

## WORLD RELIGIONS

### Overall grade boundaries

#### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 12	13 - 24	25 - 39	40 - 48	49 - 58	59 - 67	68 - 100

### Standard level internal assessment

#### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 30

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

There was variability in candidate performance across different centres. Many of the comments made in last year's report still apply. Some candidates still struggle to produce a proper research-oriented study. Candidates need to ensure they choose an appropriate research question and focus their answer on that question. The question must generate a genuine enquiry rather than just show knowledge and understanding. Candidates need to be clear about their research methodology. They need to situate their research within a review of appropriate literature presented in their preliminary research and provide sufficient critical reflection and evaluation. Good studies typically achieved high marks for critical reflection and evaluation and depended upon sufficient preliminary research having been undertaken, effective fieldwork being incorporated, and the use of sound scholarly sources. It is important that teachers give candidates sufficient grounding in the nature of research. There were a variety of topics but there was variation in the suitability of the topics chosen and the research question presented. The best studies were original and tightly focused. Some candidates persist in using inappropriate terminology by referring to groups, branches or denominations of a religion as "sects". There was a small number of IAs that exceeded the word limit and was penalized as a result.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

#### Criterion A: Rationale and preliminary research

There was significant variation among candidates across the entire mark range. This was due to some candidates not choosing an appropriate research question and wide variation in the understanding of "preliminary research".

In some studies there was a tendency to only be subjective in presenting the rationale, referring to their own experience without consulting scholarly sources. Too many studies relied almost exclusively on Internet sources of variable quality.

#### **Criterion B: Plan for study**

The plans for study were generally adequate. Not all candidates had a secure understanding of what a plan for study entails. This resulted in repetition of information given under preliminary research, and a lack of attention to the process by which the study would be undertaken. This was most obviously the case in studies with a weak research question and a lack of preliminary research.

#### **Criterion C: Summary of significant findings**

A number of candidates were unclear as to the difference between significant findings and critical reflection and evaluation. In some cases this was due to a lack of research undertaken, both empirical and through literature consulted. Where significant findings were weak and merely descriptive there was no scope for critical evaluation. Overall, these weaknesses are closely related to candidates not fully understanding the methodology of research design.

#### **Criterion D: Critical reflection and evaluation**

There was wide variation in candidate performance for this criterion. Few candidates achieved high marks (7–8 marks or above) in which critical reflection is sound and well developed. Many candidates did not show the ability to be sufficiently critical. Some studies, due to the nature of the research question and a lack of methodological progression in the study, could only produce brief and uncritical comments for this criterion. A few studies relied solely on reflecting on their research methods in a descriptive and repetitive manner. Teachers need to ensure that candidates clearly understand the requirements of this criterion and how they are related to other aspects of the study overall.

#### **Criterion E: References and compliance with format**

There is still a tendency to over-rely on Internet sources that lack appropriate scholarly material. Too many candidates' reference lists were brief. Candidates did not always cite interviews they had conducted. Studies that exceeded the word limit received no marks for this criterion. Teachers need to ensure that candidates are well aware of the penalty for not keeping to the word limit and that the length of the study should be shown on the title page.

### **Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates**

Candidates need to be aware of the overall design of a short research project and how that differs from writing an essay. In this respect they should specifically be made aware of:

- What constitutes a good research question.
- The difference between preliminary research and reading around a subject.
- The need for further research literature to be consulted during the progress of the study.
- The protocols and methodology involved in interviewing and using questionnaires.
- The need to present significant findings rather than just reporting on an interview or summarizing information obtained.

- How to write a critical evaluation.
- How to make appropriate judgments about the scholarly value of literature consulted.
- The need to ensure that the study is within the allowed word limit.

## Standard level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 34	35 - 50

### General comments

The quality of candidate performance varied across centres as well as between individual candidates.

The best answers clearly and succinctly identified specific points in the answer, relating to the question set, which were each worthy of a mark.

There was evidence that some candidates did not read the demands of the question set carefully enough or sought to answer the question based on broader information on the religion that was not specifically relevant to the question set. Comments below indicate where there were some difficulties apparent in some candidates' answers to the question set.

There was one instance where the rubric was not followed. The candidate answered part questions rather than whole questions involving both parts (a) and (b).

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Some candidates need to read the questions set more carefully. Since the questions rely on close textual reading and relating that to specific concepts it is important they develop this skill rather than writing more descriptive answers. This applies more specifically to part (b) of each question, although it was clear that some candidates also struggled with more technical vocabulary, such as identifying specific doctrines, in part (a) answers. Some candidates' range of knowledge was limited and this meant that significant aspects of the questions were not directly addressed and/or candidates repeated information given in part (a) of the question within part (b) of the question. There was some evidence that not all candidates were recognizing the relationship between the question set and its connection to one of the three fundamental questions in Part 1 of the guide. Candidates who answered with reference to the key concepts of the religion performed better than those who did not. In general candidates need to be more aware of the overall nature of each religious worldview and the specificity of its characteristics. This is most evident in relation to Hinduism and Sikhism.

## The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Generally candidates were well prepared in relation to the Christianity question in that they were more knowledgeable. The Taoist and Baha'i Faith questions were also generally well answered.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

### Question 1: Hinduism

Generally, candidates did not display the range and technicality of knowledge required by this question. In part (a), whilst aware of karma, varna and caste no knowledge was shown of their relationship to the gunas: sattva, rajas and tamas, the "qualities of nature" that link social hierarchy to the cosmic system. In part (b) candidates generally related the knowledge required in broad terms but with a lack of attention to detail. Again, there was a lack of recognition of the relationship between social hierarchy and cosmology.

### Question 2: Buddhism

Part (a) was generally well answered but candidates often missed the connection between nirvana and the extinction of craving (tanha). Part (b) was answered poorly by most candidates because they were not sufficiently able to distinguish between the careers of lay and monastic Buddhists in relation to the goal of nirvana. Most obviously the ideas of merit and generosity (dana) in relation to traditional lay practice were absent. Candidates found this question to be the most challenging in the paper.

### Question 3: Sikhism

Part (a) was adequately answered but candidates failed to show awareness of the importance of God's grace relating to "the realm of grace" (karam khand). In part (b) the previous omission was also absent, as was mention of the "realm of truth" (sach khand) as a further stage in the Sikh afterlife. Some candidates erroneously spoke of being one with God and Sikhism being monist. As with the Hinduism answer candidates seem to lack sufficient knowledge of cosmology and soteriology in these two Indian traditions, whereas they are generally well aware of reincarnation.

### Question 4: Judaism

Some candidates may have been confused by the term "Redeemer" in the quotation used, since they would more readily associate it with Christianity. However, a majority of candidates mentioned its connection to the Jewish idea of a Messiah or Messianic Age. In part (b) answers were generally adequate in relation to the question set but many lacked the detailed knowledge required on Jewish observance to achieve the highest marks.

### Question 5: Christianity

In part (a) some candidates tended to repeat information from the quotation used rather than identify the doctrines that informed the credal text. Candidates need to be more aware of what constitutes a doctrine and the relationship between creeds and doctrines. Part (b) answers were generally satisfactory and more detailed answers achieved the higher marks available.

**Question 6: Islam**

In part (a) candidates were well aware of the importance of submission to the text but often failed to link that to obedience to the will of Allah and sacrifice of one's own desires. In part (b) answers were generally adequate but too often candidates relied on a description of the five pillars of Sunni Islam instead of answering in a more conceptual manner. This is a good illustration of why candidates must learn conceptually rather than descriptively.

**Question 7: Taoism**

In contrast to answers to question 6, many of the answers to this question were conceptually based, especially in part (b). Responses achieving the higher marks were able to make appropriate connections between key concepts in an accurate fashion.

**Question 8: Jainism**

Few candidates answered this question. The answers were generally satisfactory but lacking in more detailed distinctive knowledge of Jainism; in particular the concept of Three Jewels (ratna-traya) and the radical nature of Jain monastic asceticism.

**Question 9: Baha'i Faith**

In part (a) candidates answers were satisfactory, however more precise detail could have been shown in the answers given. In part (b) answers were of variable quality. Most were adequate. The question allowed candidates with detailed knowledge and understanding to achieve the higher marks.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates need to be reminded of the necessity for focused answers to each question and the number of marks available. This will help them develop the technique of including relevant points in an economical way rather than writing more discursively at greater length.

Candidates also need to have detailed knowledge and be able to link points made in part (b) of the question in a coherent fashion. Candidates should be helped to develop the sort of textual reading that enables responses that show insight into the main concepts in the text to which the question refers. Effectively, this involves the development of candidates' religious literacy as well as providing information. In relation to Sikhism and Hinduism better knowledge and conceptual awareness is required so that candidates appreciate the distinctiveness of these worldviews, including their cosmological and soteriological dimensions.

## Standard level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 17	18 - 20	21 - 24	25 - 27	28 - 40

### General comments

More emphasis has to be placed on candidates gaining a conceptual awareness to achieve the highest grades.

As with the 2009 examination, there was a clear correlation between higher quality answers and candidates who showed the capacity to speak the language of the tradition in a precise fashion.

Again as with last year, some candidates used inappropriate terminology when referring to branches of a tradition, referring to them as sects.

Some candidates offered long answers that were not clearly focused on the demands of the question set in relation to higher skills such as analysis.

There was evidence that candidates sometimes lacked a coherent conceptual awareness of a religion which limited their ability to answer the question set.

There was also evidence that some candidates lacked knowledge in relation to the specific question asked (see question 3 below).

Candidates answering question 4, an open-ended question based on religions from the Indian tradition failed to follow the rubric. They answered also using religions from the middle-eastern traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This was due to the instructions not clearly indicating the range of religions from which the question should be answered and will be made clear in future examinations. Candidates were not penalized on this occasion when they chose a religion from Section B.

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Some candidates showed a tendency to write without specific enough attention to the question set and provided general information on the religion in question. In some cases candidates found difficulty in relating the key concepts in the religion to the theme, or the textual references to the practices of the religion. In the case of question 5 some candidates failed to focus on the concept of assimilation, rather than persecution and showed little critical acumen in their approach. This has tended to be the case now in two examination questions based on Judaism in the past two years. Candidates need to ensure the information they present is accurate. This was a particular problem in relation to question 1, Hinduism, this year (see below). Responses appeared to sometimes be too “culturally bound”, *i.e.* their perspective too western-oriented (see question 2 below).

## The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Some candidates appeared well tutored in basic knowledge and understanding in core areas of the curriculum, this needs to be translated into the exercise of higher level skills, more detailed knowledge in relation to specific questions set and a greater cultural awareness.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

### Question 1: Hinduism

Many candidates who answered this question were not able to distinguish the precise difference between the Vedic and Upanishadic texts; in particular their knowledge of the Upanishads was often erroneous and simply incorrect. Some candidates also illustrated the difference between shruti and smirti texts using the wrong scriptures. Candidates were competent in explaining the difference in status between the two categories of text.

### Question 2: Buddhism

There was variety in the quality of candidates' answers to this question based on the detail in the answers given. Whilst candidates were able to identify some differences between Mahayana and Theravada, and in some cases Vajrayana, the knowledge shown and judgments made were often not well-informed. Surprisingly no knowledge was shown of conversion to Buddhism by the dalits in India or the Ambedkar movement, nor of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, which is more focused on conversion and the need to adapt Buddhism accordingly.

### Question 3: Sikhism

This question was poorly answered due to most candidates having no detailed knowledge of the Mul Mantra. Most candidates focused more generally on Sikh practice, for which some marks were awarded. Some candidates made general links to the Mul Mantra and its teachings. However, this identified a significant omission in candidates' knowledge.

Some candidates, as in paper 1, wrongly assume that Sikhism is Monist and are not aware of the significance of God's grace in Sikhism. Also, candidates did not show awareness of the importance of bhakti in Sikhism.

### Question 4: Open-ended question

Some candidates did not answer the question in relation to the religions in Section A (Hinduism, Buddhism or Sikhism). There was no high quality answer to this question and some were not entirely clear as to the nature and purpose of pilgrimage. Few high quality examples of pilgrimage were included except the hajj in Islam. Awareness was shown by some candidates of the ambiguous status of pilgrimage in Sikhism.

### Question 5: Judaism

There was a lack of detailed knowledge of different Jewish responses to assimilation and some candidates focused more on persecution. The weakest answers showed a desire to moralize in relation to Jewish persecution. No answers showed any critical acumen concerning this issue.

**Question 6: Christianity**

This question was generally answered adequately with knowledge of differing Christian responses but with little analysis of scriptural interpretation. Some answers did show some critical merit and there was evidence of in-depth research.

**Question 7: Islam**

Most candidates had difficulty providing specific scriptural references in their answers. Many candidates focused on describing the ritual practices of Islam. Of these many focused only on the five Sunni pillars. There was a lack of critical and conceptual awareness shown.

**Question 8: Open-ended question**

Answers to this question were variable in quality. The best explored reasons for secular and religious principles that are in tension and why different religious groups within the same religion have differing views. However, many answers lacked balance in their presentation.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Too many candidates are not answering questions with a conceptual approach, signalling that a greater teaching and learning emphasis needs to be placed on religious literacy and worldview analysis. Teaching should emphasize the importance of understanding religious concepts specific to a particular religion on their own terms. Also, teaching should emphasise the need to explore critical debate over tensions within and across religions and between religious and secular views, and the reasons for them. Candidates need to have more detailed knowledge of the core areas of the curriculum and a broader cultural knowledge and perspective beyond that of candidates' own world of immediate cultural experience.

## Overall comments

As noted in the 2009 report, the new pilot curriculum based on conceptual understanding is making greater demands on both candidates and teachers. The results of the May 2010 examination suggest that this should continue with further emphasis on teaching and learning based upon the acquisition of conceptual awareness. It is also important that candidates are well versed in how to answer examination questions in detail and focusing on the demands of the question set. Rather than just showing general knowledge about the religion in the question without specificity/focus. Improving candidate performance in Internal Assessment needs to be addressed in relation to the assessment criteria and by improving research and critical skills. It is also important that all future open-ended questions clearly state the religions to which they apply.

Teachers are reminded that they should be using the "World Religions draft guide (first exams 2011)" for May 2011 teaching. Teachers and candidates should familiarize themselves with the changes in the layout and markbands for paper 2. There will be fourteen essay questions for this paper instead of eight. There will be two questions (instead of one) on each of the three religions in Section A and B to choose from. This is in addition to the choice (as candidates have now) of one open-ended question in each section, to be answered using any of the religions within that section. The duration of the examination remains the same at 1 hour and 30 minutes; with candidates required to answer as is now one question from each section. A new specimen paper with markscheme will be made available via the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC) in the autumn to illustrate these changes.