

2010 Religion and Society GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Most students attempted all questions on the 2010 examination. Few students ran short of time in Section C. Students' ability to select appropriate information and examples for the different types of questions was very good. The choice of topics for the various areas of study was good and most topics were well suited to their area of study.

Students' use of supporting evidence was appropriate, but often its application to the point of the argument was not developed. Expressing how evidence is related to the point of an argument should be learnt more clearly.

Poor understanding of questions was a major problem for many students. Many students reacted only to prompt words from the Areas of Study and appeared to use a prepared answer, with only an occasional or opening reference to the focus of the question. The more successful students analysed the terms of the question together with any stimulus material provided.

The legibility of handwriting remains a problem as it detracts from students' ability to communicate clearly.

The understanding of the meaning of and the difference between key terms needs further development, as it is a major tool to assist students to write clear and accurate responses. There was an absence of varied vocabulary about aspects of religion and their role and action, which limited the ability of students to describe and explain adequately the nature and function of aspects as they apply in the Areas of Study. The more successful students added explanatory detail to terms such as 'express' and 'expression', and were able to differentiate their meaning.

Some students had prepared responses from past examination questions and had just slightly adjusted the introduction and conclusion to try to fit the current question. These practices do not result in high-scoring responses.

Students' inadequacy in demonstrating an ability to analyse the question was also a problem in Section C. The terms and related questions implied in the questions and stimulus material must be defined and identified. Without this unpacking of the question and its related stimulus material, responses remained superficial, despite the often-substantial knowledge of the student about the concepts of the area of study and the example used.

In responses to Section C, too few students demonstrated that they had researched their topic widely enough to provide a range of views that enabled them to analyse the topic. The skills to probe, dissect, challenge and then synthesise diverse material needs focused attention.

A significant number of students demonstrated poor knowledge and understanding of ultimate reality, in general and for particular religious traditions. In most of the religious traditions referred to by the students, ultimate reality is God, variously understood. Students studying the Buddhist tradition were quite clear in their understanding of ultimate reality. Students and teachers need to ensure their information is correct, both should be verifying their facts and the reliability of their sources.

As 2010 was the last examination based on the study design accredited for 2006–2010, it is critical that the contents of this and previous assessment reports are reviewed carefully for applicability to the revised study 2011–2015.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A – Short answer questions

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

For each question, an outline answer (or answers) is provided. In some cases, the answer given is not the only answer that could have been awarded marks.

Section A has a general focus, dealing with contexts, concepts and terminology. Students needed to consider the study of Religion and Society from general perspectives, in the past and present, and this included considering religion within predominantly single-religion societies and in societies that are multi-faith.

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Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	8	23	40	29	1.9

Responses needed to identify three distinct points such as:

- one type of response is suppression of the individual, group, idea, or ritual over time
- the tradition may respond by quietly and systematically absorbing the challenge
- the tradition may respond by making a radical, slight or partial change to itself in one or more of its aspects
- the tradition may respond by reaffirming the existing beliefs, practices or structures with or without condemnation of the challenge or challengers.

Question 1 was generally answered well. There was much diversity in the responses, which was appropriate given the different religious traditions being studied. The most successful responses included specific detail about the type of response without tradition-specific examples. Single-word responses were not sufficient for this question. Identification requires more than naming. The question required students to do some overall thinking from Areas of Study 3.2, 4.1 and 4.2. Many students ignored the term 'type' of response and gave examples for their response.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

- A religious tradition can respond to challenges by adapting themselves to accommodate with morals or values of society.*
- They can reject the challenge by protest and debate through sources such as the media.*
- They can also remain silent and not comment on the challenge, leaving verdicts to be made by individuals.*

Example 2

- Religious traditions may use silence as a response to challenges.*
- They may call a council to address the challenge, which may involve change within the tradition.*
- The authority of the tradition may publish official documents outlining the religious tradition's position in challenge to the challenge.*

Example 3

- A tradition may attempt to either reaffirm or reformulate already held beliefs to counter a challenge, through already existing committees, legal action or public articles.*
- A tradition may respond through inaction, believing they can survive a challenge with minimal effort.*
- A tradition may acknowledge the rightness of the challenge and make changes or take helpful actions in the society.*



Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	14	26	30	18	7	2.7

Points as to why religions seek to maintain continuity in their religious beliefs include:

- religions do not always seek to maintain continuity of all beliefs, as some beliefs do alter over time – some are dropped or ignored. (Students needed to state that only core beliefs need to be maintained, and that other beliefs may be changed.)
- to ensure the identity of the religion some beliefs are essential to maintain
- to foster the next generation in a commonly held understanding of the tradition, without a distortion or fall in orthodoxy
- to ensure the beliefs are understood within the context of changing social mores
- to ensure the beliefs are understood within changing human knowledge such as cosmology, biology, physics, mathematics, psychology, sociology, archeology, philosophy, politics and medicine
- to provide confidence and assurance of the validity of their tradition to adherents
- to ensure authenticity of the origins of their tradition
- some may also note the various ways of maintaining continuity, but for this question such maintenance methods need to be attached to reasons for seeking continuity.

This question was generally well answered. Some students narrowed the question to deal only with core religious beliefs. The most successful responses noted the differences in the way traditions might deal with continuity of core beliefs and the broader category of religious beliefs. Some responses provided unnecessary and unrewarded detail defining core belief, making it the focus of the question.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

The continuity of religious beliefs helps religious traditions form a unique identity. It also asserts a tradition's validity or credibility as their beliefs are constant. Although some side beliefs may have to go or change, generally lack of continuity in religious beliefs can result in confusion for adherents, who don't understand the beliefs fully. Maintaining continuity of beliefs also helps the beliefs to be passed on to others more easily, ensuring a tradition's survival. Religious traditions in maintaining continuity, particularly of their core religious beliefs, keep their position or place within their relationship with other traditions and with the wider society.

Example 2

Religious traditions seek to maintain continuity in their religious beliefs, especially those that are core beliefs, in order to demonstrate the validity and consistency of their points and to provide security for believers. In addition, maintaining continuity in their religious beliefs would assist in holding up the core beliefs from which they derive and also contribute to presenting a religious tradition's uniqueness and identity. Lastly the continuity in their religious beliefs would ensure relevance between beliefs.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	8	10	18	24	23	12	5	3

Answers needed to note influences of significant life experiences upon core religious beliefs. Responses could include points such as:

- significant life experiences could develop core religious beliefs positively, through such actions as extended study, reflection, contemplation, and prayer about the beliefs. Thus the core beliefs could be reinforced and reaffirmed
- significant life experiences could negatively affect core religious beliefs creating doubt, contradiction, denial and rejection
- whether the influence of significant life experiences on core religious beliefs was positive or negative, there would often be some process of questioning and this could result in any of the above
- the possibility of a significant life experience having, over time, a combination of positive and negative influences on core religious beliefs.

Most students were able to recognise that there were positive and negative influences within the relationship of significant life experiences and core religious beliefs. However, many students missed out on marks because they

reversed the question, explaining rather how beliefs influenced significant life experiences. Other students used up much of their answer defining core beliefs and significant life experiences, neither of which was necessary to the question. Many students answered why instead of how.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

Core religious beliefs can be affected or influenced by a significant life experience in numerous ways. They can be positively influenced, a life experience can strengthen or reaffirm a religious belief; it could give a belief a new meaning or interpretation; or it could give core beliefs a more active and worldly focus. Core beliefs can also be negatively influenced by life experiences. Significant life experiences may weaken core beliefs or give adherents a reason to doubt them; the experience may contradict a set of beliefs, or the experience may result in an individual no longer holding particular core beliefs.

Example 2

A significant life experience is one which influences an individual in a definite and tangible way. It deals with matters of life and death and often involves a change in commitment. Religious beliefs can be strengthened, weakened or even destroyed by life experiences. A significant interaction can also stimulate respect for previously unheld religious beliefs. Core beliefs can also be reinterpreted upon reflection and re-evaluation by an individual in light of a significant life experience.

Example 3

A significant life experience is often a turning point in a person's life and can have an immense impact on the way they conduct themselves. While suffering and premature death can question a higher being or make adherents lose beliefs, love and joy can strengthen the adherents' commitment to a higher being. A significant life experience can magnify a belief or strengthen or weaken the belief. Through significant social and life experiences, individuals can adjust, understand and develop.

Example 4

Many significant life experiences are able to impact on the religious beliefs of people. Experiences such as joy, wonder, suffering and death all cause a change in the way people apply these beliefs to their lives through a dynamic process of reinterpretation. Characteristics of significant life experiences that impact on religious beliefs are things such as: experiences that cause doubt or new hope; experiences that cause people to think; and experiences that cause people to strengthen their beliefs. Each of these characteristics change for better or worse a person's understanding or belief within a religious tradition.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	10	21	27	22	11	6	3.1

Good answers included both positive and negative features of the interrelationship between society and religion noted.

Responses could have included:

- society and religion contribute to the characteristics of each other
- religions can provide alternative ways of answering the big questions of humans, offering meaning
- religions offer systems of ethical principles and associated moral codes to guide human behaviour
- religions are part of society and offer alternative values and vision for society
- religion and society can support each other, challenge each other, criticise each other, antagonise each other, and restrict each other
- society may partially or completely ban a religion from practising in that society
- society and religion may cooperate in improving the standards of life in their society
- ideally, respect should be the basis of the relationship between society and religion.

This relationship is the starting point for the various investigations of the study design; however, many responses showed little understanding of the complexity of this interrelationship, making simplistic and overgeneralised claims. Too many responses assumed that religion and society were equally influential upon each other and dealt only with positive relationships. Some responses had a narrow definition of society as family. Many students claimed that society could not exist without religion, without any attempt to explain their meaning. Certainly, there is a case for this contention, but it is sophisticated and there was no sign of such understanding in the student responses.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses. Examples 1, 2 and 3 are very competent and balanced responses.

Example 1

There is a dynamic relationship between religion and society as each has the power to shape the other. On one hand society develops at a pace far beyond that of religion and sometimes modern values can collide with religious principles, rendering them archaic and redundant. A society also has the power to suppress a religion in which it is located. On the other hand a religion and its moral teachings and principles can infiltrate the law of a society for example the western value system which is predicated on Judeo-Christian biblical laws.

Example 2

The relationship between religion and society is one of dynamic interplay. On one hand, society develops at a pace far beyond that of religion, often rendering some religious beliefs redundant and archaic. Religion is therefore challenged to reformulate the belief statement or change the expression of the beliefs perhaps in rituals, in order to be relevant to the changing times. Society also has the power to suppress a religion. Religion on the other hand has the ability to infiltrate the law and value system of the society to the point that the value system of the society is predicated on the laws of the religion.

Example 3

Religion and society are intractably related and inseparable in their relationship. Each one affects the other. Society gives religion a platform to express its views, while religion often informs society in terms of its core views and values. Religion and society often use similar social structures and hierarchies, and both have a common aim to work together for the betterment of humankind. Religion often informs society of how it should be run and has its own vision of a perfect human society. There is always the possibility in this relationship however that either religion or society will dominate the other.

Example 4

This example is competent, though wordy, and doesn't quite make the relationship clear – spending too long on religion being affected by society.

Whilst religious traditions exist as separate institutions within society, religion is consistently influenced, challenged and compelled to respond to the continuously changing nature of society and the perceptions of various constructs. Religion may therefore alter in accordance with the needs of society or reject the challenges to which they are confronted by. Regardless of the tradition's response to the challenges society poses religion and society exist simultaneously and will on both behalves be in some way influenced by the other.

Example 5

The following is another competent example that also focuses on religion being affected, not developing the effect of religion on society suggested in the statement of their 'complementary relationship'.

Religion and society are both societal institutions, which provide a set of ethical and moral guidelines for members or adherents. Religion is submerged within society, and has historically been part of a complementary relationship with society. However as society progresses and religion becomes constrained by traditionalism, the relationship becomes less symbiotic and religion often finds itself dragging behind societal progress.

Section B – Extended response questions

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	13	26	33	23	2.6

Responses needed to identify the religious tradition. There had to be a clear and accurate statement of the vision of the tradition, preferably using relevant theological terms. High-scoring responses showed which beliefs of the tradition provided the basis for the vision. These responses provided a basic form of 'evidence' of the source of the vision, such as the sacred texts of the tradition, its theological writings, and the teachings of the founder. There needed to be an acknowledgment that this vision is inclusive of all humanity, albeit differently, not just the members of the tradition.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

In the tradition I have studied, Roman Catholicism, the vision of a perfect human society is called the Kingdom of God. Roman Catholics are told in the Gospel of Luke to 'seek first (God's) Kingdom'. In this way adherents are called to form the perfect

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society. The Kingdom of God is a society where love, harmony, justice, equality and peace reign. The Kingdom is designed to 'Come on Earth as it is in Heaven'. (Prayer, The Our Father).

Example 2

In Buddhism the vision for human society is that all sentient beings coincide in harmony. For this to happen one's living must not cause harm to another being as this will lead to negative Karma. Karma is the law of moral causation whereby deliberate actions will lead to similar results, as the Dalai Lama has said 'Whatever you do intentionally to others you will get similarly in return'. Buddhists are inspired by a vision where both people and all other living things live peacefully. This will promote neutral Karma and therefore greater chances of reaching enlightenment as is the aim in Buddhism.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	14	14	21	24	18	10	2.5

The tradition should have been the same as in Question 1a. There needed to be a clear and accurate statement of the tradition's beliefs about ultimate reality using relevant theological terms. The points of the vision stated in 1a. should have been consistently stated in this answer. Responses had to establish clearly the connection between the belief about ultimate reality and the points in the vision.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

Firstly a belief in the Kingdom of God also demonstrates a belief in ultimate reality as God must exist in order for this Kingdom to also. Secondly this vision of a perfect human society also relates to a belief in a loving and just God because the vision of human society is to grow more alike to God and if the society is just and loving God must be too. The kingdom of God also is connected with a belief in a relational supreme being whose will is being done on Earth and is in constant relationship with his people.

Example 2

Ultimate reality is at the core of all religious traditions and from which core beliefs are established. This vision of Buddhists for human society enables each person to be enlightened and therefore reach Nirvana the ultimate reality. Nirvana is the supreme state free from the suffering and dissatisfaction that is inherent in Samsara (this world, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth). In order to reach Nirvana one must be rid of all attachments to impermanent things and dissatisfaction and have neutral Karma. Neutral Karma ensures that Buddhists have followed their middle path to enlightenment and can therefore enter Nirvana.

Example 3

Ultimate reality is the metaphysical foundation of all seen and unseen things and forms the basis of core beliefs which build the religion. Allah or 'The God' is ultimate reality in Islam existing in everything as an absolute. This means that God encompasses everything within himself. Therefore the vision for society is that every living thing including nature is equal. By fearing or submitting yourself tirelessly to Allah the individual has to believe in the oneness of Allah or Tawhid that 'God is the only God' (concept of monotheism). So the vision for society that is based on obeying Allah relates to the beliefs of Tawhid and that Allah is ultimate reality.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	9	19	23	20	11	8	3

Ideally these beliefs and the associated vision required a high level of faithfulness to the tradition, involvement in its values and practices. This may mean that adherents could be at odds with their wider society. Adherents may struggle to implement the vision and be true to the beliefs. Adherents may need the support of their tradition's structure and rituals to sustain their efforts to implement the vision.

Supportive examples needed to illustrate clearly the connection between the beliefs and the particulars of the vision.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Buddhists could lead their lives by training in what is known as the 'five precepts' which are training rules that ensure good conduct. These include avoid false speech, avoid sensual misconduct, avoid taking what is not yours, avoid substances that may cause intoxication or heedlessness, and finally avoid taking another life. In doing this and following the eight fold path adherents



become closer to ultimate reality. These eight actions include right knowledge, action, effort, mindfulness, concentration, livelihood, intention and speech. Right is placed before each to designate it as true and correct, it is not enough to show effort it must be right effort. Through this Buddhists are instilled with neutral Karma. The Buddhist Global belief (BGB) is an organization which has cultivated good conduct through following the five precepts and eight fold path, in order to live according to the Buddhist vision of living in harmony with all beings to help us reach Nirvana. BGB was set up to deal with many issues such as hunger and poverty.

Question 1d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	10	14	24	25	16	10	2.5

There needed to be accurate identification of one of the seven aspects other than beliefs. Responses needed to have tradition-specific accuracy in demonstrating how that aspect is used to express the vision and its underpinning beliefs about ultimate reality. The vision used in the question needed to be the same as the one stated in Question 1a.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

The Roman Catholic vision for human society is abundantly expressed in sacred texts and literature. In the book of Amos in the Old Testament of the Bible considered sacred to the Catholic tradition the prophet tells adherents to 'Let his justice flow like a stream, and his righteousness like a river that never goes dry.' (Amos 5:24) Here adherents are shown a perfect human society and are explicitly told to help create it. The prayer 'Our Father' found in the Bible and many cases of Roman Catholic literature says that the Kingdom of God shall come 'on Earth as it is in Heaven', suggesting that a perfect human society already exists in the Catholic afterlife and will be formed on Earth.

Example 2

A symbol is anything that serves as a direct support for spiritual realization. It is an outward and visible manifestation of an inward and invisible spiritual reality. A symbol which conveys the Buddhist vision for society is the lotus flower which represents the Buddhist journey of life to enlightenment. The roots of the lotus are in the mud, the stem grows up through the water for the flower to lie pristinely in the sun. This shows how life begins in the muds of materialism grows through the waters of experience through cultivating good conduct in living in harmony with all beings, to finally rise above the water as whole, whereby the person has reached enlightenment.

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	5	20	36	39	2.1

This question required a clear statement of the core religious belief of the tradition. Responses had to show clearly that the core belief had been maintained over time. Responses with accurate theological terms gained full marks.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

The Jewish belief in the Centrality of the Land of Israel serves as a paradigm of a belief that has been jeopardized, yet ultimately maintained. The belief originates from the patriarchal covenant when God promised the father of the Jewish nation, Abraham, 'unto thy seed I give this land'. Henceforth there has been an inextricable link between the nation and the land.

Example 2

A core belief that has been maintained over time by the Catholic Christian tradition is that God forgives sins through the ministry of the Church. The Catholic Church asserts that Jesus gave the power to forgive sins to his apostles, 'the risen Christ entrusted the power to forgive sins to the apostles' (Catechism of the Catholic Church 934). They state that because the Church was based on the works of the apostles the ability to forgive sins can be done through the ministry of the Church.

Question 2bi–ii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	11	21	25	21	11	5	3

Responses had to show a clear connection of the chosen core belief to the two areas of belief of ultimate reality and the nature and purpose of human life. In some traditions there needed to be a differentiation between the nature of humanity

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and the purpose of humanity, although they are related. Students also needed to use accurate theological terms appropriate to the tradition and the beliefs.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

i. Judaism upholds the belief in one God or ultimate reality. Judaism avows God is benevolent and immanent and therefore established a covenant with Abraham which fixed the land of Israel as the eternal possession, home of the Jewish people.

ii. Judaism maintains that the purpose of human life is to live in accordance with the Torah's precepts, one of which is to live in the land of Israel. It is also believed that the ultimate goal is for Jews to reestablish the Temple in Jerusalem with the Messiah.

Example 2

i. Part of the belief in the forgiveness of sins is that the ultimate reality is a merciful God as forgiveness is always available so long as followers are truly sorry for their wrongs. This therefore relates to the understanding that God is a compassionate God and is all loving as he is willing to forgive a person regardless of their sins as long as the individual is truly sorry.

ii. The core belief that God forgives sins through the ministry of the Church is related to the purpose of life in that it is derived from the fact that Jesus Christ passed on the ability to forgive sins to his apostles and directly told them 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any they are retained' (John 20:22-23). Therefore the relationship is that Catholics assert that the nature and purpose of life is to live according to sonship of God which is to follow in the example of Jesus Christ which is where the belief that God forgives sins through the ministry of the Church is derived. Further Catholics are called to be forgiving as God is forgiving, emphasizing that human nature is meant to be compassionate.

Question 2c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	14	24	31	21	11	1.9

Students may have repeated some of the general points from Section A, Question 2, but their responses were to be grounded in the detail of the particular tradition and the specific core religious belief.

There needed to be clear and accurate historical context associated with the illustrative detail if such was included. Students also needed to use accurate theological terms appropriate to the tradition and the situations.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

This core belief has been maintained for it bears extreme importance and significance within Judaism, The first commandment God gave to Abraham the patriarch was to go to the land and Judaism's core sacred text, the Torah, devotes four of its five books to the nation's journey from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the land of Israel. Due to its biblical significance the Jewish nation has developed strong historical and emotional ties to the Land thereby cementing it as an existential core belief. Furthermore the Torah stipulates that it is a 'Mitzvah' (commandment) to live in the Land of Israel. Moreover an observant Jew can only fulfil every commandment if he is in the land of Israel because some of the 613 laws inherent in the Torah are 'Mitzvot Tluyot Ba'aretz' (laws relating specifically to the land of Israel).

Example 2

The belief that God forgives sins through the Church has been maintained in the Catholic Christian tradition primarily because it is an essential part of the nature and purpose of the Church. It is one of the foundational core beliefs underpinning the existence of the Church and is part of its sacramental role. It brings God and people together to be in a 'right relationship' after sins are forgiven. If this belief was removed the Church would be very different and would not be following Jesus' command to bring God's forgiveness to people.

Question 2d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	16	13	16	17	14	12	7	5	2.9

Students needed to give a clear and accurate historical context associated with the illustrative detail in their response. They should also have used accurate theological terms appropriate to the tradition and the situations.

There needed to be a clear statement of which aspects of religion were affected by the need to maintain continuity of the core belief. Also required was a clear statement of how those aspects were changed in achieving the maintenance of continuity of the core belief.

Appropriate use of the terminology from the study design such as reaffirmation, reformulation, and application to new circumstances, was expected in responses to this question.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Example 1

This core belief has been threatened throughout history and therefore become subject to change. Initially the belief was expressed through sacrificial worship in the Temple in Jerusalem, however after the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem in 586BCE and destroyed the Temple, prayer in synagogues, (communal houses of worship), was devised to replace the nullified Temple ritual. The nation returned and rebuilt the Temple however it was again destroyed in 70CE by the Romans. A new social structure of rabbis (spiritual leaders) was formed who developed new sacred texts which encompassed 'Halacha' an innovative system of Jewish Law and thus 'transformed the ideal form of living in the Land to observing the Law' (Briana Simon). Today living in Israel isn't an option for many Jews, yet the Land of Israel remains pivotal in Judaism. Jews who live in the Diaspora (outside the Land of Israel) express their belief by singing Hatikvah (Israel's anthem) or celebrating Israel's Independence Day.

Example 2

The expression of the belief that God forgives sins through the ministry of the Church has been reformulated numerous times in history to meet the pastoral needs of the people of those times. It was also to ensure the belief survived the circumstances of those times that were questioning the belief or causing people not to participate in the sacrament of confession. In the early Church forgiveness was attached to Baptism and received only once in life, so many Christians held off their confession till near their death. But this did not help the people live good lives so public confession and penance were introduced with public forgiveness and re admission into the community during the Easter ceremonies. But this public nature was not popular with the many new converts to Christianity after it became legal in the 4th century. Then (by the early Middle ages) this public expression of the forgiveness of sins was changed to a private confession to a monk and it was available more often. Again by the late Middle ages, the Catholic Church changed the way the emphasis on penance from this monastic penance to tariff penance. Both were private one to one confessions, but in tariff penance the penitent had to earn forgiveness through a punishment that should fit the sin. This was to draw attention to the seriousness of sin and its consequences. This change occurred because plague, the Black Death (mid 14th century) caused people to think that God was punishing them and thus they needed to earn their forgiveness through certain punishments. All of these changes to the expression of the forgiveness of sins were to ensure the belief that God forgives sins through the ministry of the Church was maintained to meet the circumstances of the times.

Section C – Essay and report questions

Question	0	1	2	3
%	2	28	34	37

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	2	1	1	2	2	3	3	5	8	9	11	10	9	7	8	5	5	3	3	1	1	10.6

While many of the responses to these questions were competent and a few were excellent, there was a consistent absence of question analysis. The key terms of the questions and the related stimulus material, and analytical questions implied in the questions were only given partial, passing reference by most students. Most often these attempts were squeezed into a brief introduction, inadequate to establish the meaning being given by the students to the terms and material.

The responses were assessed according to the level of competency demonstrated in:

- directly and consistently engaging with the question, including the stimulus material
- effective use of supporting evidence
- accuracy of information
- correct use of appropriate theological terms
- appropriate structure of response as either an essay or a report.

Question 1

This question required students to engage with the stimulus material in a meaningful way throughout their responses.

To establish how to develop their responses, students needed to unpack the quotations, which had a number of terms that needed to be addressed:

- 'these days' – identified as now, modern, contemporary and within a democratic, multicultural and pluralistic society
- 'should' – implying a moral imperative
- 'ideals' – to be identified and understanding demonstrated
- 'values' – to be identified and understanding demonstrated.

Based on the quotations, there were a number of analytical questions to ask, including:

- Why should religions keep their ideals and values to themselves?
- What would that mean for the believers?
- Would they have to be secretive?
- Would they have to be hypocritical?
- Would they be isolated from the rest of society?
- In what ways are religions a part of society?
- What is it that they can contribute to society?
- Does this mean they should speak out about their ideals and values?
- Are there appropriate limits or boundaries for this public presentation of a religion's ideals and values?

The question required students to address the strengths and weaknesses of both statements. Students needed to give detailed examples throughout their argument and not just tack them on at the end. The example(s) used had to be contemporary. There should have been a clear and accurate contemporary context, including relevant dates. Responses also had to identify clearly the religious tradition.

The following examples are extracts from high-scoring responses.

Example 1

Below is a very competent introduction addressing the question. The response went on to articulate, with well-explained examples and supportive evidence from various Church publications, the advantages and disadvantages of both views expressed in the stimulus material.

In a multicultural, pluralistic and democratic society, diverse views are permitted to be expressed and must be tolerated. Thus as religions do form an intrinsic part of society, they should be allowed the right of free speech to contribute their views to the society and remind adherents within society of their beliefs encircling many issues of concern. However many believe that religions should confine their values to their own selves as they could infringe upon the liberties of others and can be an obstacle to the modernisation of contemporary society. These conflicting viewpoints can be highlighted in the dealings of the Catholic Church in response to the contemporary challenge of therapeutic cloning within the Australian society.

Example 2

The following is another very competent response. However, the student could have explained further some of the claims made in this introduction about religions. For example, why will religions always be a part of society?

Religions are constantly compelled to embrace changes in society, and as they are in an ongoing dynamic interplay with society, they are often pressured to make decisions regarding their values and beliefs and their roles within society. When considering the statement 'religions should keep their ideals and values to themselves' this point highlights that religions should not be involved in society and should maintain their beliefs and values without engaging with society. This might provide a sort of secure place for the religion itself but it would not help the religion develop their vision for society which is about making society better for everyone. Conversely, religions will always be a 'part of society' and can contribute to public discussion, engaging with society and remaining at the forefront of social change. Confronted with the contemporary challenge of recognising the social acceptance of homosexuality, the Jewish tradition has expressed varying responses according to the understandings of the role of religion held by different denominations within Judaism. Whilst one denomination within the tradition has kept their ideals and values to themselves over this issue, another denomination has engaged with society over the issue and responded positively to the norms and influences of the wider society.

The response proceeds to articulate the scriptural and rabbinical basis for Judaism's challenges in recognising and accepting, with full participation in the tradition, members who are homosexual, and concludes that:

The various movements of the Jewish tradition have displayed diverse responses from their interpretation of the tradition's scripture, teachings and vision for society, and these responses have meant that the denominations have related to society differently over this issue. The Reform movement have reformulated beliefs of the tradition contributing to society and remaining



at the forefront in discussions of the issue, and this can be seen as positive. A strength of the Orthodox movement in their response of ignoring society and keeping their values and ideals to themselves, is that they have maintained their fundamental beliefs and the relevance of their vision of society for their members and the tradition. There are however detrimental outcomes which may coincide with each result. The Reform movement can be said to have demolished the identity, substance and relevance of the tradition. The Orthodox movement however could be said to be non-accepting of equitable members of the tradition, betraying classical beliefs about humans being created in God's image, and consequently 'many are still in the closet, paralysed by the fear of rejection' (Rabbi Steven Greenberg). The role of the Jewish tradition in contemporary society has been expressed in a variety of ways in dealing and responding to the challenge of homosexuality, however it is difficult to conclude which outcome is more favourable; only time will tell.

Question 2

This question required students to engage with the stimulus material in a meaningful way throughout the response, not to provide a restatement of the quotation in the introduction and conclusion.

Throughout the response, clear, accurate and tradition-appropriate theological terms needed to be used. Students also needed to use a detailed example throughout their argument and include supportive evidence and quotations. Using supportive material means more than just stating the quotation, event or name. The student had to explain how that piece of evidence shows the point they are making. The key terms of the question and the quotation needed to be defined and explained in order to address the question fully.

Students also need to discern clearly the different types of belief and how the question of change differs according to the type of belief. For example:

- there are beliefs that are critical to the distinctive identity of a religious tradition
- there are beliefs of religions that are peripheral
- there are cherished beliefs that give personal meaning but are not necessary to membership of a religious tradition.

There needed to be a clear explanation of the nature of change. For example:

- What are the various meanings of 'change'?
- What does 'can be' mean?
- Does it suggest the process of change is beyond one's control?
- Are there beliefs so basic, so essential to one's humanity that they cannot be changed even if one wanted to – the 'God spot' in the brain?
- Are there some beliefs that are so personal, so attuned to one's identity that they cannot be changed without losing one's identity?

In their answers, students needed to identify the religious tradition and the identity of the individual or group within the religious tradition. They had to provide a clear statement of the significant life experience and explain why it was significant to the person or group of the religious tradition. They also needed to provide an accurate historical context, including correct dates.

The following examples are extracts from high-scoring responses.

Example 1

The statement 'not all my beliefs can be changed' suggests that in response to a significant life experience, there are some beliefs (religious and non religious) that are so foundational and important to an individual that they cannot be changed. This doesn't mean that the belief physically can't change but it means for that person that belief is unchangeable for them. This statement also suggests that in response to a significant life experience such as death, suffering, joy or wonder there are beliefs that can be changed. This is certainly true. A significant life experience may impact positively or negatively on religious beliefs. A positive experience may prompt a strengthening of one's religious beliefs while a negative experience may prompt a weakening of one's beliefs or even a loss of faith. There are no absolutes however as the interplay, between religious beliefs and significant life experiences, is dependent on a number of factors such as the individual and the nature of the experience. It remains important to note that while a belief may not change to something different to what it was, it could still be strengthened or grow or be reinterpreted due to the significant life experience.

Example 2

The interplay between significant life experiences and beliefs is bidirectional in that both maintain the ability to influence each other. Significant life experiences can alter the course of an individual's life and transform their connection to religious beliefs in positive and negative ways. These life experiences are so ground breaking for the individual that they can strengthen and



reaffirm beliefs or conversely they can discredit the foundations of belief in the eyes of the follower leading to the rejection of the belief, perhaps even of religion. Moreover adherents can grasp a more meaningful connection to their beliefs through new found understanding or the significant life experience can compel adherents to question and reassess their beliefs due to the emergence or awareness of a tangible paradox.

Whilst some adherents are unable to rekindle their faith after a traumatic life experience, others, such as Esther Wachsman who face the great tragedy of losing a child, respond in a positive manner. Esther Wachsman's reaction to her significant life experience demonstrated her choice to not only maintain her beliefs but remarkably none of those beliefs were changed negatively, they were only strengthened and reaffirmed...

Esther demonstrates that her beliefs cannot be changed, through her expression of the Jewish belief in the importance and celebration of life, 'after the darkest period our family ever experienced, we danced at weddings'. Judaism is a life affirming tradition. Whilst upholding beliefs pertaining to death and the afterlife, still the focus is on life in this world. As the scholar Earl Grollman explains, 'Judaism does not ignore the mystery of death, but is primarily concerned with the miracle of life'. The belief concerning the importance of life which is invariably upheld by Esther Wachsman is expressed in the Deuteronomic commandment, 'I have put before you life and death... Choose life.' (Deut. 30:19) As Esther did not seek to change this belief following the tragedy of her son's death, it rather became of paramount importance to her as it enabled her to remember the joyous years with her son, taking her attention away from a sole focus of his death. Esther's remarkable ability to remain steadfast in her adherence to the belief in the importance of life, undoubtedly drew her closer to the Jewish religious tradition than she had ever been. The belief for Esther was so essential in helping her through the experience of the loss of her son that for her that belief could not be changed.

Question 3

This question required students to use clear, accurate and tradition-appropriate theological terms and to engage with the stimulus material in a meaningful way throughout the response. Students needed to clearly state the nature of the historical challenge and establish whether it stemmed from within or outside the religious tradition.

Supportive evidence and quotations should have been used throughout the response. Students are reminded that using supportive material means more than simply stating the quotation, event or name. Students need to explain how the evidence demonstrates the point they are claiming.

Consider:

- What constitutes 'all else'?
- Does it mean above justice or above honesty or above truth or above mercy, compassion or above moral right or above ethical principles in general?
- What is meant by a religious tradition's self defence?
- Does this imply a religion has the need or the right to do anything to defend itself?
- From what does a religion need to defend itself?
- Have there been occasions when a religion has defended its particular beliefs, practices and structures, despite being wrong, whether knowingly or in hindsight?

The following examples are extracts from high-scoring responses.

Example 1

... The Mongol invasions from 1220-1600 were a significant historical challenge that came from outside the religion of Islam, attacking the social structure, ethics, sacred texts, symbols and rituals of Islam. ... The destruction of Islamic cities not only challenged the survival of the sacred spaces and people but also the sacred texts which were burned and which scholars had been preserving and adding to for 500 years. The Grand library was burnt down and there were plans put into action to adapt the sacred structure of the Ka'aba into a Buddhist temple.

... The exploitation and destruction that the Mongols caused as a militant Shamanist society, undoubtedly brought great grief and losses to the Muslim people of the invaded territories, but also willpower to survive these catastrophes.

The impact of the Mongol attack was devastating but pushed the Muslims to fight for their religious survival and to defend their faith...

... The Muslim society had struggled but not lost hope entirely and so with their newly united spirit under new leadership, the spiritual encouragement of the rise of Sufism (1200-1500), and the influence of the intermarriage of Muslim women with Mongol husbands bringing conversion of Mongols to Islam, Islam defended itself and achieved its continued existence and maintained their orthodox principles.



The analysis above confirms that while defending one's religion is extremely important as religion gives meaning and understanding to life, it is not the priority 'above all else' in life. Rather maintaining faith in one's religion and obeying its laws are the ultimate goal and this inherently keeps the religion stable. The Muslims' self defensive response to the historical challenge of the Mongols was both to fight to defend life and territory and to regain territory and also to continue practicing their religion privately and publically, ultimately changing the Mongols' perspective on Islam and bringing them to convert to Islam themselves.

Example 2

A religion may be about self defence in the context of a historical challenge when its beliefs are threatened. The Roman Catholic tradition was indeed focussed around self defence in such circumstances when Descartes' ideas prompted such behaviour. His ideas challenged the Roman Catholic core belief in God. Through employing a system of systematic doubt Descartes removed all 'a priori' beliefs (beliefs previously unquestioned) and in doing so threw out the belief in God. This prompted the Roman Catholic tradition to become consumed by the concept of self defence. To this end the tradition responded to the challenge of Descartes with 'The Syllabus of Errors' (1864), 'The First Vatican Council' (1869-70) and 'The Syllabus' (1907). The Syllabus of Errors and The Syllabus, both condemned the errors of the modern world to which Descartes had contributed. These responses condemned ideas pertaining to Rationalism, Modernism and Atheism. They denied any validity in such ideas and so became consumed by the need to preserve their previous conservation beliefs and the need to defend these beliefs. Through this example it would seem that when religious beliefs are threatened traditions become concentrated upon self defence.

This student proceeds to show how self-defence is also the response of traditions when the authority structure of the tradition is threatened. Again, this is demonstrated through the example of the response of the Roman Catholic tradition to the challenge of Descartes' ideas on the authority of the individual and the importance of subjective truth.

...This alarmed the Church which became all about self defence through preservation of hierarchy. This self defence is evident in a Vatican I document in which it is written that 'the Roman Pontiff cannot err in matters of faith and morals'. This implies that the Church not the individual has authority in such matters. ...

Religious traditions are not always consumed by self defence in the face of historical challenges. This letting down of anxiety allows a tradition to gain understanding of new ideas (although very slowly) and often results in effective change which strengthens the tradition just as self defence does. ... In Vatican Council II (1962-65) the Church released a document entitled 'The Declaration on religious Freedom' which established that the Church was not completely about self defence as it now welcomed the ideas of Descartes. This document stated that the individual conscience had primacy over the teachings of the Church in matters of faith and morals. ...

In the face of a significant historical challenge, external or internal to the tradition, a religious tradition will be predominately about self defence when its beliefs and authority structure are threatened, but may also be about becoming relevant to a changed society, thereby strengthening itself through both of these methods.

Example 3

It has been said that above any other aim, religious traditions are concerned only with their own self defence. In many ways this statement is true, self defence in the face of a challenge being predominately essential to the survival of the religion. However as can be seen in the response of the early Christians tradition to the challenge of Emperor Constantine's Edict of Milan in 313 CE, there are exceptions to the truth of the statement.

For the first approximately three centuries following the death of Jesus Christ the founder of the tradition, the early Christian tradition was a persecuted and so highly committed group. Although widespread throughout the Roman Empire they were a minority to the major tradition Paganism and the victims of focused blame and persecution. This was altered by the release of the 'Edict of Milan' by Emperors Constantine (West) and Licinius (East) in 313 CE.

Although a follower of the Pagan tradition until shortly before his death, Constantine saw in Christianity a force for the unification of the Roman Empire. ... (Details of his conversion follow) ... The Edict of Milan proclaimed, 'we grant the Christians and others full authority to observe that religion which each prefers', thus legalising and promoting tolerance for all religions within the Empire, with specific emphasis on Christianity. This legalisation challenged Christian Churches to organise and standardise beliefs and rituals, their responses to which indicate a propensity for self defence above many other things in order to ensure survival.

Newly bestowed with the toleration and support of the Emperor and State, the Christian tradition could scarcely disagree with the changes and adaptations proposed by Constantine. As such a great many alterations were made to the existing beliefs, practices and ideologies of the Christian religion. For example, having previously been persecuted and in hiding from the State, the tradition was now provided funding for the construction of buildings to be used openly within society. This wealth was utilised for this purpose and also led to the rich decoration of churches cathedrals as well as of vestments for officiating ministers. These developments were in many ways contrary to Christian beliefs about wealth and priority for the poor as

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evidenced by St Jerome's criticism 'Our walls glitter with gold ...while Christ is dying on our doorsteps in the persons of his poor ...'. This point of view indicates the tradition's instinct of self defence, that is taking the support of the State in order to retain the State's benevolence and perhaps compromising core beliefs and ethical principles in doing so.

The student proceeds to demonstrate the tendency of religion towards self-defence through the examples of pacifism and monasticism. The response then proceeds to consider other concerns of religions that show self defence is not a concern above all else.

... it can be demonstrated that in historical situations religions have aims apart from single-minded self defence. The effects of Christianity's response to the Edict of Milan while widespread within the tradition can also be seen in the wider society. Christian influence as evident in the less harsh treatment of prisoners within the jails of the Roman Empire, as death by starvation was no longer allowed. Divorce became harder to acquire. Infanticide was prohibited and the freeing of slaves became easier. The relationship between Church and State became one of interdependence, the Church relying on the support of the State while the State relied on Christianity for its unification powers. These alterations to previous social practices and standards within the Roman Empire are evidence of an aim of religion other than self defence, that is, improvement of society. Of course the religion has to be secure before it is able to help society so self defence remains important. ...