

## May 2016 subject reports

### World Religions

#### Overall grade boundaries

##### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 13	14 - 28	29 - 43	44 - 53	54 - 63	64 - 74	75 - 100

#### Standard level internal assessment

##### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 30

#### Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

Some confusion was created this year by late arrivals and missing candidate checklists or the 3/CS along with the essays. This only occurred in a minority of cases.

#### The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range of titles for the IA projects revealed the keen interest which students have in this project and the continuing interest in understanding religion in the contemporary world. In most cases the titles were suitable for examination as research projects. The only comment would be that perhaps teachers need to advise students more strongly that they should assess the availability of sources to make the research feasible, this particularly pertains to secondary sources.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

The candidate performance against each criterion was generally sound. On the whole candidates are beginning to grasp the concept of the IA. There remains some clarification to be communicated to candidates with regard to criteria A and B.

### **A Rational and preliminary research**

The candidate should identify either personal or scholarly reasons for selecting the project's area of research. They then need to identify some early or preliminary research undertaken and its results. Such early research would show how the candidate's initial interest is sharpened.

There should then be further research building upon the preliminary research which would show development of understanding away from the personal towards the scholarly, showing how attitudes, knowledge and understanding have been developed towards the framing of a research area to be investigated.

### **B Plan for study**

The plan of study should then reveal the actual research title and the research method, scope, and resources to be drawn upon. These should not include the preliminary research and its development.

### **C Summary of significant findings**

Interviews should be supported by literature searches whenever possible rather than be presented alone. Successful candidates will compare and contrast literature and interview results in their significant findings and reflect on the differences in the critical reflection.

### **D Critical reflection and evaluation**

Section D should not be a summary or conclusion, but a reflection on the process, limitations, possible ways of improvement, comments on scope, etc.

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

Some candidates produce excellent referencing but they should all be encouraged to adopt a standard system and to use it throughout. There were some candidates who did not comply with the format specified, but generally this was commented upon by the supervisors.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are encouraged to give candidates a clear brief on the requirements of each section to ensure that they are not carried away by their enthusiasms and select titles where resources are scarce.

## Further comments

The IA continues to work well in world religions and aids the candidates to demonstrate different skills than those shown on the examination papers. The assignments covered a very wide range of topics and showed some interesting research.

## Standard level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 9	10 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 30	31 - 35	36 - 41	42 - 50

## General comments

The paper differentiated well with a wide range of responses in each specific religion as well as across the whole exam paper. There were some excellent responses through which candidates showed an understanding of the key concepts of the religious tradition. This was particularly evident in Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Taoism. In the latter it was evident that understanding had been supported by the study of analogies associated with Taoist beliefs and this had supported an understanding of the key concepts.

The paper requires candidates to answer ten questions, five of which relate directly to a textual reference. Each question has different demands. It was evident that some candidates failed to understand the demands of the question and therefore wrote very generic answers. An example could be found in the second question related to Taoism. The question asks candidates to consider the 'silence' in Taoism. Some candidates lost marks as they wrote generic answers with no focus on 'silence'.

The question in Judaism relating to the Messiah required an understanding of the Messiah in Judaism. Many candidates framed the responses around the role of Jesus and the Second Coming. It was evident there were many misconceptions regarding Judaism as a distinctive religious tradition.

Candidates are required to answer from five different traditions. Apart from the above example there were few instances of candidates confusing the traditions. Even in the most basic responses there was recognition of distinctive features or teaching.

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

This session, candidates were weakest in Judaism, Sikhism and Jainism. There was some confusion between Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

Strongest in Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Taoism Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Once again, there was a problem with Christianity for which many responses were confessional in nature and failed to evaluate the questions objectively.

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

The best responses were generally those on Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Taoism.

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

Generally, part (a) of the questions was better done than the (b) sections. Again, many answers were short.

### Hinduism

1. (Bhagavad Gita 2:20, 22)

(a) Identify three important ideas in this passage. [3]

This question was generally well answered with most candidates able to select three important and different points from the passage. Some candidates failed to read the passage and instead made three general comments about Hinduism

(b) Explain Hindu teachings about samsara. [7]

There were some excellent responses which showed a knowledge and understanding of samsara with the use of appropriate and relevant terminology. There were some cases where candidates obviously knew more but expressed their knowledge in very brief bullet points. Responses in section (b) should be developed.

### Buddhism

2. (Dhammapada 183)

(a) Comment on the meaning of "To purify your own mind". [3]

There were some very good responses in which candidates explained what was meant by 'purify your own mind' in Buddhism and how this might happen in practice. Lack of acknowledgement of command terms impacted on the quality of some responses. The command term was 'comment' and therefore one word responses do not constitute a full comment.

(b) Explain how the Noble Eightfold Path links with this passage. [7]

The question asks candidates to relate the passage to the Eightfold path. The mark scheme shows the areas that were expected although any other relevant responses were credited. For those candidates gaining highest marks they expressed their understanding using relevant religious terminology. Some candidates, although obviously having an understanding of Buddhism, failed to make links between the passage and the Eightfold Path and just went on to explore the Eightfold Path.

### **Sikhism**

#### 3. (Guru Granth Sahib 1)

(a) Identify three teachings in this passage. [3]

Very few candidates answered the questions from the Sikh tradition. There were some excellent answers where candidates were able to identify three relevant teachings. Some candidates seemed unsure about Sikhism and couched their response in the Hindu tradition.

(b) Explain Sikh teaching about the human condition. [7]

Although there were a few excellent responses, many were very general responses about Sikhism or about Hinduism and the human tradition.

### **Judaism**

#### 4. (Isaiah 11:6)

(a) Outline three teachings in this passage. [3]

Many responses identified the passage as relating to the Messiah but were unable to relate Jewish teachings to the concept. Some responses related to the care of Judaism for animals without relating the symbolism of the passage.

(b) Explain what is believed in Judaism about the Mashiach (Messiah). [7]

There were many responses to this question which only explained the Christian beliefs about the Messiah. In some responses, references were made to Jews 'not yet' accepting the Christian Messiah. Very few responses expressed an understanding of the diversity of beliefs within Judaism regarding the Messiah.

### **Christianity**

#### 5. (Genesis 3:17 (adapted))

(a) Describe what happened in the Garden of Eden for God to say these things to Adam. [3]

This question was usually answered well. Most responses were able to identify three distinct points.

- (b) Explain the Christian doctrine of the Fall that comes from this passage. [7]

There were some excellent responses to this question which showed an understanding of the concept of the Fall to Christian doctrine. Where candidates did not achieve highly it was often because of misreading the question where candidates only focused on the Fall and not the *doctrine* of the Fall.

### Islam

6. (Adhan)

- (a) Identify three important ideas in this passage. [3]

This was answered well with candidates able to select three relevant ideas.

- (b) Explain Muslim teachings about submission to the will of Allah. [7]

Generally, a well-answered question. Candidates applied their knowledge and understanding of Islam to submission of the will of Allah. Often candidates were able to use relevant religious terminology in detailed explanations.

### Taoism

7. (Chuang Chou, Chuang-Tzu)

- (a) Outline three aspects of the Tao. [3]

A well-answered question in which candidates were able to identify three different aspects of the Tao. Often responses incorporated some further development showing an understanding the religion.

- (b) Investigate why the Tao is linked with silence in this passage. [7]

Although responses showed an understanding of Taoism, responses did not always focus on how the Tao is linked with silence. It is important for candidates to read the demand of the question carefully.

### Jainism

8. (Uttarādhyayana Sutra 32:7)

- (a) Identify three teachings in this passage. [3]

Few candidates responded to this question and there was a variety in quality of responses. Some candidates applied knowledge and understanding of Hinduism without any reference to the distinctive features of Jainism.

- (b) Explain how Jains try to achieve release from samsara. [7]

Although there were a few excellent responses, many gave a response focussing on samsara in Hinduism – sometimes repeating what they had written in question 1(b).

### **Baha'i Faith**

9. (Abdu'l-Baha, Promulgation of Universal Peace (1912) (adapted))

(a) Outline three teachings from this passage. [3]

Three distinct and different teachings were usually identified by the few candidates who answered the question.

(b) Explain Baha'i teachings about salvation. [7]

Responses tended to be very general with little reference to salvation.

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

In the May 2015 session, the questions were fair and accessible within the remit of the study guide. Candidates appear to need more detailed study of the religions and topics with a range of texts rather than relying on overview texts which is what many responses suggest. Some of the texts which candidates cite in their responses are inadequate and inaccurate. It would certainly improve responses if they used dedicated texts for the religions which they are studying. Teachers are encouraged to train candidates to read the demands of the question carefully in order to ensure that the responses they provide are relevant and merit the marks.

## Standard level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 24	25 - 28	29 - 40

### General comments

The standard this session was similar to that of May 2015. There is still an apparent lack of in-depth knowledge. Many responses were superficial. Evaluation and analysis remain an issue, and many candidates do not attempt to produce balanced arguments, instead relying on just telling the examiner everything they know, or basing their conclusion solely on personal opinions.

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

This session, candidates were weakest in Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Once again, there is a recurrent issue with the treatment of Christianity questions for which many responses were confessional in nature and failed to address the questions objectively.

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

The best responses were generally those on Buddhism and Islam. The weakest responses were in Sikhism, which was generally misunderstood.

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

Many responses were no longer than half a page. Candidates do not appear to be ready to write essay-style answers. A number of candidates answered only one question or, alternatively four or more. Teachers are advised to review the requirements of the examination papers with the candidates to ensure they know exactly what they need to do.

#### Section A

The most popular questions were 4, 6 and 7.

## Hinduism

1. Examine in detail the importance of the four ashramas.

There were some good, detailed responses to this question, but many were lists, less than a page in length. Some candidates totally confused ashramas with varnas and gave a definition to this effect.

2. Examine Hindu teaching on euthanasia.

Most responses were very general and were concerned with ahimsa and karma, and with bad karma being reflected back on to the person assisting with the act. No responses indicated that, for some Hindus, voluntary passive euthanasia may be acceptable, if no one else is involved, as it can sometimes speed up samsara whilst also releasing the person concerned from unnecessary pain and suffering.

## Buddhism

3. Discuss the content and importance of the sacred texts of Theravada Buddhism.

Many candidates seemed not to have been expecting this type of question. Many wrote about Mahayana as well as Theravada texts or about the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, none of which could attract any credit. The majority could name and describe the three parts of the Tripitaka but were unable to analysis and evaluate their importance.

4. To what extent are women discriminated against in Buddhism?

This was a very popular question. There were some excellent responses but too many candidates relied on saying that the treatment of women in Buddhism was sexist because of cultural influences. Very few were able to consider the treatment of women in Theravada v. Mahayana Buddhism with a significant number of candidates getting these two confused.

## Sikhism

5. Assess Sikh eschatology.

There were so few responses to this question that it is not possible to produce any representative comments apart from the fact that it appears to be an area which candidates have not studied in depth. Teachers are reminded that eschatology is a required section of study in the syllabus for all religions and as such, examination questions may and will be drawn from this topic.

6. "The Guru Granth Sahib is the only source of authority for Sikhs." Discuss.

There were very few references to texts such as the Dasma Granth, Rahit Nama and Rahit Maryada. Many said that Waheguru and the Khalsa were sources of authority. Whilst this is not wrong, it needs far more unpacking.

**Open-ended question**

7. With reference to one religion, either Hinduism or Buddhism or Sikhism, examine the role of ritual using at least two examples.

Many candidates appear to rely on the open-ended questions to make up for what they do not know to answer the religion-specific ones. This tends to produce very weak responses. For each of the three religions, candidates argued that rituals were/were not important. Many simply wrote about beliefs such as ahimsa, karma and dharma as rituals, thereby gaining very little credit.

**Section B**

The most popular questions were 9, 11 & 13.

**Judaism**

8. Discuss the importance of the Beth Din (rabbinic court) to Jewish religious life.

As with Question 5 this question appears to be an area which candidates had not studied in depth.

9. "Judaism is a religion of the home rather than the synagogue." To what extent do you agree with this statement? Christianity

This question appeared to polarise candidates' responses with both sides being supported. There were some very good responses but overall candidates did not appear to have sufficient knowledge to make a balanced judgement. There was also too much reliance on an historical perspective which was not required here.

10. To what extent would you agree that biblical criticism can damage a Christian's faith?

This was probably the worst answered question on the paper. No candidates' responses addressed biblical criticism as such. They all relied on 'criticism of the Bible' and saw this as negative. The topic is in the course syllabus, so responses on different types of biblical criticism were expected.

11. "Infant baptism is meaningless; people should get baptized when they become adults." Discuss.

Again, this generally polarised candidates' responses between Roman Catholic and Protestant views mostly, which suggested that candidates belonged to these denominations. A large number stated incorrectly, that the Lutheran Church does not baptise babies. A number omitted any mention of cleansing from Original Sin. Others

wrote very generally about taking away a baby's human rights. There were, however, some other excellent responses.

### **Islam**

12. To what extent might Muslim teachings about divorce be seen as unfair to women?

This was not a popular question and it produced some very weak responses about the oppression of women. There was little knowledge about different forms of divorce and the responses generally gave the impression that they came from the media rather than a study of scholarly writings.

13. Examine the importance of hajj in the life of a Muslim.

Candidates generally seemed to lack detailed knowledge of the hajj: only one mentioned the Plain of Arafat which is generally viewed as the climax of the hajj. A significant number said it was a pilgrimage from Medinah to Mecca. A number of candidates spent a whole page placing it into the context of the other four pillars, which gained very little credit. Views about women and the hajj were very confused. Few candidates actually engaged with its importance.

### **Open-ended question**

14. With reference to one religion, either Judaism or Christianity or Islam, discuss the importance of group religious experience.

Although there were responses on all three of the religions, the most popular was Islam. Unfortunately, this majority could easily have been applied to Q.13 with a description of all five pillars and a concentration on the hajj. Many candidates did not seem to know what a group religious experience is.

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

Teachers must ensure candidates know the command terms as defined in the subject guide and train them to read questions carefully to determine what exactly is being asked and what they are required to do.

Teachers must also emphasize the need for deeper, well-argued treatment of the questions where candidates demonstrate their abilities in analysis, evaluation and synthesis.

Finally, teachers are reminded to share and discuss the markbands and markschemes with the candidates as a good understanding of these will help them provide strong responses that address all aspects of the assessment instruments.