



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Religious Studies
Level(s)	Standard Grade

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The overall impression for all levels was that candidates had shown a high level of achievement throughout the majority of sections of all the papers. There were many excellent responses at all levels and centres are once again to be congratulated in placing the overwhelming majority of candidates at the correct level. There were almost no candidates who answered all sections and once again this is a positive message that centres had obviously spent time on exam preparation with candidates.

As a Marking Team we were greatly encouraged by candidate responses to source based questions as the candidates seemed to be very comfortable this year with questions that were founded on sources and this was especially obvious in the Christianity section of the papers. This was a marked improvement over the past few years and centres should congratulate their candidates on this achievement.

Candidate responses to Evaluation questions were once again of a consistently high standard throughout all three levels of the exam.

However there were some issues in all religions with candidates seeming to have a limited knowledge about some key practices of the religions. This will be referred to later on in the report.

In general terms all the papers seemed to 'work' for candidates and it was obvious from the marking that candidates were comfortable with the papers from the very first question in all three levels.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The Christianity section of the Foundation paper was well answered by candidates and questions 2 (a) and (b) on prayer demonstrated that candidates had obviously been well prepared by their centres with regard to Christian worship and ritual.

Many Foundation candidates gave full and informative answers to the Hinduism questions on the Sacred Thread and the evaluation responses to questions 4 (b) and (d) were thoughtfully handed by candidates.

Foundation questions 6 (a) and (b) on Hajj were dealt with very comfortably by the vast majority of candidates and a high level of knowledge was demonstrated throughout these questions.

The Foundation Issues of Belief and Morality section was completed well by candidates, who seemed to respond very well to the types of question we asked and indeed the 'provocative' nature of question 10 (d) generated some heartfelt responses!

Question 1 (a) of the General paper gave candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of one of the key texts of the Christianity section of the course and they responded in a very positive way. The story was retold well and this enabled them to move onto question 1 (b) very easily.

Questions 3 (a) and (b) (Karma), 5 (a) and (b) (Fasting), 7 (a) and (b) (Commandments) were handled well by the majority of candidates and these questions gave candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their basic knowledge of a specific part of the religion, which they took with zeal.

The generic mourning question (4b; 6c; 8c) was well handled no matter what religion the candidates were studying and this approach should be considered in the new qualifications as it obviously works.

Question 9 (a) produced lots of excellent answers that detailed the Big Bang Theory in particular and it was encouraging to note that most candidates stuck to writing about the beginning of the universe and did not move into the beginning of life.

The Credit paper also produced high quality responses in the Christianity section with regard to the source question. Candidate responses to question 1 (a) were extremely detailed by the vast majority of candidates and it was encouraging to see candidates who had a very comfortable grasp of this source and this allowed them to move confidently onto question 1 (b) and give reflective answers.

The Samsara question 3 (a) was very well answered and candidates demonstrated the links between Samsara and Moksha in a clear manner throughout the majority of responses.

In the Islam section the questions on Hajj 6 (a) and (b) were comfortably dealt with by candidates and a solid foundation of knowledge was shown throughout this section which enabled candidates to express themselves fully when it came to the evaluation questions.

Candidate responses to the Belief and Morality section of the Credit paper were often well detailed and this section seemed to work for all candidates who in turn took the opportunity to say lots in response to the questions.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Question 2 (c) in the Christianity section of the Foundation paper seemed to generate poorly detailed answers from some candidates. Despite the question being about Christmas activities specifically done in Church a few candidates just seemed to refer to generic Christmas activities rather than specifically Church based ones.

Question 3 (d) in the Hinduism section of the Foundation paper did seem to cause difficulties for some candidates who merely responded to the question by restating Hindu beliefs. The response of 'Gita' seemed to be ignored by many candidates as something that they could use in their answer.

Some candidate responses to question 4 (c) in the Foundation paper were basically generic 'festival' answers that did not actually refer to the Sacred Thread at all.

Some candidates appeared to confuse Bar Mitzvah with Brit Milah in response to question 8 (a) of the Judaism section of the Foundation paper.

In the General paper Question 1 (c) in Christianity was not answered as well as the setters had anticipated. Many candidates made no real reference to the 'wise' idea that the question was trying to get them to think about and this meant that their responses though detailed contained little specific evaluating.

The Communion question 2 (a) in the General paper also produced poorer responses than were expected. Several candidates did not seem to know what communion was and indeed many actually described christening/baptism/confirmation in their answers. As communion is a key part of the vast majority of the Christian community this was disappointing.

General Questions 9 (b) and (c) in the Issues section seemed to cause some candidates a struggle as they tried to explain their views. The questions seemed quite abstract for some candidates and they appeared to understand the word 'meaning' as referring to 'explanation' and not 'purpose' which was the expected response.

In the Credit paper question 2 (b) some candidates interpreted 'action' as solely being what everybody did at Christmas in terms of 'preparing' for Christmas and this meant that their answers did not really deal with the concept of 'helping others' – which is what we had hoped would develop from this type of question.

Although the vast majority of candidates did well in the Hinduism section of the Credit paper it was obvious from answers to question 4 (a) that there were a number of candidates who appeared to have little or no knowledge of the Sacred Thread ceremony which is something that we do not think should happen at Credit level. The same comments could be made for some candidates with regard to question 8 (a) in the Judaism section.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

As has been said before centres are to be congratulated for preparing their candidates well for the exams and for presenting them at the appropriate level of examination. In particular the Marking team would like to highlight the very good work on knowledge and understanding of sources that has obviously been going on in centres. It is to be hoped that this will continue as we move into the new qualifications.

Candidates should be congratulated by their centres for the quality answers that were demonstrated at all levels of this exam. The high level of evaluation answer is to be particularly commended, as this is a skill that candidates should be encouraged to transfer across all of their subjects.

Hardly any candidates answered all sections this year and this should be noted positively by centres however, there were a few candidates who missed several complete questions out and they seemed to come from centres who presented large numbers via core RME. This

issue will of course be reduced in the new qualifications but centres should be encouraged to develop an exam mentality that encourages every candidate to attempt all questions.

As a Setting and Marking team we would hope that all the positive messages from this final Religious Studies exam would be carried into the new National courses and that centres would continue their excellent work in preparing candidates to perform at the high levels that we have seen demonstrated over the past few years of the Standard Grade course.

Statistical information: update on Courses

STANDARD GRADE

Number of resulted entries in 2012	1569
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	1602
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Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	19.8%
Grade 2	22.0%
Grade 3	15.5%
Grade 4	18.2%
Grade 5	12.0%
Grade 6	7.4%
Grade 7	1.2%
No award	3.9%

Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
KU	36	30	20	36	22	15	30	16	12
EV	36	27	20	36	22	16	30	18	14