussion on implications could have been improved for example by an awareness of the interpretations by different Hindu schools.

Question 10

This question produced some excellent answers that showed a deep knowledge of the Gita and understanding of key terms among some candidates. These were also able to assess its significance for a whole range of schools and teachers down to modern times.

Section C: Islam

It has been good to note the increased reference to scholars and good knowledge of set texts in answers this year. It has however, been disappointing to note that potentially good answers have been prevented from reaching the higher levels because of lack of analysis and development.

Question 11

This was a popular question and many answers were of a high standard relating the origins of Sunni and Shi'ah to the Rightly Guided Caliphs with material selected and used appropriately. Weaker scripts were not as tightly focused upon the question. Many of these either described the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs or simply compared and contrasted beliefs and practices of Sunni and Shi'ah Islam.

Question 12

Part (a) was generally answered well, reflecting good reading and modern knowledge of the topic. However, some candidates described beliefs and practices of Sunni and or Shi'ah Islam without relating them to a particular Islamic state or assessing strengths and weaknesses as a contemporary expression of Islam.

Question 13

Candidates answering this question generally showed a good knowledge of the set texts and were able to discuss their significance for belief and practice. Some answers were brief and generalised.

Question 14

Many students needed to focus more closely upon the wording of this question. Instead of explaining the teachings about revelation in the Qur'an and their importance, many answers simply described Muhammad's call to be the prophet whilst others explained the implications of the Qur'an being the Divine Book. Whilst candidates were justified in using these themes, it was important to make this type of content explicitly relevant the thrust of the question.

Question 15

It is good to note that some answers were of a high standard reflecting good knowledge and understanding with a close focus upon the question. Some weaker responses however, provided answers that did not actually refer to two key people but instead gave a general outline of Sufism.

Section D: Judaism

In question 16 some scripts showed evidence of ample of detail. However, the main weakness was lack of explicit focus on the trigger words of ‘compare and contrast’ and in some scripts the demands of A02 were answered in a brief manner. Question 18 was well answered with commendable scholarship for A01 and informed discussions for A02. Likewise question 19 attracted good quality answers with part (a) having clear well-informed material with vigorous debates in part (b). There were too few answers to the remaining questions to make a comment.

6782: Synoptic

There were a number of scripts achieving high marks and there was evidence of outstanding work from some candidates. In very many cases candidates responded well to their chosen combinations dealing with both units of their studies.

A recurring theme of reports for 6782 over the years has been that although many candidates have amassed a great deal of knowledge they are severely deficient in examination techniques and this is reflected by the fact that so many are unable to make effective use of their considerable material in answering the question. Typically for example, some candidates have presented sound and high quality answers to questions asked in previous papers rather than the current paper. The nature of the Synoptic paper is that there must be predictability of topics, given that the Specification requires candidates to study one topic but this does not however, imply predictability of questions. There is evidence that individual and also groups of candidates have not understood this. A problem with these rote-learned answers with regard to AO2 is that debate and argument either misses the thrust of the set question or is contrived and these candidates are limited in the levels they achieve.

In addition the notion of synopticity requires explicit evidence of connections between the content and/or skills across units. For example, questions 5 and 6 focus on the connections between Philosophy of Religion and New Testament. Some candidates presented an answer that was predominantly biblical with only passing reference to Philosophy of Religion or vice versa. For these partial answers candidates penalised themselves in terms of the level descriptors. Those aiming to achieve AO1 level 4 should present clear and obvious understanding of the connections between different units whether this is achieved via connections of content or skills. One further feature that examiners noticed this year was that a number of scripts presented short answers across a number of different questions and this was noticeable given the time allowed for this exam.

Comments are made on the more popular questions. The principles in many of these comments however are also widely applicable to other questions on the paper.

Question 1

This attracted some good quality answers. Candidates balanced their biblical accounts with a range of philosophical scholarship and engaged with issues in a critical manner. Weaker answers tended to keep to the biblical features and were more descriptive of the divine attributes.

Question 3

On the whole candidates had ample of scholarly material on both religious and ethical language. A popular approach was to focus on verification and falsification debates. The better quality answers focused on the trigger words of 'compare and contrast' and embarked upon vigorous debates. A number structured their answers in a holistic manner combining together the demands of AO1 and AO2, and in the hands of competent candidates this proved very successful. However, some paid little attention to the thrust of the question requiring a comparative analysis. These scripts tended to have more material on religious language with a bare minimum on ethical language. It did not work for candidates to simply write 'religious and ethical language' throughout their answers without any analysis of comparative demands of the question.

Question 4

Sometimes candidates answered the AO1 demands of this question in a basic manner. The AO1 part attracts 30 out of 50 marks and all too often this part received cursory treatment. Sometimes candidates selected an ethical dilemma that proved inadequate to this academic task. The question required an explanation of the arguments involved in one ethical dilemma. Some scripts merely gave a superficial narrative account of a dilemma without the academic rigour of analysing the arguments involved. At times candidates did not appear to be too clear whether their selected dilemma was an ethical one or whether it was more of a political or economic issue. Furthermore, simply to write about particular facts is not in itself synonymous with an examination of an ethical dilemma. This is yet another example of the 'is-ought' debate. For example, to describe a state of affairs concerning a relationship as 'homosexual' is not in itself an argument about a moral dilemma.

A number of candidates took the opportunity to focus on one dilemma and one ethical theory to develop in some depth their expertise and argumentative skills. The examiners agreed that it was credit worthy to focus on one theory and at the same time to compare this one or more others in order to highlight the distinctive features of the selected theory. The same principle applied to one moral dilemma. However, there were a few candidates who ignored the question and with no compunction wrote out what appeared to be pre-prepared answers, covering two or more dilemmas and theories without any attempt to select and adapt the material to the demands of the question. Some candidates in the lower and middle range spent too long over a basic exposition of an ethical theory, rather than integrating the theory with the dilemma.

Question 5

The better responses integrated Philosophy of Religion with their New Testament studies. These were able to present a nuanced account of New Testament teaching about life after death and to offer a philosophical critique of such views. Many of these answers showed convincing evidence of scholarship. These included for example Plato, Descartes, Ryle and Hick. However, New Testament scholars were rarely used. There were some fine examples of arguments for and against the reality of Jesus' own resurrection. A number of middle range candidates treated this as a philosophy essay with the New Testament content 'tagged on'.

Question 6

Some of the less able candidates wrote at length about miracles in the New Testament but paid insufficient attention to the issue of 'a convincing proof for the existence of God'. There were detailed accounts of the views of Aquinas, Hume and others but often without direct application to the question, and there was more limited reference to New Testament scholars.

Questions 7, 8 and 9

These tended to be too heavily based in philosophy, omitting key material about the nature of God in Christian belief in question 7. Question 8 attracted some good philosophical material about identity and personal survival but with weaker content on Christian teachings. The quotation in the question was disregarded in the weaker scripts. Question 9 saw some of the pitfalls of rote-learned answers across a centre in which the same mistakes are repeated. An example was reference to Pope John Paul X111 and the Second Vatican Council across a whole Centre.

Question 11

This was a popular question. Overall the standard was good across Buddhist, Hindu Islamic and Jewish approaches. These often presented AO1 material with some subtlety and finesse. The weaker scripts were characterised by tenuous connections between the two units under examination. There were varying degrees of success with the AO2 demands. It can be noted that in this context a critical discussion of weaknesses of a belief in life after death within a religious tradition may be achieved by an evaluation of different positions and schools within that religion and not necessarily by applying external criteria to the belief system.

Questions 12 and 13

These questions produced some good examples of synoptic answers dealing with connections across these respective units.

Questions 19 and 20

A number of scripts were well informed about both ethical concepts in the New Testament and ethical theories. These included for example studies of agape and situation ethics. Some candidates however, limited their AO1 marks by writing narrative accounts at the expense of an analysis of these concepts and theories. Other candidates relied too heavily on ethical material at the expense of New Testament content.

Question 22

This attracted some good quality answers, although some struggled with the AO2 demands. At times the ethical dimension of answers showed lack of understanding of detail.

Question 24

A popular topic was either just war or jihad. Good answers evaluated the strengths and weaknesses both within the selected religion and also in relation to the wider community. The weaker answers did not display evidence of a critical appraisal.

Question 27

The quality of answers varied but there were interesting scripts comparing the portrayal of Jesus in Luke's gospel and in Calvin's teaching.

Question 28

Popular combinations included John the Baptist and Peter and Cranmer. These were often well answered with candidates thinking about the contributions of each person. Some however, lacked specific detail and information about the development of Christian beliefs. Those answers that explored Jesus in relation to liberation theology struggled to consider critically the contributions to Christian belief. These also tended to be two separate answers with only a limited comparative approach.

Statistics

Unit 6771: Coursework

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	39	35	31	27	23
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6772: Philosophy of Religion

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	25	21	18	15	12
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6773/01: Old Testament/Jewish Bible

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	26	22	19	16	13
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6773/02: Religious Ethics

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	26	22	19	16	13
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6774: New Testament

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	26	22	19	16	13
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6775/01: Christianity - Church History and Christian Thought: The Reformation

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	26	22	18	15	12
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6775/02: Christianity - Church History and Christian Thought: The Nineteenth Century to the present day

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	26	22	18	15	12
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6775/03: Christianity - Christian Belief and Practice

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	26	22	18	15	12
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6776/01: World Religions: Buddhism

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	25	22	19	16	13
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6776/02: World Religions: Hinduism

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	25	22	19	16	13
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6776/03: World Religions: Islam

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	25	22	19	16	13
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6776/04: World Religions: Judaism

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	25	22	19	16	13
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6777: Philosophy of Religion

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	26	23	20	17	15
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6778/01: Old Testament/Jewish Bible

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	26	22	19	16	13
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6778/02: Religious Ethics

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	27	24	21	18	16
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6779: New Testament

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	26	22	19	16	13
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

**Unit 6780/01: Christianity - Church History and Christian Thought:
The Reformation**

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	24	21	18	15	12
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

**Unit 6780/02: Christianity - Church History and Christian Thought:
The Nineteenth Century to the present day**

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	24	21	18	15	12
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6780/03: Christianity - Christian Belief and Practice

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	24	21	18	15	12
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6781/01: World Religions: Buddhism

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	25	22	19	16	14
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6781/02: World Religions: Hinduism

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	25	22	19	16	14
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6781/03: World Religions: Islam

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	25	22	19	16	14
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6781/04: World Religions: Judaism

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	25	22	19	16	14
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 6782: Synoptic

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	38	33	28	23	19
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Notes

Maximum Mark (Raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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