

WORLD RELIGIONS

Overall grade boundaries

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 24	25 - 39	40 - 48	49 - 58	59 - 67	68 - 100

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

There was a good range of work submitted showing a diverse range of responses to the assignment. Much of the material showed enthusiasm and interest on the part of students, though this occasionally led to disappointment when exciting questions were not given the academic attention they merited. Candidates were not always up to dealing with their own questions and should have found a tighter and more manageable focus when tackling subjects like 'Are Democracy and Sharia Compatible?' The research questions were also variable in quality and often too broad. There was a lack of scholarly and preliminary research evident in many studies and a lack of empirical research in some. When empirical research was carried out some candidates were unsure how to do it effectively or how to incorporate findings into the study. In some studies, where no empirical research was undertaken the significant findings were sometimes just selected information. In poorer studies there was a lack of citation and use of scholarly sources. Because some students do not really understand the nature of research they do not use the sections of the study consistently. This is due to a lack of research skills and a lack of understanding of task demands in the IA, especially in relation to how the different sections contribute to the overall product. The number of words in the study should be registered on its title page, most candidates did this but there were exceptions.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Rationale and preliminary research

There were one or two much repeated misunderstandings about Section A and B, with some candidates clearly having been instructed to repeat the research question from one section to another, and some candidates understanding Section B to require the inclusion of a review of research. Too often there was a lack of citation and reference to sources and reading, especially in section A.

Candidates need to be aware that section A is about how they researched an area of study in order to arrive at a manageable and significant research question and that this involves preliminary reading prior to embarking on the study proper. The rationale is the justification they provide for the exercise they have undertaken.

Criterion B: Plan for study

This year research questions were often better than in previous years but ways of tackling them in the studies varied significantly. This became clear in the different approaches to the plan for study. Some candidates treated it as a list of things they would do rather than providing a progressive plan of how they would do their research in order to effectively address the question they were pursuing.

Criterion C: Summary of significant findings

Section C was often well dealt with, but note above the distinctions between studies that involved empirical research and those that did not.

Criterion D: Critical reflection and evaluation

Section D often included more 'significant findings' rather than actual analysis and tying together of significant findings and preliminary research into a coherent argument. Students had usually been instructed to consider their own methodology, though not all did, by any means. Although the best studies generally accomplished the section on critical reflection better than in previous years, critical reflection was poorly done in many cases. This can be because the 'significant findings' have not thrown into relief any important issues and evidence related to the research question. It can also be because candidates have pursued their research question in an unbalanced way by seeking evidence, or interpreting evidence toward an answer to their research question that they favour.

Criterion E: References and compliance with format

Candidates generally performed well in section E - although a common error was to leave out page numbers.

Referencing to format was very good but the quality and quantity of references was very variable. Some candidates were including references to sources that were not cited in their study. There is an issue with regard to the descriptor for 3 marks in this section, which includes 'A comprehensive list of references is included'. Many studies do not provided a comprehensive list in terms of quantity but 'comprehensive' could also be interpreted as including all the sources they have cited, which may not be many.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

It should be made very clear that Section A precedes section B, in that it leads up to the articulation of the research question, through an introductory undertaking of preliminary research. In general, it was problems with the structure of the assignment that cost most marks. Teachers would be well advised to insist on an early first draft leading to an in-depth discussion with the student about how to structure their final work. If students can understand the long-term process of the IA they do well. Many however, view it as a one-off challenge and so do not digest or develop their research properly and fail to manage the challenging format. The gentle tailoring of the research question over a longer period might lead to more coherent Sections A and B, and more fruitful Section Ds. It is essential that candidates are given some research training in the course of or prior to undertaking the IA.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 11	12 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 34	35 - 50

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

The questions on Christianity and, to a lesser extent, Islam were not well answered by a number of candidates. Generally, some candidates have a tendency not to answer the question set but provided general information on the religion. This applies most obviously to part b) of the questions. There was also, sometimes, a tendency to repeat information given in part a) again in part b). This suggests that some candidates have not thought through how to relate the part a) and part b) questions to one another.

Candidates performing less well produced answers that lacked precise detail, did not demonstrate a secure knowledge of relevance key concepts in the religion and relied on general information. A minority of candidates struggled with organizing information into concise and coherent answers. About half of the candidates had trouble with giving examples as a way of making their points more credible. Those candidates who gained satisfactory but not high marks often produced answers that lacked scope, detail and depth in relation to the questions set. There appeared to be variability in the performance of candidates both across centers and within centers. For most questions on the paper candidate performance was across a wide range.

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

The vast majority of candidates demonstrated a high degree of respect for each of the traditions, responding to the questions in many cases as though they, themselves, were followers of the tradition. Some candidates showed a welcome degree of sophistication in using both the English phrasing and the corresponding correct religious/philosophical term in the vernacular associated with each religion.

Most candidates were quite well prepared for the questions on Taoism and, to a lesser extent, Jainism. In the questions on Hinduism and Buddhism, candidates showed a strong understanding of the concept of re-incarnation (though 'rebirth' should be used for Buddhism) and its ultimate end, as well as its dependence on karma (for some candidates) concerning its particular manifestations. Generally, the best answers showed an awareness of how to address the question set, especially in part b) where these answers provided a progressive explanation based on the relevant key concepts of the religion. Candidates who performed well recognized that what was required in part b) was a mini-essay of explanation not just a series of points of information.

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

Question 1 Hinduism

Atman and the human condition: More required on karma, varna / caste and dharma. A wide range of attainment.

Question 2 Buddhism

Cleansing the mind and Buddhist path to enlightenment. More required on types of meditation, mindfulness, morality and moral virtues. A wide range in attainment but many of the candidates answered the questions quite well.

Question 3 Sikhism

Haumai and Sikh understanding of human suffering. The grace of God missing in all answers. There was a wide range of attainment. A majority of candidates understood the concept of haumai in Sikhism even if some of them could not enlarge on that sufficiently.

Question 4 Judaism

Chosen people and how meant to live as chosen people. More required on carrying out God's work, mitzvot, the responsibility for the unfortunate, being an example of holiness. A wide range of attainment but answers were generally quite competent. Understanding of Judaism's unique position as The Chosen People and what that means to Jews in their daily lives was about split down the middle for candidates. Some were quite clear on what that meant, but an equal number demonstrated a vaguer understanding.

Question 5 Christianity

Life of the world to come and purgatory. More required on heaven as reward and living in the presence of God, hell as punishment. In part b) Purgatory was often little understood. More required on purification; those who enter purgatory will go to heaven; only a Roman Catholic belief, prayers and indulgences can be made. Almost all candidates showed confusion over the concept of Purgatory. Most believed it to be a place where the soul somehow worked out its own fate and most believed that that ultimate fate could be hell as well as heaven. Very few understood the belief to be that it is those on earth who are responsible for helping the soul reach heaven (and only heaven) through their prayers, good works, and sacrifices. Poorly answered by many candidates.

Question 6 Islam

Punishment on day of judgement and how that is related to divine creation and divine justice. A lack of connection to bad/evil action of wrongdoers as well as lack of belief in a). A lack of linking the 3 concepts together in answer to b), e.g. divine justice necessitates punishment and reward; a lack of reference to free will. Very variable quality of answers. The best answers had good focus on key Muslim concepts. The majority of candidates seemed to have an understanding of heaven and hell in Islam, and how a Muslim "gets there." Many of them demonstrated a clear sense that Allah is both merciful and just, but most focused on how a Muslim gets to heaven even though the question, and the passage from the Qur'an that prompted it, were about Hell.

Question 7 Taoism

Tao modelled on own spontaneity and connection between earth, heaven, human activity and tao. A need to link spontaneity to change, especially in human behaviour; disruption brought about by desire.

A lack of direct link to the question focusing on connections and a lack of appropriate reference to heaven. Variability in the quality of answers but the best answers had a strong grasp of key Taoist concepts. Some candidates provided strong answers. A majority of candidates understood the workings of the Tao in Taoism.

Question 8 Jainism

Jain view of suffering and how the passage relates to Jain view of human existence. Generally, a lack of account of karma and the preciousness of human life because of the possibility of release from samsara; also jiva as omniscient caught up in material world as cause of suffering. Generally reasonable marks but not outstanding.

Question 9 Bahais

The world of mortality as one of contradictions and the understanding of human purpose. A lack of commentary on 'the world of mortality', freewill and choice, the grace of God and the identification of how human purpose can be achieved. A wide range of attainment but a significant number of poor answers. Many candidates interpreted the question regarding the "human purpose" of the members of the Baha'i Faith to be that of uniting the world. Few saw the question in terms of the individual's personal spiritual growth toward God. There was, generally, a good understanding of the dual nature of humankind in the Baha'i Faith.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- That candidates be made fully aware of the difference in demands between part a) and part b) of paper 1 questions, according to the command terms, and do not duplicate information provided.
- That candidates be taught the importance of using key concepts in their answers and answering the specific question set in part b).

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

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

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

Many candidates answered informationally and descriptively rather than basing the answer on conceptual awareness and analysis. Scripts from some schools indicated candidates were working from information provided by the teacher, resulting in similar answers, again informational. Some candidates performed poorly on evaluation where the question required adjudicating between the merits of arguments from different viewpoints, evidence for these viewpoints was missing and judgements offered were often subjective and unsubstantiated. Some candidates often had a tendency not to fully answer the question set but provide information that related to different religious groups and do little more or to provide information that did not directly address the question or all parts of it.

Some students still refer to sects when they mean denominations or branches of a religion. No candidate showed a knowledge of non-vedic and sectarian rites or of the different yogas and bhakti in Hinduism. Questions 10 and 11 on Christianity and question 12 on Islam were poorly answered by many of the candidates who attempted them. Some candidates identified Buddhism as believing in a soul. Some candidates identified practices in Islam as concepts in question 12.

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

Candidates who provided the best answers showed knowledge of the relevant key concepts in the religion and shaped their answers to directly address the question set. They performed creditably in relation to analysis and evaluation. Some candidates produced sophisticated, well argued responses worthy of very high marks. Whilst there was a wide range in the quality of answers the best ones were produced on Buddhism (for questions 4 and the open question 7) and on Christianity and Islam (for the open question 14). There was variation in the quality of answers produced between candidates in the same centre but also across centres.

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

Question 1 Hinduism

To what extent does Hinduism support the idea of a just war? The one attempt at this question was poorly answered gaining only 5 marks. Lacking in focus on Hinduism only and some irrelevant information on Kashmir.

Question 2 Hinduism

Varhashramadharma and rites of passage: there was no knowledge of non-vedic and sectarian rites. There was often a lack of attention to relevant key concepts. This question tended to be only partially answered.

Question 3 Buddhism

Do daily rituals help Buddhists to understand teaching of the Buddha? A Tendency to be descriptive and stray from the focus of the question. A lack of analysis of relevant key concepts and evaluation of the question was often missing. A relatively poorly answered question.

Question 4 Buddhism

Dharma and suffering: some answers conceptually quite weak; too descriptive and literal especially in understanding of 'seeing suffering'. A need to answer question directly rather than rely on lots of information. A number of quite good answers. A range of attainment.

Question 5 Sikhism

Guru granth sahib and its experiential centrality on doctrine and practice. Approximately a quarter of candidates answered this question. Marks ranged from 1-16, a wide variety in quality. Most answers gained between 8-12 marks.

Question 6 Sikhism

No answers.

Question 7 (Open) Buddhism and samsara

Answers need to be more conceptually developed; a need to answer the question set directly. Some inaccuracies in representation of different branches of Buddhism. Some sound answers that were without these errors. Quite a broad range of attainment.

Question 7 (Open) Hinduism and samsara

Some answers were repetitive and lacking analysis of key concepts and issues. Monism focused on and a lack of appreciation of different yogas and bhakti in many answers focusing on Hinduism. Significant misunderstandings/ inaccuracies in some answers. Answers focusing on Sikhism were often of good quality and a few were very good.

Question 8 Judaism

This was not a popular question and not many candidates answered it. Generally some knowledge and understanding but a lack of balanced commentary and a tendency to judgements without sufficient justification or just opinion. Quite poor answers.

Question 9 Judaism

Answers were variable in quality. One answer was good on arguments based on Zionist and anti-Zionist Jewish views but lacking on wider contemporary debate and Palestinian claims. Some answers showed some political understanding but lacked a deeper spiritual awareness.

Question 10 Christianity

Often a lack of detailed knowledge led to general and superficial answers. There was also a lack of conceptual awareness and detail on branches of Christianity and on modern issues. A need for substantiating evaluation, which is often just subjective, and for addressing different judgements based on evidence. Modern issues of importance such as division on homosexuality and gender were lacking. Too many answers were descriptive, just identifying differing beliefs of different churches giving a sense of just conveying information taught. Others expressed opinion with little justification. Appropriate key concepts were not sufficiently addressed. The idea of truth was seen as dependent on individual belief. Generally answers were mediocre.

Question 11 Christianity

There was a lack of consideration of specific arguments. Opinion not argued on position offered. Answers tended to only partially address question. Lack of balance of arguments for and against, lack of reasons for differences and lack of analysis. Need to widen the range of denominations and views taught. Answers were not of higher quality.

Question 12 Islam

Some answers didn't answer the question set directly and were not conceptually focused. Some candidates mistook practices, typically the 5 pillars, for doctrines. There was variable quality in the answers but too many answers received 5-8 marks.

Question 13 Islam

There were few answers to this question. They were not of good quality. There was some basic knowledge and understanding but no detail, depth, analysis of key concepts or reference to contemporary controversy

Question 14 (Open)

In answers focused on Islam: a range of quality from very poor answers to not answering question directly to a lack of conceptual analysis to good answers with analysis and excellent answers showing intellectual acumen. Some candidates introduced their knowledge of the 5 pillars in a way that was not germane to the question set. In answers focused on Christianity: Best answers competent but idea of 'extent to which' in the question was not effectively addressed; there was a presumption that the two forms of authority are closely linked. Analysis through key concepts was often missing. In some of the best answers there was effective recognition of different denominational interpretations. This led to range of quality in answers.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- That candidates be made aware of the demands of paper 2 in relation to analysis and evaluation and specifically answering the question set.
- That candidates be taught based on the key concepts of each religion and that candidates answers in examination be structured upon relevant key concepts.
- That candidates be taught the distinctions used for group names, for example: sect, branch, denomination.