



**2006 Religion and Society GA 3: Written examination**

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

This was the first year for the revised study design and the new examination format. There were a few new issues encountered in students' responses, but most areas of concern were familiar territory. The primary concern is the need for teachers to become more familiar with the current revised study design. Some of the topics and examples used and the emphasis in some responses were unsuitable.

Teachers need to be clear when presenting content to students and ensure that connections are made. This may include repeating or reworking material from different angles, and emphasising the need to explain and use supporting statements in the examination. Students need to ensure that they accurately express the core beliefs of a religious tradition and refer to official documents. Accuracy and preciseness are necessary. Some students were disadvantaged through long and often irrelevant responses, very difficult writing, vagueness, simplification, over generalisation and unsupported claims.

Students must remember that individuals and/or organisations do not equate to the religious tradition. This problem was evident in responses dealing with Thomas Berry, Jean Vanier, St Vincent de Paul, Ozanam, St Ignatius of Loyola and various environmental and justice groups such as Caritas.

Some students tended to write overly long responses to fill the available space in the examination booklet. Extra space is provided to allow for large writing, variations in expression and corrections – students with average-sized handwriting should not need to use all of the space provided. On a similar note, it is not necessary to restate the question – this uses up valuable time and earns no marks.

A common problem was for students to move too quickly into their examples without taking the time to outline the points that the example is to illustrate. Students need to remember to explain specialist terms when they are first used in a response.

**Essay and report writing technique**

Students must keep working at their essay and report writing skills. The answer to the question should be clearly established in the introduction. It is also necessary to return to this contention throughout the essay by clearly showing how the content of each paragraph supports the answer offered in the introduction. Argumentative and discursive essay techniques continue to be weak.

Students need to be taught that report writing is not just a matter of putting headings above paragraphs.

**Names**

In every question that asks for an example from a particular religious tradition, students should precisely name the religious tradition they are using. Students should also use people's full names or titles if there could be confusion over which individual is intended. It was pleasing to see the use of abbreviations had declined in this year's responses. In the examination, students should be able to comfortably write in the provided time the full names of the religious tradition, individuals and groups that they have studied. Students should not abbreviate words or reduce key names and terms to anagrams. The word 'and' should not be reduced to a symbol.

**Evidence**

There is still much work to be done in assisting students with the appropriate use of evidence. When using evidence, especially in evaluative questions, students need to see the limitations of their selected evidence and acknowledge this. They should avoid overstressing their evidence and claiming 'proof', when often such proof is realistically only supportive evidence

**Context**

It was evident that teachers and students are working hard in this area, and more students in 2006 grounded their topics in accurate historical, social and religious circumstances. However, understanding and explaining the meaning of these contexts for the topic under discussion still requires more work.

It was obvious from the increased use of the names of people, institutions and groups within religious traditions that teachers are emphasising the importance of understanding, acknowledging and explaining a more precise religious context. Nevertheless, some students simply named the religious context after which they reverted to making over-



generalised and simplistic claims about some amorphous, unified religious tradition. Much more clarification needs to be done to help students understand the complexity of religious traditions.

When students write about a particular theological perspective within a selected religious tradition they should acknowledge that perspective and not claim that it represents the whole tradition. Also, if the perspective taken is that of the official teaching of a religious tradition, this should be made clear and, where appropriate to the question, the existence of differing positions within the tradition should be acknowledged.

### Beliefs and core beliefs

There was big improvement in the clarity of statements of religious beliefs and core beliefs in 2006; however, it remains essential for teachers to continue to train their students in this skill. Students need to be aware of the distinctions between core beliefs, associated religious beliefs, religious beliefs held by individuals or groups (which may be very personalised and may not be representative of the religious tradition), and social teachings which arise out of the core religious beliefs of a religious tradition. The beliefs of individuals and groups need to be linked to the core beliefs of their religious tradition. And these beliefs need to be articulated clearly, not just referred to as the tradition's belief about God.

The words 'belief' and 'change' are used too imprecisely by many students. For example, 'A belief can be altered but never changed.' This quite typical statement indicates confusion in the meaning of terminology, which needs to be addressed.

Some students demonstrated incorrect theology and misunderstandings of core belief. Given that the concept of core belief permeates the study design for Units 3 and 4, regular checking for students' correct understanding of Unit 3 Area 1 is of primary importance to help students have the best chances of success in the exam.

There were repeated examples of the same incorrect theology. In particular, eschatological beliefs need clarifying, especially the difference between the concepts of reincarnation and resurrection, and which religious traditions believe in them. Students writing from the Christian tradition made some strange claims about the concept of Purgatory. The theology of marriage and issues of divorce and remarriage need very careful clarification.

## SPECIFIC INFORMATION

**Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information. Some examples are sections only, but are representative of the quality of the whole response**

### Section A – Short answer questions

Responses to Section A require careful selection of information and precise and concise language. Students should practise writing responses in this form. One way to practise writing short answer responses is to take each dot point in the key knowledge and key skills lists for each outcome and write responses of up to half a page. Students should then rewrite these responses and refine the content, expression and vocabulary to achieve shorter and more succinct responses.

Section A enables students to show their knowledge and understanding of the interaction of religion and society and of specialised terminology relevant to the tradition(s) studied. Generally, the standard of responses in this section is improving, and most students are writing responses of more appropriate length. However, students need to improve their understanding of study design terminology and practise using examples briefly to illustrate the points made in the answer.

#### Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	8	16	21	24	19	11	2.7

This question covered Unit 3, Area of Study 2, 'Continuity and maintenance of religious beliefs'.

This question was often poorly answered. Many students simply repeated the question and the term chosen without giving any informative explanation. Given that these terms are essential for competently demonstrating the relevant outcome, it was concerning that so few students demonstrated an understanding of these terms.

The meaning of the term has to be clear in the response. The terms are not synonymous and distinctions needed to be made; however, some terms incorporate the others. All terms may strengthen beliefs. Students should refer to



dictionaries, books of synonyms and a thesaurus to develop an understanding of the terminology of the study design and to increase their vocabulary range. Such development of language provides the possibility for greater depth and detail in responses.

Few students chose 'spirituality', and those who did often did not know its meaning. Spirituality is a new term in the revised study design and should be explored carefully. Some students made the mistake of applying their chosen term to individual people; for example, 'We must reformulate ourselves and make ourselves better people'.

Any use of examples needed to relate to a particular, identified, religious tradition. The response should have conveyed a sense of what is maintained and what is continuous, and why.

Below are some examples of successful student responses.

Example 1

*'Adaptation' greatly contributes to the maintenance and continuity of Jewish beliefs. Over its history, and following the Jewish dispersion throughout the world in the aftermath of the Roman conquest of Palestine(70CE) the Jewish religious tradition has continually been exposed to different cultural ideologies and moral frameworks that oppose and challenge its own core beliefs ... To ensure the tradition's relevance and meaningfulness for future generations, beliefs have been adapted to reflect the societies in which Jews found themselves, allowing beliefs to maintain their traditionalist essence while ensuring [conformity] with the wider society. This has helped the tradition to maintain its unique character while functioning in the different societies where it was and is practiced.*

Example 2

*Reaffirmation of the core beliefs are essential to uphold the continuity and maintenance of religious traditions. This is particularly true to the religious tradition Islam. The core belief of Tauheed (meaning the monotheistic nature of God) is the foundation for Islam and all other consequent beliefs are directly or indirectly derived from Tauheed therefore Muslims believe it is essential to continuously reaffirm their beliefs in order to maintain and keep intact Tauheed. This is clearly evident in that Muslims must establish prayer 5 times a day and in each prayer the statement 'There is no God but Allah' is read throughout the prayer. The call to prayer which is called five times a day also acts as an affirmation by reminding people 'There is no God but Allah'. These reminders serve to instil the notion of Tauheed in the minds of Muslims, and has worked to continue this belief (from which all other beliefs are derived) from the time when Islam first originated (1400 yrs ago) until today.*

Example 3

*In the Christian tradition the belief of original sin has been reaffirmed through time. In the 5th century an internal discussion between Pelagius and Augustine led to the need of reaffirmation. Reaffirmation refers to being able to restrengthen something that has already been brought into light. Augustine's teachings of original sin was reaffirmed by the Council of Orange that stated Augustine's belief of original sin being within every person of the human race from the time of conception and that anyone who maintains Pelagius' view that sin is done by us and not born with us would be deemed a heretic. Later Martin Luther in the 16th century reaffirmed Augustine's view and later in the 19th century when Charles Darwin's theory of evolution came about the Church once again reaffirmed original sin.*

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	9	19	26	22	21	3.2

This question covered Unit 3, Area of Study 1, 'Meaning in Religious Traditions' with emphasis on the knowledge points from Outcome 1:

- knowledge of a range of core beliefs in one or more religious tradition
- knowledge of the expression of these beliefs in the religious tradition(s).

Generally this question was answered well. Students were required to choose one symbol **or** ritual and explain how it is connected with a core religious belief. Too many students wasted time by writing about both a ritual and symbol. Students need to read each question with care and ensure that they understand what is required.

In their responses, students needed to:

- clearly identify the symbol or ritual chosen
- clearly identify the connected core belief
- clearly explain how the two are connected.



Weaker responses often named a symbol or ritual but the connected core belief was inaccurate and the explanation of the connection vague or missing. Students needed to be more specific in their description of the connection than just claiming that the core belief is expressed through the symbol or ritual.

Some responses showed a misunderstanding of the religious aspect of 'belief'. For example, 'The significant religious ritual 'Baptism' is connected with the core religious belief 'Belief' because the parents of the child who is being baptised 'believe' in God.'

Below are examples of successful student responses.

**Example 1**

*In the Catholic Christian Tradition the ritual of making the sign of the cross is linked with the core belief of the Trinity. The Trinity is the expression of God as the Father, Jesus as the Son and the Spirit as ever present. When believers make the sign of the cross they are reminded of the presence of God in their lives and can understand that God is present in every aspect of their life looking over them and beside them as Son and continually offering salvation and hope as the Holy Spirit.*

**Example 2**

*The significance of the ritual of prayer has been used as a fundamental expression of the core belief in an ultimate reality. Indeed the most basic affirmation of Judaism is the existence of G-d, as scholars Goldberg and Reyner write, 'it is this which makes it a religion'. Hence meaning and purpose in life begins with G-d's existence. Therefore for all religious traditions alike the ritual expression through prayer of the belief in a higher being may engender 'context, joy and meaning', enabling a moment of consciousness, of acknowledging and furthering the Divine/Human relationship. Notably within Judaism adherents thus use prayer to give the belief in G-d physical dimension, exulting in the Shema, Judaism's most central prayer 'Here O Israel, The Lord is One, The Lord is your G-d.'*

**Question 3**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	15	25	30	17	9	2.7

This question covered Unit 3, Area of Study 3, 'Life experiences and religious beliefs' with emphasis on the knowledge points from Outcome 3:

- knowledge of a range of significant life experiences
- knowledge of the impact of core religious beliefs on a person's or group's interpretation of significant life experiences.

Most students understood the influence of religious beliefs on significant life experiences, but the question required acknowledgement of more than one way of connection. Students needed to show an understanding of the dynamic interaction of religious beliefs and significant life experiences. For example:

- these interactions are positive and negative
- religious beliefs may support individuals through significant life experiences or they may fail to help; either way, the religious beliefs may undergo some sort of change
- religious beliefs may encourage individuals to undertake certain significant life experiences
- significant life experiences may stimulate respect for or the acceptance of previously un-held religious beliefs.

There was no need for students to respond from the perspective of a specific tradition.

Below are examples of successful student responses.

**Example 1**

*The relationship between significant life experiences and religious beliefs is one of dynamic interplay. Religious beliefs are the framework upon which we understand significant life experiences and significant life experiences impact upon our understanding of religious beliefs. When a person is facing a significant life experience the belief surrounding this experience is either reaffirmed or questioned. This questioning can result in either the reformulation of the belief – the development and growth of the belief to come to a new understanding or the rejection of that belief.*

**Example 2**

*Significant life experiences such as death and religious beliefs such as a belief in an ultimate reality are integrally linked. Significant life experiences shape religious beliefs and offer key ideals for what people believe. Religious beliefs also shape life experiences and impact the way people understand and interpret their significant life experiences. The expression and interpretation of religious beliefs may change when people experience life experiences because significant life experiences change humans which then leads to the development and new understandings of religious beliefs...*



**Question 4**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	7	12	21	28	21	11	<b>2.8</b>

This question covered Unit 4, Area of Study 2, 'Contemporary challenges and their impact', with emphasis on the knowledge point from Outcome 2:

- knowledge of the vision of human society implied in the beliefs of a religious tradition studied and Unit 3, Area of Study 1, 'Meaning in Religious Traditions' with emphasis on the knowledge points from Outcome 1:
- knowledge of a range of core beliefs in one or more religious tradition.

To successfully answer this question, students needed to identify the religious tradition and explain the religion's vision for society. This vision needed to be connected to specific religious beliefs within the religious tradition, including the core beliefs of the tradition, as studied in Unit 3, Area of Study 1.

The question focused on the vision and the related religious beliefs of the religious tradition as a whole. Students were not required to refer to an example from a case study. Most students clearly and accurately articulated the vision for society of the religious tradition they selected; however, clear and accurate articulation of the associated religious beliefs was less common.

Below are examples of successful student responses.

**Example 1**

*The Catholic Christian tradition's vision of human society will be made real when Christ Second Coming is made real. 'God will wipe away all tear.' [Revelation 21:4] However, Catholics believe they can make real God's Kingdom on earth 'here and now' through acts of love, compassion and working for peace and social justice. Catholics believe that a human society based on these principles along with the fulfilment of the notion of stewardship [Genesis 2:15] and 'loving God and loving neighbour' [Matthew 22:37-39] will ensure that humans share a harmonious relationship with God the Creator and all of God's creation.*

**Example 2**

*All religious traditions have a vision of an ideal society, Islam is not exception. This vision would be determined by the core beliefs of Islam as these would be encompassed in all principles of that society. Which would encapsulate the belief in Tauheed (oneness of God), Al-Achira (Day of Judgement) and Risaalah (Prophethood). These beliefs would also result in the consequent beliefs being followed hence Shariah would be applied. As Shariah is not only a legal system, but it is an education and economical and encompasses all aspects. Hence ideally all Muslims would abide by Shariah laws and the non Muslims would also be allowed to and they would be given all their rights under Shariah law. This is the vision of an ideal Islamic society.*

**Example 3**

*In all religious traditions there exists a vision, which encompasses the ideals of a perfect human society. In the Jewish religious tradition the ideal vision of a human society is equated with the Messianic Redemption. One of the central tenets of Judaism is the belief in the Messiah, the saviour who is to come redeem the people of Israel from their suffering and establish a rule of peace over the world. The belief in redemption enables Jews to maintain their faith and their universal mission as the chosen people. According to Judaism redemption is the ultimate goal of human destiny and Jewish destiny. Although Jews have always stressed the arrival of a Messiah it has always really been about building a righteous society in which all individuals can live free in dignity and freedom. Through the process of Tikkun (repair) individuals are able to transform society and make the vision of the ideal human society in which everyone conducts themselves ethically and morally into a reality. Together with the process of Tikkun (repair) and the optimistic hope of redemption the Jew's vision is informed and the meaning and purpose of his/her life is reinforced.*



## Section B – Extended response questions

### Question 1

#### 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	11	25	64	1.6

#### 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	8	9	11	13	15	14	13	9	7	4.0

#### 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	12	11	15	18	19	13	12	3.1

#### 1d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	17	22	29	19	13	1.9

This question covered Unit 4, Area of Study 2, ‘Contemporary challenges and their impact’, with emphasis on the knowledge points from Outcome 2:

- knowledge of the vision of human society implied in the beliefs of a religious tradition studied
- knowledge of the ways in which beliefs impel individuals or groups to act to transform society
- knowledge of the way religious traditions respond to new challenges
- knowledge of the way a specific religious community or communities in conjunction have confronted a particular social or moral issue.

Students needed to clearly identify both the contemporary social or moral issue **and** the tradition. In this identification there should have been some hint of the nature of the problem; for example, is it a problem for belief, or for ethics, or for authority?

There needed to be a clear explanation of what in the religious tradition was being disturbed, threatened or challenged by particular features of the issue. This should have related to the tradition’s vision for society. For part c., students should have outlined more than one form of response and given some indication of which group or part of the tradition was responding in what way and why.

Part d., the evaluation part of the question, was generally poorly answered. Students were required to select only one of the responses outlined in the answer to part c. This was often a difficult task, especially in relation to a contemporary issue where results and consequences may be unclear. It was reasonable for students to state these difficulties in evaluating the effectiveness of a particular response.

Evaluation requires consideration of the positives and negatives of the selected response and a conclusion about the overall effectiveness of the response. The evaluation can only go as far as the evidence allows. Most students made exaggerated claims for the effectiveness of the response, either with little or no reference to evidence or in contradiction to the evidence offered. There seemed to be an assumption among students that they had to claim success, often total success, of the response in bringing about a reversal of the social or ethical problem. However, some realism is needed in this area of evaluation: what does the evidence suggest? Is there indeed evidence by which effectiveness can be estimated?

Some contemporary issues were not located within the context of a particular religious tradition or a country, making these issues too broad for students to adequately discuss responses and effects.

There was repeated misunderstanding of Catholic Church documents, such as *Humane Vitae*, as being related to birth and contraception issues only. Responses focused on Helen Prejean often made some strange factual claims stemming from over-generalisation and simplification.



Some students focused on the word 'challenge' and ignored the word 'contemporary'. Thus these students answered the question from the perspective of their historical challenge material. Other students, who had read the question correctly, undermined themselves by dwelling in too much detail on the historical origins of their contemporary issue.

Topics used for this question included:

- Charles Darwin and the theory of evolution (this was acceptable if the contemporary debate was treated rather than the historical)
- asylum seekers (this was often well done)
- the marginalisation of and discrimination against Australian Aboriginals
- justice and peace in the world (this topic was too big and therefore too general)
- people living in poverty (unless well-focused, this topic was also too big and too general)
- embryonic stem cell research
- homosexuality (this was very well done)
- Work Choices legislation in Australia
- priests and child abuse (this was often very generalised and it was unclear what was trying to be established)
- feminism (this topic needed to be firmly grounded in the contemporary forum)
- Catholic social teaching (a danger here was to claim that this teaching equalled the Catholic Christian Tradition)
- capital punishment (this topic often lapsed into a rehash of Helen Prejean, and there were some strange factual claims)
- invitro fertilisation (this was well done)
- cloning (this was well done)
- abortion/abortion pill (this was well done)
- Vatican II (this topic was too big and confusing for most students)
- Humane Vitae (some factual errors were made in relation to this topic).

Below are examples of successful student responses.

## Example 1

### ***Jewish Tradition***

#### ***Ia.***

*The increased tolerance of secular society towards Homosexuality and homosexuals acquisition of civil equality challenges traditional religious perspectives in Judaism.*

#### ***Ib.***

*...Homosexuality challenges a fundamental aspect of Judaism's vision of an ideal human society; man's prime directive to procreate derived from the Genesis injunction – 'be fruitful and multiple'. Additionally the importance of the family ideal is underscored as man is commanded to 'cling unto his wife and children' 'they shall become one flesh' [Genesis 2:24]. Thus in the context of a progressive society at odds with the social prescriptions of the religious tradition, homosexuality has emerged as a challenge to this vision highlighting a tension between what is politically correct and halachally permissible [Rabbi Joel Roth]...*

#### ***Ic.***

*Following the lead of secular gay rights advocates, main questioning authorities, these observant Gay Jews have returned to the source, to Leviticus to find alternative interpretations of the word of the Divine. This has prompted each sect of Judaism to reformulate its own viewpoint on homosexuality...Thus the tradition has responded to the challenge of homosexuality in three separate streams of thought. Outright rejection amongst Orthodoxy, compromise and re-application of the Halacha (Jewish Law) from the Conservative movement and unequivocal acceptance of homosexuals by the Reform sect.*

## Example 2

### ***Islamic Tradition***

#### ***Ia.***

*Secularism can be identified as a major contemporary social issue facing the Muslim society, especially in the Muslims living in the West.*

#### ***Ib.***

*Secularism is a way of living that is divorced from God. Basically all the principles of that society and issues would be dealt with without turning to religious assistance and laws do not have to conform with religion.*

*Islam as a case in point has responded to this issue because as the number of Muslims in Western societies is increasing secularisation poses a very real issue. Why? Simply, because Islam is a way of life. Muslims believe that all of their actions, decisions, and behaviour basically their social conduct should be decided on the basis of what Islam says. To be Muslim one must do so and practice it in public and in private. Therefore a problem arises when there are conflicting views...*



*To follow man made laws over the laws of God is seen to be a grave disobedience to Allah which is a punishable act. Therefore Muslim traditions have responded to secularism because they must be able to strike a balance between their religious beliefs and the laws of Western countries...To ensure that Muslims don't forget who they are at heart, because Islam is a religion and a way of life and if it is lost then Muslims lose their identity.*

**Ic.**

*Muslims in the West have responded to secularism in a very pro-active manner, realising it is not possible to establish Shariah law in Australia or other Western societies Muslims attempt to provide places and centre and alternatives for Muslims which are 'religiously sensitive'.*

*Education is a crucial aspect of Islam and is the focal point of the religion hence the first words revealed to the Prophet Muhammad was 'Read'. Therefore Muslims in the West have established schools which educate according to secular standards however also teach religious education and offer prayer facilities...*

*Alternative Banking is also a response of Muslims. Interest is prohibited in Islam and therefore Muslims have established MECCA Bank and Balance Finance to assist with Muslims who do not wish to do their banking with secular banks in order to overcome the interest aspect of living in a secular society.*

*Youth camps and weekend activity groups like 'Young Muslims of Australia' have been established also as a response to secularism and these Youth organisations provide a place where Muslim youth can be in the company of other Muslim youth and discuss ideas and beliefs.*

*So the response of the Muslims has not been to 'fight' secularism but to work with it and attempt to make the most of it.*

**Id.**

*In terms of the establishment of Islamic schools they provide an alternative to Muslims...*

*This response is effective to the extent that it ensures that the Muslim youth who grow up in Australia do not totally 'throw out' their Muslim identity and beliefs, while at the same time it teaches them to integrate with the secular side of education...*

*As the environment is also often Islamic in that the religious rituals (prayers) and symbols (headscarf) are able to be practiced freely without being criticised, as a result allowing Muslims to feel comfortable to practice their religion...*

*Muslim schools also give students the chance to integrate with non-Muslim schools through interfaith dialogues and sports days which encourages acceptance, understanding and tolerance rather than promoting a clash between secular society and Islam.*

**Question 2**

This question covered Unit 3, Area of Study 1, 'Meaning in Religious Traditions' with emphasis on the knowledge points from Outcome 1:

- knowledge of a range of core beliefs in one or more religious tradition(s)
- knowledge of the implications for the way people live their lives.

**2a.**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	15	31	28	22	2.5

In part a. students had to engage with the cartoon provided. Although it is fair comment to hypothesise that 'obviously a guy has had a tough day and nothing has gone right for him', more precise comment was required. There are three stages to the cartoon and students needed to refer to each of them in relation to the question. The attitudes towards a supreme being come from Fred, from the cartoonist and from the supreme being's attitude to self.

Responses to part a. were generally fair, though few students dealt adequately with the three parts to the cartoon. Those students who worked with the actual images, even with basic expression and vocabulary, were the most successful.

Students were not required to refer to a religious tradition in this part of the question. Interpretation of visual stimulus material is an area to develop with students.

**2b.**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	13	11	11	9	10	9	11	10	8	4	3	4.2

Part b. required clear links that established similarity or difference between the attitudes observed in the cartoon and the beliefs of a religious tradition about the concept of a supreme being. Students of some religious traditions wrote from the position of the tradition having no concept of a supreme being and therefore their concepts of guidance, free will, destiny, meaning and purpose and punishment were outlined according to the beliefs of the tradition. This part of the question was generally well done.



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2c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	19	20	18	17	12	8	6	2.3

Question 2c. was not about living the beliefs of the religious tradition, as many students seemed to think. The question asked students to consider what would change and what would be the same if the attitudes of the cartoon replaced the beliefs of the religious tradition they have studied. The question required hypothetical thinking and really asked students to reflect on the significant difference that may be made to adherents of a particular religious tradition if some of their core beliefs were different.

This part of the question was not well done. Certainly, it was a challenging question, which picked up the new key knowledge and key skills points in Unit 3, Area of Study 1, to analyse the implications of the role of religious beliefs in the way people live their lives. Responses showed that students and teachers need to look more deeply and reflectively at the nature of religion and its impact on the way people live their lives.

Below are examples of successful student responses.

## Example 1

### ***Jewish Tradition***

**2a.**

*The supreme being is tyrannical, and installs fear in the followers in order to ensure they continue to adhere to his laws and ethics. He is not depicted as being benevolent or caring for the people, but rather as being transcendent and omnipotent.*

**2b.**

*'There is no death without sin and there is no suffering without iniquity' [Talmud] The Jewish tradition dictates that if one does not follow God's law, and commits transgressions, then they will be punished because of their sins. However God is not perceived to be tyrannical or unjust by the Jewish tradition as he is depicted as being in the cartoon. God is transcendent, above and beyond this world, but also close and personal with his people, displaying benevolence and kindness, 'He is my God and my ever-living redeemer.' [Principles of Faith]*

## Example 2

### ***Islamic Tradition***

**2a.**

*An attitude of forceful submission is being depicted explicitly through showing how the Being 'crunches' people who 'don't believe'. It is reinforced through showing an already crunched person who now unwillingly believes because of fear of being 'crunched' again.*

**2c.**

*Muslims realise that they must believe in Allah alone and associate no partners with him. Therefore if one does so, there is heaven awaiting them and Allah gives them hope in the Quran...*

*However Muslims are left in the middle of this hope in the 'Most Merciful' Allah and the fear of the 'torment of the fire' they will receive if they don't abide by Allah's commandments.*

*This fearful aspect that is depicted displays that other aspect, the more firm aspect of God hence the implications for Muslims is to attempt to practise their religion as much as is possible for them and never forget Allah in all their actions and decisions in order to avoid punishment. However Muslims should not despair because God is very Merciful and the 'Benevolent' therefore may forgive them.*

## Example 3

### ***Christian Tradition***

**2c.**

*When believers have an understanding in a transcendent God they can comprehend the great sense of power and might that their ultimate reality has. This helps believers to continue to search for God and find god as their highest intellectual and spiritual pursuit. If this understanding is not balanced however some believers may over look the compassionate nature of God. This may lead to pious worship and can also lead to the understanding that God is punishing and God's wrath may be brought upon them if they make mistakes or do something wrong.*

## Example 4

### ***Christian Tradition***

**2c.**

*The implications of the view expressed in this cartoon for the way members of the religious tradition lead their lives is the removal of personal freedoms. Members' individual beliefs are forgone and the supreme being of the tradition has ultimate power. Freedom of thought is removed through intimidation and coercion. Mankind becomes pawns of a supreme being. Their*



*life is not theirs to lead if those liberties are taken away or are in the control of a supreme being. Life becomes a vehicle of a supreme being and not the individual's to lead.*

### Section C – Essay and report questions

Question chosen	none	1	2	3
%	1	28	21	50

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	5	6	5	8	7	9	8	8	6	5	3	3	2	1	10.4

#### Question 1

This question covered Unit 3, Area of Study 3, ‘Life experiences and religious beliefs’ with emphasis on the knowledge points from Outcome 3:

- knowledge of a range of significant life experiences
- knowledge of the impact of core religious beliefs on a person’s or group’s interpretation of significant life experiences
- knowledge of the reinterpretation, change and growth in the way core beliefs come to be understood by the individual as a result of significant life experiences.

Also relevant to this question is Unit 3, Area of Study 1.

Although students could choose to answer this question in an essay or report format, all responses were presented as essays. Responses ranged from adequate to excellent, with a large group writing from across a number of different religious traditions.

Students needed to engage with the ideas in the statement provided. They should have explained the dimension that religious belief brings to attitudes and beliefs about existence and to the experiences of life in general before moving to any specific example. The statement is the lens through which they then needed to discuss the particular example(s) they had selected.

The question allowed for students to recognise that religious beliefs may not be the only, or indeed the primary, source for the beliefs or the action of the religious tradition and people from the tradition. Students needed to explore the idea that religious beliefs have a particular contribution to make. The question also allowed students to consider the interactive relationship between religion and society.

Few students explored the need for religious beliefs at all; most simply assumed their necessity. A very few students acknowledged that people with no religious beliefs still make sense of significant life experiences and derive meaning in life.

When responding to questions such as this, students should identify particular beliefs and explain their relationship to the action of the individual or group from the religious tradition. The action must be grounded within the beliefs of the tradition.

This question was quite challenging. There were many students who successfully engaged with the question; however, others made their focus too narrow, for example by dealing only with death, and failed to respond to the other elements of the statement. This was a discussion question that required more than the articulation of one view. Weaker responses often failed to address the part of the statement which asked, ‘Why have religious beliefs?’

Responses in 2006 showed that there is still not enough interaction with the question. The instruction to discuss was generally overlooked, indicating that the skills associated with ‘discussing’ a statement need dramatic attention. It appeared that many students simply reproduced their Outcome task, regardless of what the question actually asked.

Topics used for this question included:

- Sr Helen Prejean/*Dead Man Walking*
- Cardinal Bernadine
- C.S. Lewis
- Dorothy Day
- Sherri Mandell



- Father Damien
- Deborah Lipstadt
- Elie Wiesel
- Nachshen Wachsmann
- Rookie Billet
- Yossel Rakover
- Archbishop Oscar Romero
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Below are examples of successful student responses.

## Example 1

### ***Jewish Tradition***

*In life one is bound to encounter significant experiences. These are experiences that leave an impact and prompt re-evaluation. These experiences range from positive ones such as fulfilment and happiness to negative ones such as death and suffering. However whether the experience is positive or negative constructive or deconstructive they all have a common characteristic. That is, when they are experienced they all promote a series of existential questions. Whether these questions are regarding life, death or even what is to come it is generally acknowledged that they cannot be answered by man. However core beliefs within a religious tradition can provide some answers to these questions as they teach their adherents about the nature meaning and purpose of their lives as well as about the afterlife.*

*Evident in Sherri Mandell's poignant autobiographical reflection, 'The Blessings of a Broken Heart' is the reason and the point of having religious beliefs about life experiences...*

*...Although Mandell's experience was tragic and does not include anything happy or fulfilling she acknowledges the importance of beliefs regarding happiness. This is expressed through the statement 'I know one day I will be able to look at the wonders of the world and feel happiness'. This shows her acknowledgement that one day she will be guided by the beliefs regarding life and happiness, just as she has been guided by the beliefs regarding death and suffering...*

## Example 2

### ***Catholic Christian Tradition***

*There is a reason that religious traditions have beliefs about these significant life experience areas. That is because no matter what the interpretation is the various beliefs offer meaning and purpose and comfort to those who follow that tradition. Human beings have a need to know these things and to know why. Whilst answers can be found in other ways such as personal experience, the example of others, heroes for instance and the ideas of great thinkers in science and philosophy, it is religion that offers more to most people. That is why many people turn to religion when something significant happens in their life. Particularly in times of great sadness and grief like when someone dies, turning to a religious tradition's beliefs such as the Catholic's belief in resurrection, life after death and heaven. This is a source of great comfort the belief that they will one day meet the person they love again. And the rituals and the others in the community of believers who give support are also ways that people find comfort and can make sense of what has happened to them...*

## Question 2

This question covered Unit 3, Area of Study 2, 'Continuity and maintenance of religious beliefs' with emphasis on the knowledge points from Outcome 2:

- knowledge of the continuity of a core belief(s) within one or more religious tradition
- knowledge of the implications of the reaffirmation and/or reformulation of the beliefs
- knowledge of the effects of the new applications of the beliefs.

Unit 4, Area of Study 1, and Unit 4, Area of Study 2, were also relevant to this question.

Although students could choose to answer this question in an essay or report format, all responses were presented as essays. Few students chose to answer this question.

Initially, students should have explained the range of responses open to religious traditions when challenged at the fundamental level of their religious beliefs. Then they should have moved on to a discussion of at least one of these ways through a specific example (it was possible to discuss more than one challenge). Students needed to identify the religious tradition to which they were referring.

Good answers identified a specific challenge and placed it in its specific time, place, and circumstances. They identified what exactly was challenged in the religion and how this related to particular religious beliefs. They also explained why the challenge occurred: what factors in the religion gave rise to the challenge and what factors in society contributed to the challenge.



These students then identified the responses of the religion and where they came from within the religion. They considered whether the responses were adequate and explained why. Within this, they identified and explained the consequences of the responses. In very good responses, this discussion of consequences considered the different impacts on audiences within the religious tradition and perhaps the wider society. Immediate and long-term consequences were considered.

Some responses presented very good facts about the nature and context of the challenge to change, but were lacking in areas such as drawing conclusions, evaluating the effectiveness of the response and identifying and discussing the implications for the tradition and for the tradition's relationship with society.

While it can be appropriate to restate the question within an essay, care needs to be taken to avoid changing the question; for example, 'When a religious belief is pressured many questions need to be answered and defined to assure believers of their religious tradition' or 'When a religious belief is confronted by pressure to change the religious tradition must change the expressions of the religious belief in order to remain relevant and continue'. These restatements led to very different emphases in the responses, which did not pick up the focus of the question. This was a problem in the responses of many students, who, given their obvious knowledge and understanding of the material, should have scored well.

Topics used for this question included:

- the Eucharist
- the hypostatic union
- the holocaust – belief in God
- enlightenment
- life after death
- agnostics
- Messianism
- heretics
- Irish penal laws and Catherine McCauley
- beliefs about creation and the role of humanity
- reformation
- liberation theology

Below are examples of successful student responses.

#### Example 1

##### **Anglican Christianity**

*The religious beliefs of the Anglican tradition about Life After Death have come under significant pressure from society to change. The beliefs in what happens after death, judgement, heaven and hell have all been questioned by society and the Anglican tradition has responded to this questioning by maintaining a sense of continuity, strengthening its beliefs, reaffirming them, reformulating them and by applying its beliefs to new circumstances...*

*Although there is pressure to change from Australian secular society for the funeral service to be merely a celebration of the life of the deceased, the Anglican tradition has affirmed that the Christian message must still be central to the funeral service and thus the Christian message is strengthened. Anglican ministers aim to strike a balance between personalising the funeral service while maintaining that it be a religious occasion.*

*The belief in Heaven has been reaffirmed as a positive belief which can offer real hope and comfort in the face of death. It can comfort those facing death as well as those coping with the death of a loved one – knowing that their loved one is safe in the hands of God.*

*The belief in hell has been reformulated to no longer be a place of active punishment (fire and brimstone) but a state of eternal separation from God – resulting from deliberate rejection of God and God's ways. This can be seen in the contemporary funeral service with only one mention of judgement and no mention of hell.*

#### Example 1

##### **Jewish Tradition**

*Regardless of one's religious tradition, the continuity of core beliefs may require a comprehension of the inexplicable, a 'conscious examination and bearing of the burden which our century has placed on us'. (Hannah Arendt) Hence when a religious tradition is confronted by the pressure to change, religious beliefs may undergo a reformulation or a reaffirmation or indeed both, as reformulation can also reaffirm. Thus religious continuity is ensured. Certainly 'throughout their history suffering has been the hallmark of the Jewish people' (Don Cohen Sharbok) and is often dealt with in the framework of monotheism, the core belief in one G-d and the belief in a covenantal relationship between G-d and the Jewish nation. Whilst*



*such practices have sustained Jewish life for centuries, the Holocaust (1933–45) an ‘epoch making event’ (Emil Fackenheim) confronted Judaism with an unprecedented pressure to change, prompting a reformulation of core beliefs without which Jewish survival may not have been possible.*

*As scholar Richard Rubenstein writes, the Holocaust bequeathed extraordinarily painful questions as to whether and to what extent G-d was involved in the brutal murder of 6 million Jews. The fracture then to the belief in an ultimate reality not only questioned the belief in one G-d but that of the Covenant as well, ‘the lynchpin of the Jewish myth and structure that Jews use to lend meaning to their existence in the world’. Judaism’s ‘most basic affirmation has always been the existence of G-d’ (Goldberg and Reyner) hence G-d’s unity and the sacred myth of chosenness have always been ritually expressed in the blessing over the wine which exults the ‘king over the universe, who has chosen Jewry from every nation’.*

*Therefore through continued suffering the rabbinate have emphasised the covenantal commitment to memory, the duty to remember ‘ancient days and understand the years of each generation’ ... Yet to many the Holocaust is a ‘novel event and a new moment in history’ (Raul Lulberg) that defies classic responses to adversity... Subsequently the Jewish religious tradition was placed under a new pressure to change beliefs so as to ensure continuity and indeed never has such been so manifest than in the multifarious response of Jewish theologians who have consequently attempted to reformulate the core beliefs in G-d and Covenant, whilst maintaining the integrity of Jewish identity.*

### Question 3

This question covered Unit 4, Area of Study 1, ‘Historical challenges to religious traditions’ with emphasis on the knowledge points from Outcome 1:

- knowledge of a particular challenge faced by a religious tradition
- understanding of what was challenged and why
- knowledge of the historical, social and religious context of the particular challenge
- knowledge of the impact of the challenge on the religious community
- knowledge of the response of the religious community
- knowledge of the effects of the response within the religious community and in its relationship to the wider society and/or other religious communities.

This was a popular question and responses were generally adequate. Students could either use the questions provided as headings or use different headings and sequences, but they needed to address all of the listed questions. Response had to be organised in an appropriate report style.

In considering each of the issues, students needed to demonstrate appropriate and accurate factual and theological knowledge and use supporting evidence. With historical challenges, students needed to clearly establish the religious tradition and the appropriate century or years. It was beneficial to identify the areas of conflict, such as the conflicting ideas and beliefs and practices, and then fill in the background as necessary.

Major problems in responses were a tendency to over-simplify and an apparent lack of research. This was seen in the paucity of supportive evidence and the narrow perspectives presented. Also, when discussing the effects of the religious tradition’s responses, there was a tendency by some students to jump into a contemporary situation without first addressing the historical effects.

Some students studying the Judaic tradition, ‘Effects on the relationship between Jews and the wider society of the Holocaust and the Jewish response to it’ seemed to conclude that ‘the relationship between Judaism and the wider society remains the same today.’ The same as what? Is this claiming there have been no changes in relationship since the 1940s? Students also needed to give more careful consideration to the diversity within society.

In preparation for Section C of the examination, appropriate report-writing skills need to be taught. Simply writing separated paragraphs is not appropriate. With this report option, students whose essay technique is not strong have the opportunity to clearly and systematically demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. However, they need to be taught the appropriate structure for a report and practise planning report headings for their various topics, which can then be adapted to the emphasis of the particular question.

Topics used for this question included:

- stewardship of God’s creation
- modernism in the form of the interaction of the theories of Darwin and God
- Galileo
- St Vincent de Paul (this does not equal a religious tradition)
- oppression in the early years of Islam
- modernity for newly emancipated European Jewry



- Mary McKillop
- Martin Luther
- the Sisters of St Joseph
- the industrial revolution
- the Holocaust
- contraception
- Marxism
- the Black Death
- the Eucharist
- the Chinese government challenge to the Buddhist Falun Gong sect
- early oppression of Muslims by pagan Arabs
- Catholic education in Australia
- communism in Poland – post WWII.

Below are examples of successful student responses.

Example 1 – this student used the list of questions provided as the headings for the report.

**Islamic Tradition**

**Why did this challenge occur?**

*Islam posed as a threat to all prior ways of life of these Arabs as Islam promoted the belief of only one God. The aristocrats wanted to get rid of Islam because they believed that if Islam replaced 360 gods with one God not many people would come to worship at the Ka'bah and the aristocrats would lose economically. Also, because Islam preached equality between the genders and all people. The aristocrats felt threatened that their positions would be taken away from them as Islam maintained that the only thing that people could be put in a higher status for was the amount of faith they had and demonstrated and their good deeds rather than on the basis of gender or even a slave.*

*Therefore the Qurayshi Aristocrats oppressed the Muslims to the extreme in order to kill them off or hope the fear of torture would bring them to renounce Islam, and their claim of 'God is One'...*

Example 2

**Jewish Tradition**

**Who and What was Challenged?**

*The Jewish religion faced a historical challenge known as modernity whereby Jews were emancipated from Ghettos into being equal European citizens. Their religious beliefs were challenges in that after emancipation, 'Judaism became a voluntary commitment'. (Jonathan Sacks)*

*They were no longer allowed to impose Halachic (Jewish Liturgy) tradition and regulations on Jewish adherents. Jews were given the freedom to decide what their beliefs were and how they wanted to express them...*

**What were the effects of the challenge on different groups within the religious tradition and what were the various responses of the religious tradition to the challenge?**

*The response of the Jewish tradition was that, barring the minority groups who chose to convert to Christianity after the Emancipation in order to completely integrate themselves into European culture, there was a schism into different movements. While all Jews maintained their belief in the omnipotent deity, their practices and traditions became varied.*

*Moses Mendellsohn was the first individual to introduce secular culture to the orthodox Jews and had a significant impact on the schism. To some he was the catalyst for the beginning of a new positive era in Jewish history. For others he marked the end of Jewish unity and the beginning of assimilation and the loss of identity.*

*The group most affected by Moses Mendellsohn's theology was the Reform Movement, 'The Reform Movement watered down their own convictions in order to gain social and political benefits' (RJ Com). Founded by Abraham Greiger the Reform Movement aimed to provide 'a modern religion for European Intellectuals' (RJ Com) whereby tradition was not static and people are not obliged to follow all Halachic restrictions. They believed the Torah is divinely inspired but written by man.*

*The Orthodox Movement was less affected by Moses Mendellsohn's teachings and divided into divisions within the movement modern-orthodox and ultra-orthodox. Modern Orthodox were not so far removed from Reform believing that embracing modernity and the social benefits it brought with it was essential in order to function in everyday society. Founded by Sampson Hirsch the modern orthodox movement also believed that the Torah was divinely inspired and written by man.*

*Ultra Orthodox followers have made the commitment to use Halacha. Founded by Moses Sofer the Ultra Orthodox movement use the morals and codes of behaviour dictated in the Halacha to guide their life choices. They teach that the Torah is divine and therefore cannot be changed by man.*