As stated in previous years, this is a demanding course with a demanding external assessment. It is essential that students and teachers read the markers report if they wish to achieve a result that reflects their efforts.

Markers were pleased with some excellent responses and the general standard of responses to some of the questions. However, many candidates let themselves down by not preparing fully for this rigorous examination.

The external examination requires candidates to select from or adapt the knowledge and understanding they have gained during the year, in order to present-

- a **structured and supported discussion of the question** posed by the examiner.

Too many candidates appear to have entered the examination armed only with knowledge and understanding of the various topic areas in the course.

To break it down specifically for students –

- **Excellent knowledge** is important. In an exam response knowledge must be relevant or you will get no credit for it. Knowledge/information is only 1 out of 4 of the criteria you are assessed on in the exam.

- A **structured response to the question posed** is required. A response to a different question (e.g. last year’s question) will not be well rewarded. Markers do understand the difficulties you face in an exam situation but you must attempt to address the question. If there is no deliberate attempt to answer the question and no deliberate attempt to structure the essay you cannot expect to score well.

- **Address stimulus material** if it is provided. Markers know you have to write four essays, and that many of you will not have seen the stimulus/quotation before. They also know that some stimuli suit better than others.

- **There must be a discussion.** Regurgitated information is not a discussion. A memorised discussion will not address the question. A good discussion will demonstrate that you have thought about the material you have studied during the year. That you have drawn links between behaviour and beliefs and values. That you understand the strengths and weaknesses of theories. That you have analysed the implications of theory or belief and identified some of their underlying assumptions. That you can draw conclusions.

- **The discussion must be supported.** Lengthy quotations are certainly not expected in an exam situation but the markers must be convinced that you understand the need to provide evidence for what you are claiming. If there has been no deliberate attempt to provide evidence then you cannot expect to do well.
• If the marker has to hunt to find demonstration of any criteria you cannot expect more than a bare pass result on that criterion (if that).

Markers must be able to read the response to reward candidates appropriately. Illegible writing is one problem. Writing that is too small to read is another, and pencil or faint pen can be a third. A marker’s comment was not required when fewer than 10 candidates answered a question.

Question 1

This year, the examiner set an extract from a newspaper article as the stimulus for a discussion of the beliefs of a religious tradition. This change from a cartoon stimulus did not seem to cause problems. The main point to note is that the focus of the discussion in response to question 1 should be on beliefs.

JUDAISM (20 responses)

There were some very good responses to the stimulus piece. Unfortunately, too many responses focussed too much on stages of life, rites of passage, rituals and festival occasions.

Criterion 1

With some notable exceptions candidates failed to focus their discussion on the beliefs of Judaism or to link their discussion to the stimulus piece.

Criterion 2

With some notable exceptions candidates failed to focus their discussion on the beliefs of Judaism or to link their discussion to the stimulus piece. Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of Jewish practices but it was difficult to reward this knowledge adequately if it was not made relevant to the question and topic.

Criterion 3

On the whole, this criterion was poorly handled with most candidates providing little if any evidence or support. Once again there were a few exceptions.

Criterion 4

Candidates who discussed Jewish beliefs and addressed the stimulus tended to do well on this criterion by linking those beliefs with practices and values. The many candidates who gave little if any attention to Jewish beliefs could not do well here.

BUDDHISM (182 responses)

Marker 1

Overall, the majority of candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the beliefs of Buddhism and most demonstrated an understanding that the stimulus material should both nuance their discussion and be referred to throughout their discussion. More sophisticated responses were able to identify and
compare the responses of the various schools of Buddhism (in particular, Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana).

Candidates also demonstrated an understanding that this question clearly required them to discuss the particular beliefs of Buddhism which they could relate to the circumstances of the two cab drivers in Steve Biddulph’s story. Significantly, most candidates were able to demonstrate their competence in identifying aspects of the story that they could use as a ‘launch pad’ into a discussion of Buddhist beliefs as they related to the circumstances of both the refugee and the embittered Australian-born cab driver.

Whilst it was pleasing to note candidate understanding of the imperative that they address the stimulus in their responses; some candidates focused solely on the cab drivers and neglected to discuss Buddhist beliefs apart from vague references to karma and nirvana. Many also made fleeting reference to the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path; however, it is to be noted that many candidates did not provide sufficient detail and/or explanation of key aspects of Buddhist belief/practice such as the Three Marks of Existence, Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, the Five Precepts, teachings about karma and the Five Skandhas. Better responses were evidence-based and clearly incorporated many Buddhist beliefs into a coherent and sophisticated analysis of the stimulus.

In summary, it is pleasing to note that:
(a) the use of a story rather than a Leunig cartoon as the stimulus did not deflect candidate engagement from the set question/task
(b) candidates had obviously read the Assessment Panel Reports for past papers and incorporated suggestions from examiners into their preparation for the question in this examination;
(c) candidates prepared well for this question and were able to demonstrate a strong understanding of Buddhist beliefs in order to create a dialogue between these beliefs and the two cab drivers in Steve Biddulph’s story.

Criterion 1

The majority of candidates demonstrated their ability to structure a response in essay form and to provide a clearly expressed and coherent response to the set question. They also demonstrated an ability to logically develop their discussion incorporating aspects of Buddhist belief.

Criterion 2

Candidates were able to select those aspects of Buddhist belief which fitted the stimulus material and were able to demonstrate their understanding by providing appropriate and relevant detail.

Criterion 3

This criterion requires candidates to refer extensively to evidence when discussing religious beliefs. Furthermore, evidence must be used to support points being made. In general, this is an area that needs to be improved. There is no excuse from not using evidence from the teachings of the Buddha himself, the Tripitaka, or contemporary Buddhist teachers/leaders such as the Dalai Lama.
Criterion 4

As for Criterion 3, candidates must incorporate specific evidence of critical and analytical thinking into their essay. Generally in this section analysis would include the implications of key beliefs as seen through Buddhist practices. It might also include - examining a variety of perspectives and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of sources and/or perspectives.

Marker 2

Criterion 1

Most candidates adapted to the shift from the stimulus cartoon of previous years to the extract from Steve Biddulph’s writing extremely well which was pleasing to note. Students on the whole had the correct balance between using the stimulus as a framework or launching pad for discussing in depth and detail the core beliefs of Buddhism rather than devoting too much time to analysing the stimulus.

Candidates would be advised to think of the structuring of paragraphs in the body of their essays. Adopting the approach of having a topic sentence, followed by deeper explanation, followed by evidence and a link back to the question is a solid framework on which to build a paragraph within an essay.

Stronger responses wove a thread of connection between the stimulus and core beliefs throughout their responses. As in previous years weaker responses mentioned the stimulus in their introductory remarks and briefly in the concluding paragraph only. Weaker responses provided prepared answers on the core beliefs of Buddhism with little if any unpacking of the stimulus piece.

Criterion 2

The marker enjoyed the thoughtful and considered ways that candidates applied their knowledge of the core beliefs of Buddhism to engage with the stimulus. There was clear understanding of the implications of discussing the Noble Truths with specific discussion of the nature of suffering with links to the lives of the two men in the stimulus. It was refreshing however to see students engage with other core beliefs of Buddhism such as the three marks of existence, the three poisons and the importance of adopting aspects of the eightfold path. Reference in particular to mindfulness and the importance of meditation as a Buddhist practice that would benefit the cab driver seeking to escape his bitterness about the past, indicated great engagement with the stimulus. The Buddha’s life journey and search for meaning provided an interesting point of departure in making comparisons between the lives of the two men.

Confident and accurate use of terms was evident in stronger responses and provided further evidence of knowledge and understanding.

Criterion 3

Candidates have clearly read former examination reports as was evidenced by students providing quotations from suitable authorities such as the Buddha, the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh in their essays. Better responses were able to use the quotations by way of evidence and to support their understanding of Buddhist beliefs and were not just thrown in for good measure. There were a pleasing number of references to Buddhist parables and teachings which the stimulus seemed to evoke in student responses.
Criterion 4

Discussion of the way that Buddhist belief is practiced is a significant element of this criterion and reference to Buddhist practices of meditation were well received by the marker. The implications of belief in the lived experience of the Buddhist adherent was elucidated well by stronger candidates and showcased a good understanding of the implications of being a Buddhist practitioner in one’s world view and approach to life and its hardships.

CHRISTIANITY (15 responses)

Most candidates satisfactorily incorporated the stimulus into their answers & provided an outline of Christian beliefs appropriate to the stimulus. Many of these responses could have improved their ratings on all criteria by providing a fuller exposition of Christian beliefs, firstly by indicating the denomination chosen, then, as the majority of students chose the Apostles Creed as an exemplar of Christian beliefs, setting out a fuller version of this famous prayer. Two lines is not sufficient. Neither is vague waffle about Jesus love & compassion. In respect to these Christian virtues they could be linked to the Beatitudes. Doing so would enable better ratings to be established between beliefs & practice (Criteria 1 & 2) & enhance the analysis required by Criterion 4.

ISLAM (67 responses)

The stimulus piece led to an interesting range of approaches as candidates did what they could to apply what they had learned to the story of the two taxi drivers. Some candidates took little notice of the story or the demands of the question and simply offered material which they had prepared earlier; generally these answers wrote about little other than The Five Pillars. Better answers analysed the story and imaginatively tried to guess how Muslims would respond to the behaviour of the two drivers, (sometimes seen as Muslims, sometimes not). These answers noted the question’s emphasis on ‘core beliefs’. Very good answers, and there was a gratifying number of these, assessed the lives of the taxi drivers not only from the perspective of Islamic beliefs, but suggested appropriate behaviours too in the light of important Muslim values.

Criterion 1

Most answers did try to answer the question, though quite a few did not ‘... express ideas and arguments clearly’. The skill of older or more mature candidates in ‘setting up’ the essay so that what they had learned was made relevant to the question was patently obvious. It was clear that many weaker candidates had pertinent information at their disposal but simply did not have the ability to use it to meet the demands of the question. As a general comment answers to this question had far too many ‘sentence fragments’, mis-spellings of important Muslim terms and used deliberately over blown language which was presumably there to impress the examiner. Answers were quite well ‘structured’ – teachers are congratulated for work they have done on essay technique; candidates seem to understand the importance of opening and concluding paragraphs and the role they play in capturing the examiner’s attention.

Criterion 2

As was to be expected, some candidates took the opportunity to ‘dump’ what they had learned about Islam and listed the Five Pillars (forgetting that they technically are practices rather than beliefs) and then suggested that the taxi drivers would have their problems solved if they followed them. More
capable answers acknowledged the importance of the Articles of Faith and the significance of such values as Submission, Taqwa, Hilm, Niyyah. The best answers concentrated on an examination of the content and significance of teachings on Tawhid, Gods’ will and human freedom of choice on the matter of suffering, and the belief in resurrection and judgement.

Criterion 3

Students were rewarded for using information which was carefully selected to answer the question. Those who wrote a ‘potted summary of Islam’ did not fare well. Those noting the communal nature of the faith and the significance of the needs of fellow Muslims as a possible moderator of behaviour impressed the examiner.

A large number of answers made excellent use of quotations from both the Qur’an and the Hadiths, but there was very little use of secondary quotations.

Criterion 4

Answers which really attempted to show the link between beliefs and living did well. These answers seemed to realise that the way to do this was to look carefully at key values which, in a sense, enabled the translation of belief into action. Subtle answers carefully chose behaviours (including parts of but not limited to, The Five Pillars) which might be pertinent to the lives of the two taxi drivers. Analysis of, rather than straight description of behaviour was rewarded by the examiner

Question 2 – Aspects of Belief

JUDAISM

Structures, Practices and Festivals: - 4 answers

The question mentions in bold lettering ‘In your response you must refer to core beliefs’. The four answers on Judaism were competent enough, but they did tend to concentrate on the descriptive side, looking in particular at the sequence of each of the rituals or festivals chosen. They needed to point out the underlying reasons for the practices more and to show how practice assisted in the search for meaning and personal and communal identity. Discussion which included an analysis of symbols impressed the examiner. The Jewish sense of history is unique and the celebration of this needed to be stressed. It is also a ‘religion of the deed’ and this too was noted in the best answer.

Rituals: – 25 answers

This question elicited a number of strong answers, as it should have done as candidates spend a quarter of the year on the topic and can largely anticipate the question. The wording of the question ‘... how does this aspect assist or not assist individual believers and their faith communities in their search for meaning’ was awkward and candidates (sensibly) ignored the words ‘... or not assist individual believers’. Unfortunately, many candidates also tended to ignore the last line of the question which asked them to ‘... refer to core beliefs’.
Criterion 1

Most candidates ‘structured’ their answers sensibly – teachers had clearly worked on the basics of essay writing. The majority of answers carefully defined the words ‘ritual’, ‘rite of passage’ and ‘rite of devotion’, as well as explaining the ways in which the ritual form consolidated beliefs and values. Where candidates were weak was in their failure to outline the fundamental beliefs of Judaism.

Criterion 2

The examiner was encouraged by the extent of, and knowledge and apparent interest in, the material which was needed to answer the question. Students were clearly intrigued by the cultural background and the customs of Judaism – but often did not use their knowledge to show how these things illustrated fundamental beliefs and provided a sense of meaning to practising Jews. A broad interpretation of the word ‘ritual’ led to some fascinating presentations of material. Generally students did not try to cover too many topics – the average length of answers was around three and a half pages; only a few candidates struggled to say something worthwhile.

Criterion 3

Some answers had an astonishing amount of detail which supported their basic descriptions. Stronger candidates also quoted from both the Torah and secondary sources which enriched their answers. Overall, the choice of materials was balanced and varied, indicating sound teaching and preparation.

Criterion 4

This was the criterion which separated stronger from weaker answers. If candidates had made little attempt to point out significant beliefs in Judaism, then it stands to reason that they would have difficulty showing how beliefs (and values) were put into practice. It was surprising that only one answer referred to Moses Maimonides’ ‘Thirteen Principles of Faith’, though gratifying to see that most candidates recognised the importance of the Torah as a repository of beliefs and ceremonial customs.

BUDDHISM

Ritual – (12 responses)

This question requires core beliefs of one religious tradition to be linked to an aspect of this tradition, in this case ritual. Too many answers gave only cursory attention to the beliefs of which ritual is the manifestation & this made good ratings across all criteria especially Criterion 4 more difficult to earn. Merely mentioning a belief (samsara) & a linked practice (meditation) is only just sufficient. These elements need to be more fully set out then the links between them will be more apparent & analysis & evaluation will follow naturally. A nice balance between the two elements of this question would be 1/3 beliefs & 2/3 aspect/ritual. In respect to Buddhist ritual most students showed a reasonable knowledge of this important practice. More detail on key rituals (ordination, death) is necessary for good ratings. (A wonderful teacher resource on all aspects of world religions is the Holm & Bowker set of books - scholarly erudite & adaptable to students’ needs.)
CHRISTIANITY

Lived Traditions — Oscar Romero

Responses to this aspect were empathetic & well written showing a good understanding of how & why in Romero belief & experience interacted & profoundly changed him. An awareness of the ‘marxist’ orientation of Liberation Theology would allow an insight into the antipathy between this movement & both the Catholic Church & the military government of El Salvador thus contributing to a good assessment on Criteria 3 & 4.

ISLAM

Structures, practices and festivals

Nowhere in the exam paper were candidates asked to tell the examiner everything they know about the five pillars, and this style of response fared no better here than it did anywhere else. This year’s question contained the word “rituals” in the stimulus quotation and this made it difficult at times to be sure which aspect of Islam the candidate was writing on. The multitude of regurgitated “Five Pillar” responses didn’t make the sorting task any easier. Nevertheless, the standard of responses was generally satisfactory with some good, a few excellent and one which was exceptional.

This exceptional response –

- Addressed the stimulus quotation
- Related it to structures, practices and festivals
- Developed a “central thesis” on how these assist individuals and the community and contribute to the search for meaning (as the question asked)
- This “thesis” was explained in terms of well understood core beliefs and values of Islam (in this case the individual’s relationship with God – building taqwa, and the support of the community in understanding and following the word of God)
- This thesis was supported with evidence
- Each paragraph related back to this central thesis and the question
- Each paragraph in the body of the essay dealt with an identified, structure, practice or festival
- Each “body” paragraph established key knowledge and understanding of the structure, practice or festival,
- Each paragraph contained some demonstration of “excellent” knowledge, including relevant discussion of different variants of Islam, key text references, schools of fiqh etc. (not all in the one paragraph of course)
- Each “body” paragraph contained relevant supporting evidence
- Each “body” paragraph linked behaviour/practices to the central thesis, and key beliefs and values
- The essay finished with a confident conclusion.

This is as much or more than can be expected of a candidate under exam circumstances but may assist future candidates in understanding why an “information only/five pillar” response is not good enough.

Clearly each of these dot-points were not separate sentences in each paragraph. For instance, evidence or analysis often indicates excellent knowledge and understanding, and relating the paragraph to the question shows excellent analysis, etc.
There are many ways to write an excellent response. The outline above is only one way, and is relevant to this year’s question. Future candidates might be advised however to take note of examiner’s comments on the particular criteria below.

1. High quality responses always address the question, and any stimulus material regardless of its quality. Good responses have an introduction and then a discussion that leads from the introduction to the conclusion. Excellent responses have something to say about the question or task they have been asked to respond to, and all of the response is relevant.

2. High quality responses discuss, don’t just repeat memorised information. The best responses contain very good understanding and usually include some information that is not contained in nearly every other response. All parts of an excellent response are relevant.

3. Evidence demonstrates the support or authority for what you are claiming. If you offer no support you cannot expect to pass this criterion. If you use pertinent evidence to back up some points you have made you can expect to be well rewarded. Clever use of evidence can contribute to an excellent result on other criteria too.

4. Analysis when we look at Religious Traditions is most successfully demonstrated when practices and behaviours are linked to beliefs and values. Demonstrating understanding of different variants of a religion can also be well rewarded here especially if the candidate demonstrates an understanding of what difference in belief underlies a difference in practice. It can work for highly competent candidates to point out weaknesses, strengths and contradictions inherent in a religious tradition but great care should be taken that such comments are relevant to the question.

Rituals (138 responses)

Marker 1

The answers that were well done were well done. There are still a large number of ‘potted’ or ‘dumped’ answers. Candidates MUST answer the question. If they must memorise a stock answer, they need to practice customising it to fit different question frameworks, for all criteria require a dimension of relevance to the question. Too often an Islam question becomes a Five Pillars information unload. A good practice would be for a candidate to ask themselves “Have I shown the relevance of this piece of detail?” If not, then either show its relevance or scrub it from the answer. Candidates are also urged to re-use the key terms of the question so that both they and the marker can stay more easily on track.

Marker 2

The overall standard was again very disappointing because so many candidates just saw the word 'Islam' in their minds and wrote a dumped essay on the Five Pillars, mostly without even attempting to link it to the question or mention the relationship between ritual and beliefs. Other candidates only wrote about Rites of Worship and ignored Rites of Passage, while several only wrote a lengthy well-informed essay on the Haj but ignored other rituals. There was also an irritating tendency by some candidates to refer to 'Islams' rather than Muslims and a failure to simply refer to the faith itself as Islam. Spelling errors were frequent but there really is no excuse for mis-spelling some of the basic terms like RAMADAN. Obviously many candidates wrote about the Haj as a ritual but for some reason, a considerable number still seem unable to spell Pilgrimage correctly.
A number of essays referred to the number of Muslims in the world but figures varied wildly, from 800 million to 2 billion. The Pew Research Centre came up with the figure of 1.6 billion in December 2012 ago but it’s hard to come up with an accurate figure. A good essay might have started with an introduction to Islam, defined ritual (as a number of candidates did, referring to the TQA syllabus), linked the essay to the quotation, then outlined both rites of devotion and rites of passage in light of the basic beliefs of Islam - why Muslims carry out these rituals and what they hope to gain from them.

**Question 3 – How do we know what is right?**

Generally this question was not as well handled as the markers had hoped now that the unit is a compulsory one. When the question asks for one tradition or approach that is what the focus of the answer should be. It should be clear to the marker what (in this year’s case) ‘religion or philosophical tradition’ has been selected. Reference to additional approaches or traditions should be very brief and well justified otherwise they are not relevant and can not therefore contribute to the candidate’s award. Future students would be well advised to take note of the very helpful suggestions offered by the marker below, bearing in mind that there are many ways to write a successful essay.

**Marker 1**

Overall, this question was not done well. Several areas emerged as problematic:

- A significant number of candidates failed to read the question which asked them to discuss the tensions and conflicts within one religious or philosophical tradition. Many responses discussed not only a variety of frameworks; but, did so in a way which lacked logic and cohesion.

- Following on from Point 1, many responses lacked precision in terms of knowledge of ethical traditions. In many instances, there was a general lack of evidence that candidates understood the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the ethical framework that they chose to examine. Likewise, there was a lack of clear, concise and accurate explanation of either religious or philosophical frameworks.

- Likewise, many candidates failed to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the ethical issue that they were discussing. This might have involved (a) providing precise definitions of terms specific to the ethical issue; (b) identifying ‘why’ the issue can be deemed an ethical one; and, (c) clearly establishing the parameters of the issue for the purpose of the task.

- Many candidates produced very tenuous discussions of the tensions and conflict within the tradition that they chose to discuss.

There were a variety of responses as to what constituted one religious or philosophical tradition. Response included discussions focusing on normative ethics, deontological ethics, teleological ethics, individual frameworks (for example: Kant, Natural Law, Utilitarianism, Situation Ethics) as well as religious ethics such as Christian ethics which incorporates both deontological and teleological approaches.

The presence of the quotation adapted from ‘Meaning’ by Sam De Brito, as a preface to the question, proved enigmatic to many candidates who omitted any mention of the quotation as a whole or any part of it. Better responses were able to incorporate the quotation within a sophisticated dialogue between
the notion of self, selfishness, community, social responsibility and the ethical framework and ethical issue which was the focus of the essay.

**Criterion 1**

An essay question such as this one required a strong introduction and conclusion, both of which specifically addressed each aspect of the question. Discussion about the ethical approach and the ethical issue needed to be clearly structured, logically developed and present a coherent response to the question.

**Criterion 2**

Strong responses were able to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding and sound analysis of the ethical frameworks that they had selected to apply.

It is essential to have a good working knowledge of the terminology used in Ethics. For many students a good way to showcase this sophisticated understanding is by clearly defining issue-specific terminology and using this consistently throughout the paper.

Likewise, it is essential that candidates demonstrate a pervasive understanding of ethics. This might include clear and precise articulation of the ethical framework chosen including the philosopher/thinker responsible for the development of each ethical framework correctly (for example, Bentham and Mills for Utilitarianism, Aquinas for Natural Law, Kant for the Categorical Imperative and Joseph Fletcher for Situation Ethics).

it is also useful if responses demonstrate a thorough understanding of the dimensions of an ethical issue. It is difficult to apply an ethical approach to an ethical dilemma that has not been clearly articulated.

**Criterion 3**

The use of credible evidence goes hand-in-hand with producing reasoned and informed arguments. Strong responses were able to provide appropriate examples or illustrations to showcase their understanding of the framework discussed.

Too many responses, however, neglected to include pertinent and accurate evidence.

**Criterion 4**

Weaker responses failed to identify and discuss tensions and conflicts that arise in the application of an ethical framework. Stronger responses provided thoughtful and considered commentary and evaluation throughout the essay and reinforced these perspectives in a summative format in the concluding paragraph.
Question 4 – **Significant Historical Challenge** (72 responses)

This, and question 5, seems to be another area where candidates did not achieve the result they might be capable of because they did not answer the question they were asked.

**Markers report**

This question seemed far more suited to candidates whose subject was the Shoah. They had the ease of referring to the well-documented theological wrestling of Jewish thinkers with that nightmare. It wasn’t as easy for most other topics. Again, however the common error of candidates was to give information without showing its relevance – sometimes they needed to point out how traditions maintained their stance without reinterpretation. A religion staying consistent still counts as response, but this stability needs pointing out. Another cause for concern was candidates taking far too long to set the historical scene and wasting vital space better given to the actual question. Sometimes the historical scene included almost the whole of the religion’s history when all that was needed was the part germane to the challenge being considered.

Question 5 – **Significant Contemporary Challenge** (35 responses)

With regard to contemporary religious challenges, most students seemed to know what they wanted to say. But, again, they were not prepared to resequence what they wanted to say in a way that reflected the question. Most showed little evidence in their answers of even having read the exam question. This is a pity since markers are primarily looking for ways to reward students for their contributions in the exam, but if no attempt is made to relate information given to questions asked there is next to nothing for markers to work with. In this question particularly there was a tendency for passion to subsume relevant evidence, concepts and argument. In the same polemical vein there were too sweeping statements: thus, ‘the Church’ views the place of women as such-and-such. This really does deserve nuancing as ‘The Roman Catholic Church’ or ‘conservative church attitudes place women as...’ or some such.

Question 6 – **Founders fiction and fact** – (1 response, no report)

Question 7 - **How did the Universe come into Being?** (33 responses)

The responses fell, in the main, into two ‘camps’. The first was the modest, honest Christian essay using, in most cases, a single major reference outside the Bible. The second was the high powered, undergraduate-like, ultra-polished, rote-learned essay, uniformly and slavishly employing Barbour’s conflict, independence and dialogue model. In short, two types of dogmatic responses. Whilst the latter ‘essay type’ forcefully answered the question and responded to all four criteria extremely well, the honesty of the former was refreshing and was also rewarded.

Question 8 – **Why do Humans Suffer?** (125 responses)

This was another question where candidates demonstrate good knowledge and understanding but sometimes inadequately address the other criteria and the question. For instance, the question referred to the ways in which ‘a religious tradition explains.......’ Candidates should then have largely or fully confined their discussion to one religious tradition if they wished to gain full credit for their efforts.

This is part of answering the question and maintaining relevance.
Marker 1

Generally speaking, essays appropriately concentrated on suffering rather than on evil in its various manifestations. The vast majority of answers looked at the theodicies of Irenaeus and Augustine; looking at both was appropriate as the question asked for ‘ways’ in which a religious tradition explains the existence of suffering…. A number of answers looked at more than one religion when explaining the existence of suffering and how the tradition chosen should respond in thought and action. Brief comments on the explanations and responses of a second or third tradition were looked on favourably – detailed examinations were not as they went against the express demands of the question.

The examiner was disappointed that so few answers used material which, presumably, was at the disposal of the candidates – i.e. how religious traditions respond in action to suffering. Candidates concentrating on Buddhism seemed more willing than others to make use of the values and practices of the tradition to reduce the instances of human suffering.

The question was a large one and must at first reading seemed daunting to candidates who had to both explain the existence of suffering, describe how its adherents coped with it, and evaluate the notion that it was ‘... possible to maintain religious faith in the face of suffering.’ Some simply avoided the last part of the question altogether, but the majority of candidates were not ‘phased’ and simply suggested that theodicies or basic beliefs gave meaning and direction to adherents in the face of suffering. Many saw suffering providing opportunities for loving behaviour or compassion and suggested that such values would not be expressed with out suffering. A small number of answers which examined Islamic responses spoke of its necessity for the testing of faith in Allah and providing opportunities for compassionate behaviour to others, especially within the Umma. It was disappointing that answers did not examine the opportunities provided by say, Zakat, and Sadaqa, the feasts of Eid ul Fitr and Eid ul Adhan in Islam or the Five Precepts in Buddhism.

Several answers looked at a second tradition when evaluating the notion that ‘...it is possible to maintain religious faith in the face of suffering’. This was this year accepted as a legitimate approach by the examiners as this part of the question could be read as separate from the first part.

Criterion 1

This was generally well done, though far too many answers did not have effective concluding paragraphs (though paragraphing in other parts of the essays was sound). Too many answers failed to differentiate between various forms of evil and the different types of suffering that resulted from them.

The main problem in this criterion was that a number of candidates neglected to answer the second part of the question.

Criterion 2

This was a little disappointing. Too many answers gave sketchy treatment to the theodicies, the Four Noble Truths and so on; perhaps this was to be expected when the average length of answers to this complex question was barely two pages. More extensive treatment is expected at this level of study. It did surprise the examiner that students did not adapt materials which they must have learned for other parts of the syllabus for use in this question.
Criterion 3

Most answers gave credible evidence. Surprisingly few, though, supported their arguments with material from recognised authorities and even fewer referred to secondary sources.

Criterion 4

The main weakness in this criterion was that many candidates made no reference whatsoever to adherents’ responses in action. Far too many failed to make any critical comments on the implications or underlying assumptions of traditions’ teachings on the existence of suffering.

Marker 2

Competent responses analysed & discussed the great Christian thinkers Irenaeus & Augustine’s defence of Christianity’s key belief in an omnipotent benevolent Creator God in the face of suffering (Please spell these great names correctly). This paradox at the heart of the question of belief in the orthodox Christian God was counter pointed by some students who referred to various forms of atheism, relevant to the second part of the question, though this connection was not always directly made. Those students who did this rated well on Criterion 4. On the same note, better ratings especially on Criteria 3 & 4 did not merely mention Darwinism as an objection to Augustine’s theodicy – they explained why. One astute student remarked that Irenaeus & Augustine’s theodicies contradict one another – well done!

Buddhism & Suffering

The links between Buddhist beliefs & this tradition’s explanation of the suffering inherent in human existence (& animals) was on the whole clearly established. More in depth accounts of Buddhist concepts would lead to better links to the issue of suffering – eg how does karma influence rebirth & are there any flaws in the justice of this key belief? Does adopting a Buddhist stance on life lead to less suffering? These questions are analytic, not difficult & will lead to better results on Criteria 3 & 4 as well as a better understanding of an important religious tradition.

Recommended text: Holm & Bowker on world religions.

NOTE: This question called for “a religious tradition “ to be described. In these circumstances including another tradition in the response is a waste of precious time. While it is appreciated that students are under pressure to write 4 essays in 3 hrs this makes it even more important that questions are interpreted correctly!

Question 9 – Do Human Beings have a Soul? (20 responses)

Responses were suitably varied and represented in the main diligent, non-rote learned responses. Critical discussion ranged across Descartes and Doubt, Materialism and privileged access, Christian dualists, physics and First Principles, Dawkins, Ryle, Monism, God and occasionalism - even Malebranche and Leibniz got a mention! Encouraging to read students attempting to employ Buddhism as a non-theistic form. The Indic sensibility of ahimsa might in the future garner mention and criticism. Good endeavour.
## Award Distribution

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<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This year</td>
<td>8% (22)</td>
<td>18% (51)</td>
<td>35% (102)</td>
<td>39% (113)</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last year</td>
<td>9% (27)</td>
<td>18% (54)</td>
<td>38% (113)</td>
<td>35% (103)</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last year (all examined subjects)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous 5 years</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous 5 years (all examined subjects)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Student Distribution (SA or better)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Year 11</th>
<th>Year 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This year</td>
<td>33% (94)</td>
<td>67% (194)</td>
<td>35% (101)</td>
<td>65% (187)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last year</td>
<td>34% (102)</td>
<td>66% (195)</td>
<td>30% (89)</td>
<td>70% (208)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous 5 years</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>