

Study of Religion subject report

2022 cohort

February 2023



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Introduction

Throughout 2022, schools and the QCAA worked together to further consolidate the new Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) system. The familiar challenges of flood disruption and pandemic restrictions were managed, and the system continued to mature regardless.

We have now accumulated three years of assessment information, and our growing experience of the new system is helping us to deliver more authentic learning experiences for students. An independent evaluation will commence in 2023 so that we can better understand how well the system is achieving its goals and, as required, make strategic improvements. The subject reports are a good example of what is available for the evaluators to use in their research.

This report analyses the summative assessment cycle for the past year — from endorsing internal assessment instruments to confirming internal assessment marks, and marking external assessment. It also gives readers information about:

- how schools have applied syllabus objectives in the design and marking of internal assessments
- how syllabus objectives have been applied in the marking of external assessments
- patterns of student achievement.

The report promotes continuous improvement by:

- identifying effective practices in the design and marking of valid, accessible and reliable assessments
- recommending where and how to enhance the design and marking of valid, accessible and reliable assessment instruments
- providing examples, including those that demonstrate best practice.

Schools are encouraged to reflect on the effective practices identified for each assessment, consider the recommendations to strengthen assessment design and explore the authentic student work samples provided.

Audience and use

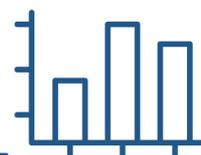
This report should be read by school leaders, subject leaders and teachers to:

- inform teaching and learning and assessment preparation
- assist in assessment design practice
- assist in making assessment decisions
- help prepare students for external assessment.

The report is publicly available to promote transparency and accountability. Students, parents, community members and other education stakeholders can use it to learn about the assessment practices and outcomes for General subjects (including alternative sequences (AS) and Senior External Examination (SEE) subjects, where relevant) and General (Extension) subjects.

Report preparation

The report includes analyses of data and other information from endorsement, confirmation and external assessment processes. It also includes advice from the chief confirmer, chief endorser and chief marker, developed in consultation with and support from QCAA subject matter experts.



Subject completion

The following data includes students who completed the General subject.

Note: All data is correct as at 31 January 2023. Where percentages are provided, these are rounded to two decimal places and, therefore, may not add up to 100%.

Number of schools that offered the subject: 88.

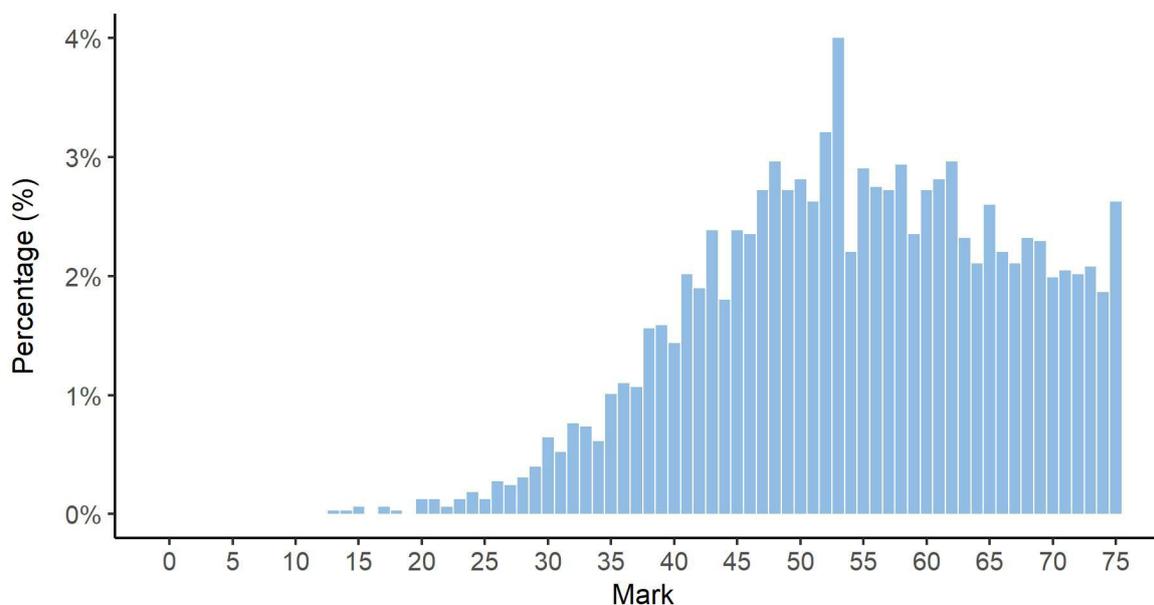
Completion of units	Unit 1	Unit 2	Units 3 and 4
Number of students completed	3752	3478	3265

Units 1 and 2 results

Number of students	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Unit 1	3554	198
Unit 2	3363	115

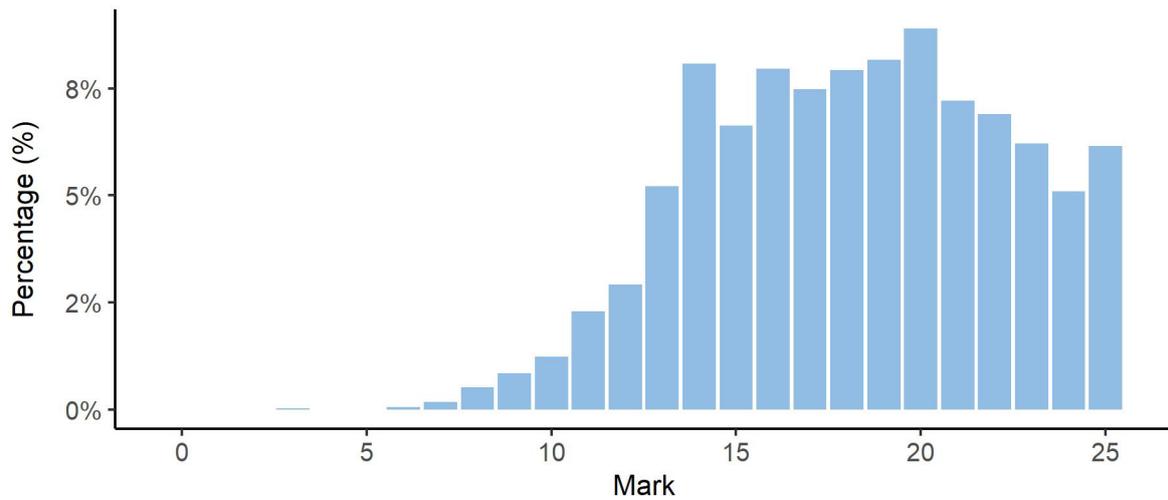
Units 3 and 4 internal assessment (IA) results

Total marks for IA

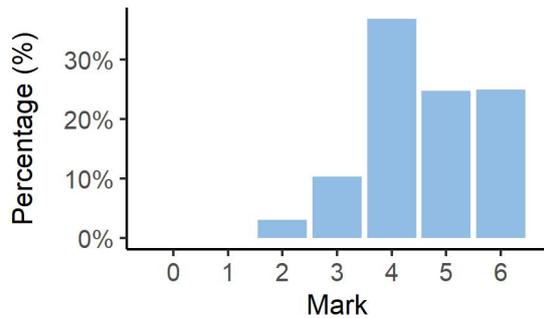


IA1 marks

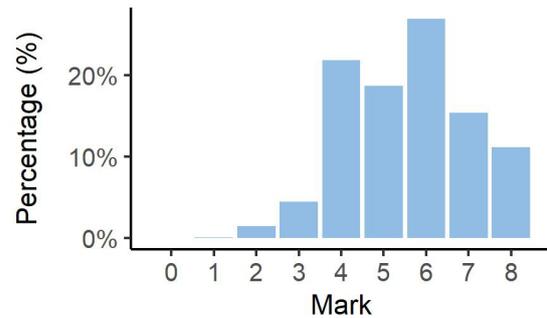
IA1 total



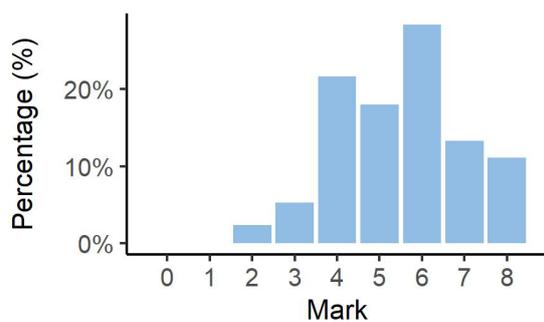
IA1 Criterion: Describing and demonstrating understanding



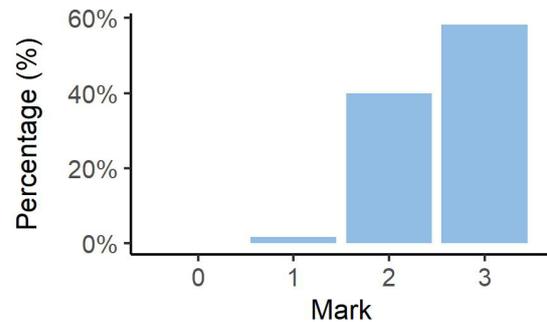
IA1 Criterion: Differentiating and analysing



IA1 Criterion: Evaluating and drawing conclusions

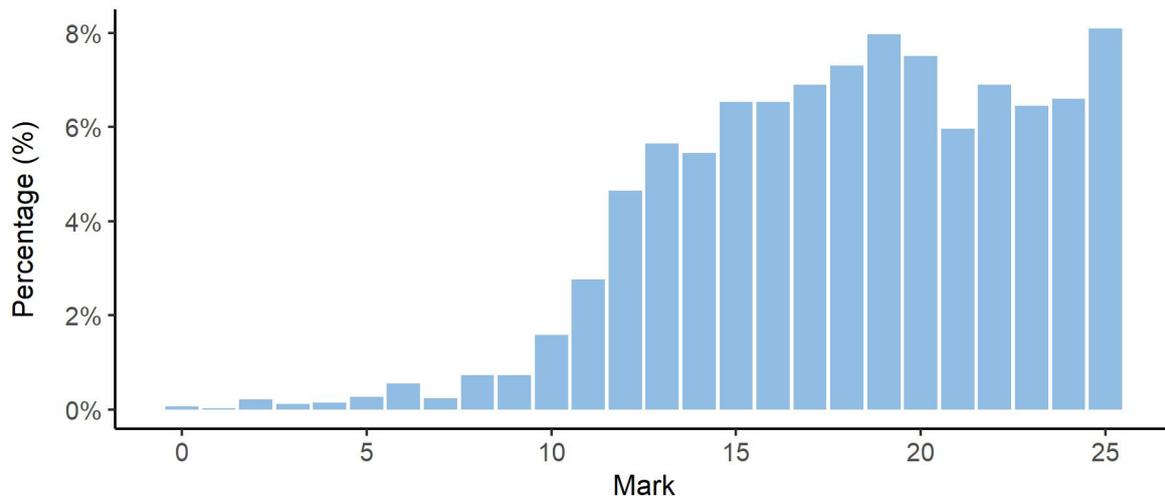


IA1 Criterion: Creating

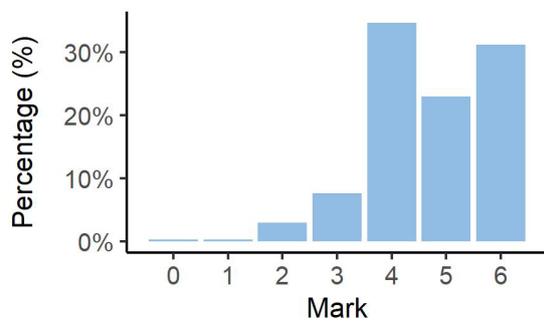


IA2 marks

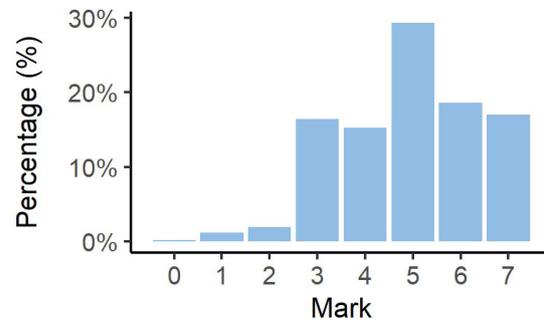
IA2 total



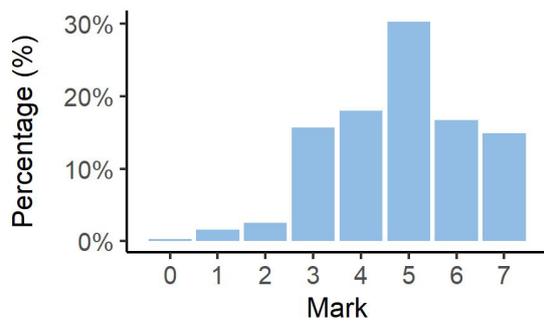
IA2 Criterion: Demonstrating understanding



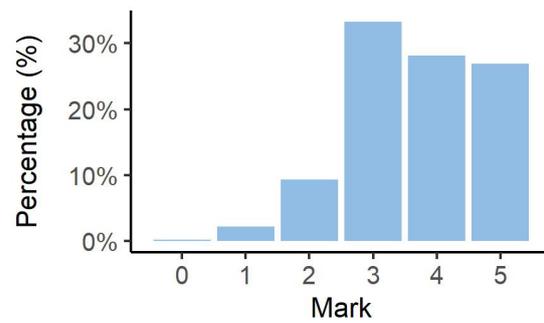
IA2 Criterion: Analysing



IA2 Criterion: Evaluating and drawing conclusions

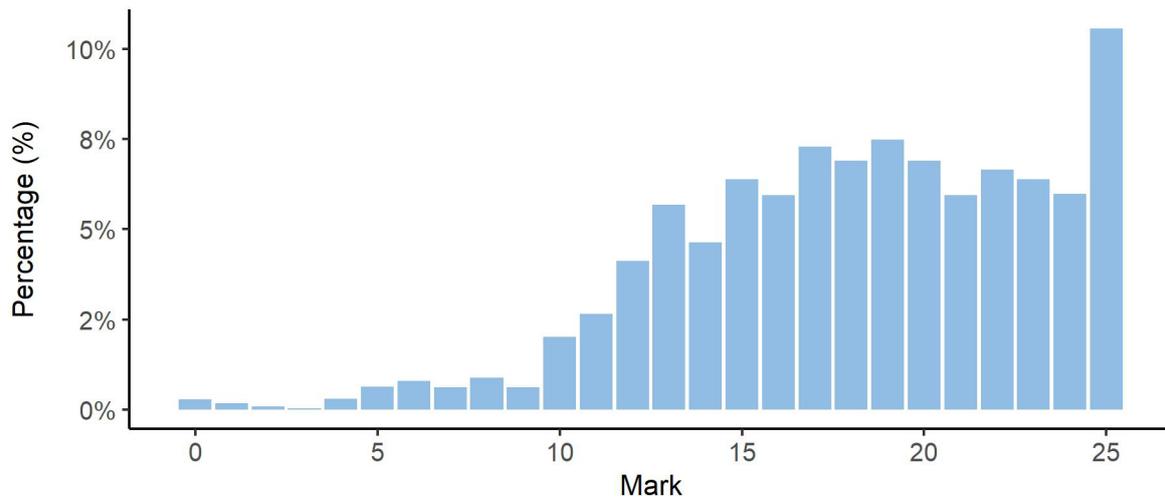


IA2 Criterion: Considering, organising and creating

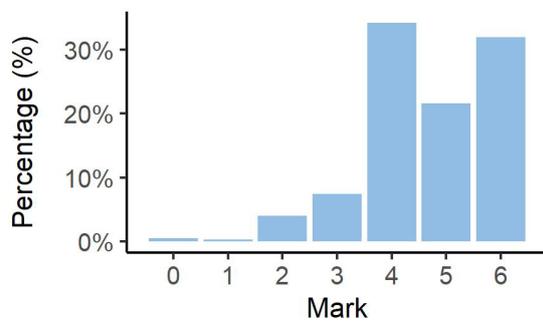


IA3 marks

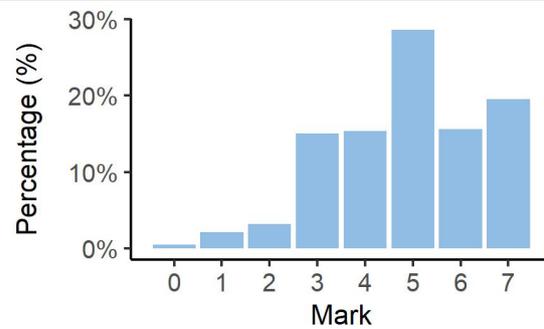
IA3 total



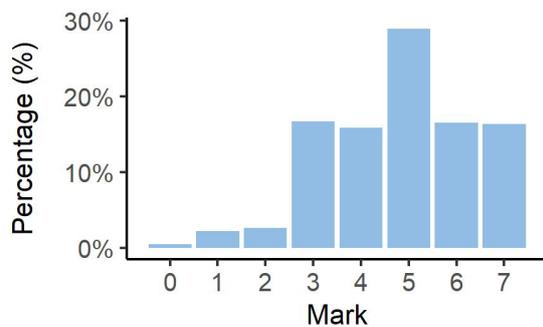
IA3 Criterion: Demonstrating understanding



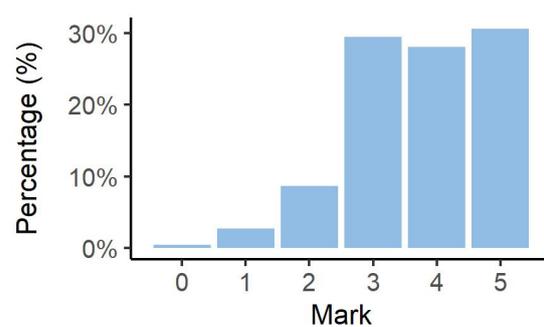
IA3 Criterion: Analysing



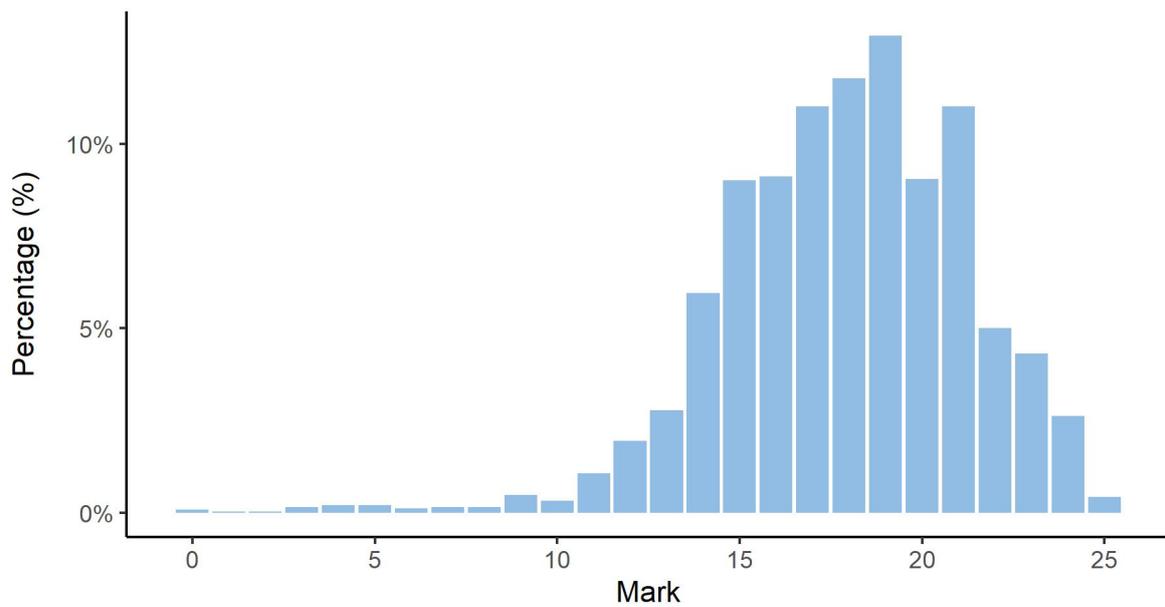
IA3 Criterion: Evaluating and drawing conclusions



IA3 Criterion: Considering, organising and creating

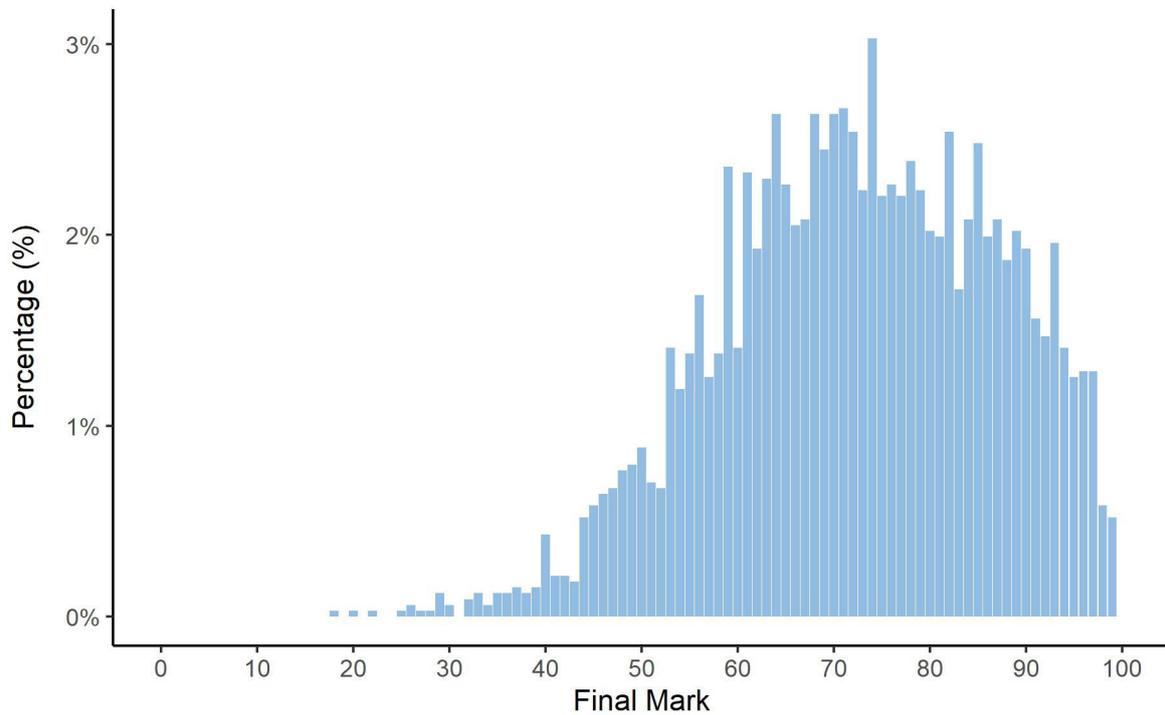


External assessment (EA) marks



Final subject results

Final marks for IA and EA



Grade boundaries

The grade boundaries are determined using a process to compare results on a numeric scale to the reporting standards.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Marks achieved	100–83	82–62	61–43	42–18	17–0

Distribution of standards

The number of students who achieved each standard across the state is as follows.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Number of students	904	1609	679	73	0

Internal assessment



The following information and advice relate to the assessment design and assessment decisions for each IA in Units 3 and 4. These instruments have undergone quality assurance processes informed by the attributes of quality assessment (validity, accessibility and reliability).

Endorsement

Endorsement is the quality assurance process based on the attributes of validity and accessibility. These attributes are categorised further as priorities for assessment, and each priority can be further broken down into assessment practices.

Data presented in the Assessment design section identifies the reasons why IA instruments were not endorsed at Application 1, by the priority for assessments. An IA may have been identified more than once for a priority for assessment, e.g. it may have demonstrated a misalignment to both the subject matter and the assessment objective/s.

Refer to *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v4.0*, Section 9.5.

Percentage of instruments endorsed in Application 1

Number of instruments submitted	IA1	IA2	IA3
Total number of instruments	88	88	88
Percentage endorsed in Application 1	29%	47%	18%

Confirmation

Confirmation is the quality assurance process based on the attribute of reliability. The QCAA uses provisional criterion marks determined by teachers to identify the samples of student responses that schools are required to submit for confirmation.

Confirmation samples are representative of the school's decisions about the quality of student work in relation to the instrument-specific marking guide (ISMG), and are used to make decisions about the cohort's results.

Refer to *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v4.0*, Section 9.6.

The following table includes the percentage agreement between the provisional marks and confirmed marks by assessment instrument. The Assessment decisions section of this report for each assessment instrument identifies the agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks by criterion.

Number of samples reviewed and percentage agreement

IA	Number of schools	Number of samples requested	Number of additional samples requested	Percentage agreement with provisional marks
1	88	777	52	89.77%
2	88	687	88	85.23%
3	88	720	70	76.36%



Examination — extended response (25%)

The examination assesses the application of a range of cognitions to a provided question, scenario, and/or problem.

Student responses must be completed individually, under supervised conditions, and in a set timeframe.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Alignment	56
Authentication	0
Authenticity	1
Item construction	4
Scope and scale	2

*Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Total number of submissions: 88.

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- offered students a clear and neutrally worded essay question or hypothesis that aligned with the assessment objectives (Syllabus section 4.5.1)
- provided clear scaffolding cues in the task section that aligned with the assessment objectives, using the language of the syllabus, e.g. *describe*, *demonstrate*, *analyse*
- provided students with a range of accessible, unseen stimulus items. These stimulus items were selected discerningly to cover both religions and the chosen ethical issue. Effective stimulus packages did not lead students to a predetermined response and allowed sufficient scope for students to display their own understanding of the course material.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- align with the task requirements for IA1, as identified in the syllabus (Syllabus section 4.5.1): one social–ethical issue must be examined from the perspective of two world religions
- contain stimulus items that allow students to demonstrate the full range of assessment objectives. Stimulus items must allow students to fully demonstrate Assessment objective 1: Describe the distinguishing features of religious traditions that inform religious ethics, and Assessment objective 2: Demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which religion informs ethical decision-making processes. It is recommended that schools do not provide stimulus that contain specific religious teachings or religious ethical positions as this limits the ability of students to demonstrate these assessment objectives.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Bias avoidance	2
Language	0
Layout	0
Transparency	11

*Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Total number of submissions: 88.

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided stimulus items that were presented in a variety of formats, e.g. written excerpts, diagrams, cartoons, photographs. The task specifications for IA1 require that schools provide a variety of stimulus items, including at least one item of visual stimulus
- ensured that the religious and social–ethical perspectives presented in the stimulus avoided bias, e.g. by providing stimulus that offered a balanced range of perspectives from within the chosen world religions, ensuring sufficient stimulus on both world religions.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- are carefully edited to ensure that all parts of stimulus items (including diagram font) are clearly legible
- adhere to the quality assurance principle of transparency. Assessment instruments must match the assessment objectives for IA1 and use language and cues that align with the ISMG
- include stimulus packages that are of appropriate length for students to reasonably engage with during planning time. As the stimulus items for IA1 are unseen, schools should consider the number of stimulus items they are providing, as well as the length of individual items.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability is a judgment about the measurements of assessment. It refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
1	Describing and demonstrating understanding	95.45%	2.27%	1.14%	1.14%
2	Differentiating and analysing	89.77%	10.23%	0%	0%
3	Evaluating and drawing conclusions	93.18%	5.68%	0%	1.14%
4	Creating	100%	0%	0%	0%

Effective practices

Accuracy and consistency of the application of the ISMG for this IA1 was most effective when:

- responses for the Describing and demonstrating understanding criterion effectively matched the qualifiers, e.g. at the upper performance level, responses *comprehensively* identified *relevant* distinguishing features of the religious traditions and provided *detailed* explanations of how the religious traditions inform ethical decision-making processes
- making judgments in the Evaluating and drawing conclusions criterion, decisions were made about the interrelationship of the descriptors in the performance levels and were applied in relation to the previous one. The first descriptor focuses on making judgments about the religious–ethical stances of adherents concerning the social–ethical issue. Subsequent descriptors focus on how these judgments are supported by arguments and how these are established in relation to the question or hypothesis. At the top performance level, judgments were supported by *thorough* and *justified* arguments
- for the Creating criterion, responses adhered to the structure of an analytical essay that presented arguments relating to the question or hypothesis, were *logical* and used *succinct* arguments or ideas.

Samples of effective practices

The following excerpts illustrate detailed explanations of the ways in which different religious traditions respond to social–ethical issues.

Excerpt 1 provides an introductory paragraph that identifies the social–ethical issue of the environment, as required by the syllabus (Section 4.3). It further refines the focus on climate change and key differences between Hindu and Jewish adherents' responses. A clear hypothesis provides a focus for the remainder of the response.

Excerpt 2 has been included as a section of a high-level response that differentiates between the two religious traditions of Judaism and Islam on the social–ethical issue of refugees. The student identifies the concepts of *Kavod HaBriyot* and *Ismah* and incorporates analysis of these as they relate to refugees, while drawing on evidence from provided sources to support conclusions.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s has occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

The prevalent social issue of climate change is one that every religious and secular society has been focused on for many years, the impacts causing severe environmental degradation and threatening the stability of Earth and all its tenants. Religious communities stress about the impacts of climate change in reducing their ability to maintain strong relationships to their divine and for the future of all the environment. Hindu and Jewish adherents alike have a strong stance on climate change; respecting the Earth and its resources is vital to maintaining balance and a connection to their divine. However, both religions ethical responses to this widespread social issue are significantly influenced by their religious beliefs and teachings. For Hindus they are called to act with the consequences of their actions at the forefront of their mind, maintaining balance and cosmic order. For Jewish adherents however, they focus on the reparation the world (*Tikkun Olam*) as G-d has provided them with the ability to act out his will.

Excerpt 2

	Source
Two, an excerpt from the Tanakh, the Book of Exodus, believed to be written by Moses during exile, after receiving the word of G-d, therefore containing a mitzvah with divine authority, states that	adherents,

"You shall not [✓]wrong or oppress a resident ~~at~~ alien" (source 2). This teaching alludes to the concepts of Kavod Habriot and reciprocity, which suggests that all people ^{-including refugees-} contain inherent dignity as they were ^{created} made in the image and likeness of G-d and, thus, should be treated with compassion and mercy. Whilst in Islam, it is believed to be blasphemous to relate oneself to God, the concept of Ismah also translates to the inherent dignity of all people due to their creation by Allah, ^{suggesting} therefore, ^{that refugees} are to be granted protection and security as stated in Source Four. Hence, sacred texts provide the foundational concepts and beliefs in both Islam and Judaism which inform the ^{deontological duties} ~~ethical~~ ^{duties} ~~treatment~~ ^{to protect} of refugees.

Practices to strengthen

To further ensure accuracy and consistency of the application of the ISMG for this IA, it is recommended that:

- when addressing the first descriptor of the Differentiating and analysing criterion, differentiation between religious traditions, in the top performance level, is thorough and accurate when discussing beliefs and practices that influence decision-making on the chosen social-ethical issue
- attention be given to the second descriptor of the Differentiating and analysing criterion, focusing on the analysis of perspectives from the two religions. These need to be logically thought out to form and inform religious-ethical responses to the chosen social-ethical issue
- stimulus material be incorporated in the response to effectively support the analysis of perspectives.



Investigation — inquiry response (25%)

This assessment requires students to research a specific problem, question, issue, design challenge or hypothesis through collection, analysis and synthesis of primary and/or secondary data. An investigation uses research or investigative practices to assess a range of cognitions in a particular context. Research or investigative practices include locating and using information beyond students' own knowledge and the data they have been given.

Students must adhere to research conventions, e.g. citations, reference lists or bibliographies. This assessment occurs over an extended and defined period of time. Students may use class time and their own time to develop a response.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Alignment	12
Authentication	0
Authenticity	3
Item construction	2
Scope and scale	0

*Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Total number of submissions: 88.

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided a scope that was appropriate to the conditions of the syllabus: that students consider one contemporary ethical issue from the perspective of one world religion. While schools may give options for students in terms of the ethical issues presented, effective assessment tasks clearly named both the issues and examples from which students could choose (beginning and end of life, e.g. abortion, reproductive technologies or palliative care)
- provided cues that clearly aligned with the terminology used in the assessment objectives
- identified that assessment objectives are different from unit objectives, and all assessment tasks were written to fulfil the assessment objectives for that task.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- limit the preparatory work to what is required in the task description and specifications for IA2 (Syllabus section 4.5.2), e.g. avoid reference to developing inquiry questions, keeping a record of research through the development of a research journal or log, providing brief reasons for selecting sources or producing an annotated bibliography. When developing their IA2 task, schools must consult the syllabus and only include instructions in the scaffolding section that align with the syllabus specifications
- select contemporary ethical issues that fall within the scope of the topics provided within the specifications for this unit. These topics are: beginning and end of life issues, body image, interpersonal conflict, medical technologies, and substance abuse.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Bias avoidance	1
Language	0
Layout	0
Transparency	32

*Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Total number of submissions: 88.

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided clear instructions to students, using language that is straightforward, direct and clear by using cues from the ISMG (e.g. *describe*, *evaluate*, *analyse*), ensuring that the question or topic contained language that allowed students to achieve across the full range of performance bands
- offered an appropriate scaffold, with clear instructions about assessment checkpoint timelines and the drafting process.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- contain a carefully considered Context section. Schools must offer an appropriate statement of context without leading students to a predetermined conclusion. Care should be taken not to include quotes, statistics or other data in this section.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability is a judgment about the measurements of assessment. It refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
1	Demonstrating understanding	93.18%	4.55%	2.27%	0%
2	Analysing	89.77%	7.95%	2.27%	0%
3	Evaluating and drawing conclusions	89.77%	10.23%	0%	0%
4	Considering, organising and creating	94.32%	3.41%	2.27%	0%

Effective practices

Accuracy and consistency of the application of the ISMG for this IA was most effective when:

- for the Demonstrating understanding criterion, the first descriptor's qualifiers were appropriately applied at the upper and mid performance levels. Understanding the ways in which the chosen world religion informs an individual's response to the contemporary issue was *thorough* when applied to the entire response and included all that is required with sufficient attention to *detail*
- the qualifiers at the upper and mid performance levels were accurately applied for the first descriptor of the Evaluating and drawing conclusions criterion. When responses were *discerning* and matched to the upper performance level, they demonstrated perception, were astute and *relevant*
- for the Considering, organising and creating criterion, the judgments matched the qualifiers for the upper performance level in the first descriptor. Such responses followed the genre of the analytical essay, responding directly to the hypothesis or question with *logic*.

Samples of effective practices

The following excerpts have been included to illustrate how religious beliefs inform adherents' responses to contemporary ethical issues, using evidence and arguments to support judgments.

The inclusion of Excerpt 1 provides a section of a high-level response that demonstrates a thorough understanding of the ways Jewish beliefs and practices inform a response to the ethical issue of beginning and end of life (Syllabus section 4.4). The student incorporates both primary and secondary references, providing attention to detail to carefully make clear the acceptance of in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) as an ethical approach to fertility.

Excerpt 2 provides a section of a response that shows perceptive judgments about a Muslim's response to the beginning and end of life issue of euthanasia. The excerpt includes reference to authoritative teachings and concludes with their influence on the decision-making process for Muslims.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s has occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

A guiding principle outlined within the first chapter of the Torah, which informs Jewish adherents accepting outlook on IVF is the first mitzvah of 'to be fruitful and multiply' (Genesis 1:28). This links specifically to the ethical concept of 'community,' which is a primary locus within Judaism, relating to the notion of people coming together, contributing toward the greater good (Furman, 2004). The Parshat Bereishit, which encapsulates this first mitzvah where G-d blesses Adam and Eve upon creation; subsequently enforces the ultimate importance of having children to benefit society (Klein, 2022). Specifically, in Orthodox and Conservative Judaism, this mandate is fulfilled when a couple, who are female and male, have at least two children – one boy and one girl (Hammer, 2008). For this reason, it is therefore generally accepted by rabbinic authorities that IVF is permitted for couples under Jewish law (halakhah), and a mandatory requirement for men; when the husband's sperm and wife's eggs are utilised (Wahrman, 2020). Kosher Certification is additionally required when conducting 'assisted procreation,' especially in Orthodox Judaism, where the approval and verification of procedures, made by a Rabbi who witnesses each step, is crucially necessary (Genea, 2014). This ensures that the halachic protocol is carried out, meaning the baby's identity remains unquestionable and therefore allows the couple to continue fulfilling their commandment of reproduction, and to 'fill the earth and subdue it' (Genesis 1:28). This notion is further supported by Rabbi Aaron L. Mackler (1995) who states in a report that 'having children supports the fulfilment of a mitzvah,' and that 'IVF offers... joy and harmony to [families], and [contributes] to the strengthening of the Jewish (and human) community.' This indicates the sacredness of 'to be fruitful and multiply' (Genesis 1:28), a commandment so integral it overrides another commandment in the Talmud, forbidding the 'cutting of spermatozoon ducts,' as populating the earth and benefiting the community is substantially more important (Silber, 2011). Therefore, it is evident that teachings in the Torah and the mitzvah contribute toward the significant extent in which such ethics influence Jewish adherent's decision making processes and supportive outlook on IVF.

Excerpt 2

Additionally, Qur'an 5:2 "... do not help each other in sin (*ithm*)," reveals hastening death is considered as a sin (ISRA Academy, 2019), and an act of defiance against Allah (Sachedina, 2005). It is haram (forbidden) to take a human life or one's own life, as it interferes with Allah's plan for that life. Consequently, Muslims make an informed decision about euthanasia based on the Qur'an as they want to be a good Muslim and submit to the will of Allah and how he wants Muslims to live by following his direct words in the Qur'an. Furthermore, Muslims want to achieve good judgement and be reunited with Allah in Paradise, however, those who engage in euthanasia are disobeying the Qur'an and are negatively impacting their Judgement Day outcome. Judgement Day is a core belief where a Muslim's good and bad deeds are balanced, and Allah determines whether they will be rewarded and enter Janna (Paradise) or enter Jahannam (Hell) as a consequence. Hence, the Qur'an, an important element of Shariah Law, influence's a Muslim's ethical standing on euthanasia because it contradicts their religious and ethical beliefs, and Allah's words.

Practices to strengthen

To further ensure accuracy and consistency of the application of the ISMG for this IA, it is recommended that:

- there is a focus on the first descriptor in the Analysing criterion to address the analysis of perspectives within a world religion that influence an adherent's response to the contemporary ethical issue selected. At the upper performance level, this requires the analysis to be *thorough* and carried out completely and carefully, requiring detailed articulation of religious perspectives
- consideration is given to the first descriptor in the Evaluating and drawing conclusions criterion, regarding the influence of religious ethics on an adherent's response to a contemporary ethical issue related to the chosen religion. The upper performance level requires the judgments about the influence of religious ethics, approaches to ethical decision-making and ethical teachings be *discerning*, showing discrimination and intellectual perception.



Investigation — inquiry response (25%)

This assessment requires students to research a specific problem, question, issue, design challenge or hypothesis through collection, analysis and synthesis of primary and/or secondary data. An investigation uses research or investigative practices to assess a range of cognitions in a particular context. Research or investigative practices include locating and using information beyond students' own knowledge and the data they have been given.

Students must adhere to research conventions, e.g. citations, reference lists or bibliographies. This assessment occurs over an extended and defined period of time. Students may use class time and their own time to develop a response.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Alignment	50
Authentication	3
Authenticity	10
Item construction	12
Scope and scale	38

*Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Total number of submissions: 88.

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided students with a task that was of appropriate scale to match the assessment specifications for IA3. Effective assessment tasks placed limits, where appropriate, around topics by specifying a time period, key event or key figure which allowed students to focus their investigation and manage responses within the 1500–2000 word limit
- aligned with all the assessment objectives (Syllabus section 5.5.1). Tasks that were endorsed ensured that Assessment objectives 4 and 6 were covered accurately by the wording of their question and cues directing students to analyse the perspectives that influenced religious interaction with the nation–state (Assessment objective 4) and to evaluate and draw conclusions about the interaction between the religion and nation–state, and its influence on shaping society's response (Assessment objective 6).

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- only instruct students to complete preparatory research tasks that are in line with the task description and specifications (Syllabus section 5.5.1). In Study of Religion, the assessment instrument specifications do not require students to: develop inquiry questions, consult a minimum or maximum range of sources, provide justifications or annotations in a bibliography or keep a record or journal of research
- are of appropriate scope and scale to ensure that students can feasibly complete IA3 within the specified 15 hours of time allocated in Unit 4.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Bias avoidance	3
Language	2
Layout	0
Transparency	11

*Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Total number of submissions: 88.

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided a clear topic, hypothesis or question that aligned with the assessment objectives and task specifications (Syllabus section 5.5.1), and which allowed sufficient opportunities for students to develop an original hypothesis.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- avoid any form of bias in language used to describe the religion–state relationship in question, so that students are not unduly influenced or led to a predetermined conclusion
- address the Context section of the task to provide clear information and avoid including quotations, data or other evidence that do not align with the task specifications, objectives and ISMG.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability is a judgment about the measurements of assessment. It refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
1	Demonstrating understanding	90.91%	6.82%	2.27%	0%
2	Analysing	90.91%	7.95%	1.14%	0%
3	Evaluating and drawing conclusions	87.5%	11.36%	1.14%	0%
4	Considering, organising and creating	96.59%	2.27%	1.14%	0%

Effective practices

Accuracy and consistency of the application of the ISMG for this IA was most effective when:

- judgments for the first descriptor for the Demonstrating understanding criterion matched the characteristics and qualifiers of the performance levels, foregrounding the way religion interacted with the nation–state
- responses matched the upper performance level for the first descriptor of the Analysing criterion provided *thorough* analysis of perspectives that influenced the religion’s interaction with the nation–state. These provided attention to detail across the analysis, were complete and included all that was required
- responses at the upper performance level for the third descriptor of the Analysing criterion employed arguments that were *informed*, based on detailed knowledge and an *in-depth*, comprehensive understanding of the religion–state relationship and interaction
- judgments made at the upper performance level about the second descriptor for the Considering, organising and creating criterion were accurate when responses were *succinct* and concise, and expressed with *logic* and consistency.

Samples of effective practices

The following excerpts illustrate thorough and accurate understandings of the ways in which religion has interacted with the nation–state.

The inclusion of the section of Excerpt 1 is part of a paragraph of a high-level response that shows a thorough understanding of the way Islam interacted with the nation–state of Iran during the Revolution of 1979. It foregrounds the significance of Islam and Shiite interpretation that was central to the context and the religion–state interaction.

Excerpt 2 is part of a paragraph that was included to show an in-depth understanding of the relationship between Catholic Christianity and the nation-state of El-Salvador. This understanding provided the basis for informed arguments about the shift in the Catholic Church’s perspective.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s has occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

The Twelve Imams are divinely ordained male descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, founder of Islam who look over the ummah (community) with justice and the power to interpret the esoteric meaning of the Qur'an (Islamic holy text). They are a reference point for the community of believers (Fanack, 2020). As explained by Shiite Research, Baqir Sharif al-Qurashi, there have been twelve Imams since the Prophet Muhammad, in which the Twelfth Imam – Imam Mahdi – went into Major Occultation (hiding) and is believed to still remain alive but will return from hiding on the Day of Judgement (al-Qurashi, 2022). Henceforth, in the absence of an Imam, Khomeini believed a system of governance was required where an individual was appointed to complete the task of an Imam and interpret Qur'anic texts. Khomeini believed that this system of government would be divinely inspired by Allah (Islamic God), stating, the Velayat-e Faqih “would have the same powers [Allah] gave the prophet...in regard to ruling, justice, and the settlement of disputes” (Shevlin, 1998). In such a way, Khomeini also stated, unlike the Shah's secular form of government, “the power of legislation is confined to God...and nobody else has the right to legislate” (Shevlin, 1998). This change in governance saw the shift from a monarchy to a theocracy. Despite many believing this was a successful method of Islamification, there were minorities, like Sunni Muslims, who faced oppression and persecution as a result, because this legislation was created under the influence of fundamental Twelver Shiite beliefs (Alsayyad, 2019). Further, although Article 12 of the constitution states, “other Islamic schools...are to be accorded full respect and...are free to act in accordance with their own jurisprudence” (Islamic Republic of Iran 1979), this was not reflected in the oppression inflicted upon other sects of Muslim adherents following the revolution.

Attributions for sources quoted in Excerpt 1:

Islamic Republic of Iran. (1979). *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (English trans.)*. Retrieved from Ace Project: <https://aceproject.org/en/regions/asia/IR/Iran%20Constitution%201979.pdf/view>

Shevlin, N. (1998, October 10). *Velayat-E Faqih in the Constitution of Iran: The Implementation of Theocracy*. Retrieved from Penn Law Legal Scholarship Repository : <https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/jcl/vol1/iss2/7/>

Excerpt 2

At the time of Archbishop Romero, the Traditional Church remained a friend of the wealthy, the government and the military as it ensured safety of the 'institution' of the Church. However, as human rights abuse increased, the Church began to adopt a new Theology of Liberation, opposing the government's social injustices especially government-sanctioned murders and death squads (Navarro, 2011). Originally, the Church believed it was not their role to challenge the government but rather silently and tacitly condone the government repression. The Church expressed support for the Catholic Social Teaching (CST) of 'Preferential Option for the Poor' but was limited to what they could do for the underprivileged due to the rule of the government, as it contrasted with the economic and military establishment bent on retaining power. One of the demands of the revolutionaries was that Church and State should be truly separate from one another, a position which Church leaders felt would result in the loss of temporal power and therefore influence over the people (Mikus, 2017). Rerum Novarum's focus on class justice demonstrated that the Church was starting to break away from its traditional alliance with socio-economic elites. In so doing, the Church explicitly adopted the doctrine of human rights and the CST of Dignity of the Human Person, as well as the necessity of opposing any government that failed to recognize such rights (Mikus, 2017). This was a transformational time for the Church, in which the institution came to support the marginalised, as per the CST, rather than the upper classes or political parties whose interests aligned with the elite groups.

Practices to strengthen

To further ensure accuracy and consistency of the application of the ISMG for this IA, it is recommended that:

- the first descriptor in the Evaluating and drawing conclusions criterion is recognised as requiring judgments about how the interaction between religion and the nation–state shaped society's response. At the upper performance level, such judgments must be *discerning*, showing intellectual perception and demonstrate astute choices
- when making judgments for the second and third descriptors in the Demonstrating understanding criterion, religion and religious practices are foregrounded when identifying and explaining the religion–state relationship and interaction.

Additional advice

- When engaging with the content for this IA, ensure that religion–state relationships are the focus, rather than approaching the task as a sociocultural analysis or historical essay. By foregrounding the ways religion has interacted with the nation–state, students optimise their ability to provide high-level responses matching the top performance descriptors, particularly in the Demonstrating understanding and Analysing criteria.
- In constructing the response, adhere to the analytical essay genre required by the syllabus and avoid including images and annotations.

External assessment



External assessment (EA) is developed and marked by the QCAA. The external assessment for a subject is common to all schools and administered under the same conditions, at the same time, on the same day.

Examination — short response (25%)

Assessment design

The assessment instrument was designed using the specifications, conditions and assessment objectives described in the summative external assessment section of the syllabus. The examination consisted of one paper (58 marks).

The examination assessed subject matter from Unit 4. Questions were derived from the context of Religion and human rights.

The assessment required students to respond to six short response items.

The stimulus reflected the subject matter of Unit 4 Topic 2: Religion and human rights and was presented in written texts and a table of information. The focuses of the stimulus included: salvation; human justice; the ideal of free human beings; the destruction of rights and freedoms; birth rituals; karma and justice in a Cambodian historical context; and freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Context statements were supplied for each stimulus item.

Assessment decisions

Assessment decisions are made by markers by matching student responses to the external assessment marking guide (EAMG). The external assessment papers and the EAMG are published in the year after they are administered.

Effective practices

Overall, students responded well to:

- the range of stimulus items, engaging with unfamiliar information, contexts, and examples, enabling them to apply their knowledge of religious traditions and human rights concepts to such stimulus
- short response questions that required them to demonstrate their understanding by identifying and explaining the ways in which religious traditions inform understandings of human rights
- questions that required them to describe the distinguishing features of religious traditions that shape views on human rights.

Samples of effective practices

Short response

Question 2 required students to explain how a Christian teaching about human dignity aligns with 'the ideal of free human beings' as stated in the Preamble, *International covenant on civil and political rights*. Students were provided with the verse from Galatians 3:28 as Stimulus 3.

Effective student responses:

- identified a relevant Christian teaching from the stimulus
- explained how the teaching aligned with human dignity and the ideal of free human beings.

This excerpt has been included:

- to demonstrate a high-level response that identifies *imago dei* as a relevant Christian teaching and shows a clear understanding of this teaching
- as it provides an explanation of the relationship between *imago dei*, human dignity and the obligation this brings to uphold the ideal of free human beings, e.g. the connection between the sacredness of human life, the equality of 'all humans' and that people 'deserve to be treated with dignity and respect'.

The Christian core belief of *imago dei* teaches that humans are created in the image and likeness of God and therefore human life is sacred. This is confirmed in Stimulus 3 which teaches adherents that "all of you are one in Jesus Christ," meaning that all humans are equal in the eyes of God and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. This aligns with "the ideal of free human beings," which promotes the idea that all people should have the right to freedom as all people deserve respect. Free will was given to humanity as a gift from God and reflects human's capacity to be God-like and choose good over evil. It also reflects the responsibility placed on adherents to follow God's teachings and uphold the dignity of all people as shown in Stimulus 3.

Question 3 required students to explain how Sattvic action in Stimulus 4 supports the notion of rights and freedoms from Article 30 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* using a relevant Hindu teaching. Students were provided with an excerpt regarding the concept of Sattvic action in Stimulus 4.

Effective student responses:

- provided a detailed explanation of a relevant characteristic of Sattvic action
- explained the relationship between a relevant Hindu teaching, Article 30 and Sattvic action
- effectively used Stimulus 4 in the explanation.

This excerpt has been included:

- as it provides a clear response that explains the Hindu teaching of karma as a relevant characteristic of Sattvic action
- to illustrate how a high-level response draws together the requirements of the question. It explains the relationship between karmic actions and its impact on samsara, how acting virtuously through Sattvic action provides karmic balance and aligns with Article 30, denying any individual the right to destroy the freedoms of others.

Sattvic action supports the UDHR article that there is no right to ~~engage~~ engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms' as it considers the duty ^(dharma) and karmic consequences of human nature. Sattvic action is described as "virtuous, thought through" and "free from attachment" (stimulus 4). This action demonstrates the Hindu belief in both karma and sanatana dharma as an adherent is called to follow their universal duty to balance their karmic weight. The purpose of life for an adherent is to escape the cycle of suffering (samsara) to reach moksha and have their atman return to Brahman. As such acting virtuously through Sattvic action puts good into the community to help an adherent balance their karmic weight. "Destruction of any rights and freedoms" would be a direct contrast to Sattvic action and would negatively impact

an adherent's ability to escape samsara and reach moksha. As such, the Hindu concept of sattvic action strongly aligns with the idea that no individual has "the right to... destruction of any of the rights and freedoms" (UDHR article 30).

Question 6 required students to analyse perspectives about religious pluralism and how these aligned with the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion from Article 18 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Students were to refer to two Islamic teachings and information about a specific position on pluralism, as provided in Stimulus 9, 10 and 11.

Effective student responses:

- identified perspectives on religious pluralism, with an analysis of characteristics of Islamic teachings
- incorporated the stimulus to support their reasoning
- made judgments about the how perspectives about religious pluralism align with the extract from Article 18, and supported their judgments with a valid argument
- organised paragraph/s to answer the question in a clear, succinct and purposeful manner.

This excerpt has been included:

- to illustrate a high-level response that identified Patel's perspective on religious pluralism. The response achieved this by providing analysis of the Islamic teaching of Submission to the will of Allah and by using the stimulus to support reasoning
- to demonstrate the organisation of the student's ideas and how these are drawn together at the end of the response. The response brings together the requirements of the question and specifically articulates how the Islamic teachings reflect Patel's perspectives on pluralism and align with Article 18 (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*).

Eboo Patel presents the perspective that religions are very different and can offer opposing beliefs but that, despite this, "different communities need to learn to live together" (stim 9) as "that is how God meant it to be" (stim 11). He also offers a differing perspective on religious pluralism that it is a Muslim's duty to "help others, to make mercy" which focusses on showing compassion for the marginalised because it is the will of Allah, rather than specifically focussing on unity. ^(stim 6) The Islamic core belief of free will teaches that humans are Allah's favourite creation and, although predestination exists meaning he is all-knowing, humans were still granted free will. This serves as an important test for humanity as those who act in accordance with the will of Allah will be rewarded. Free will aligns with Article 18 as it promotes that all people are able to make their own decisions and should be allowed to express them as long as it is in a way that does not harm others. This reflects Eboo Patel's belief that humans should not be "in isolation from others" but rather should work together to achieve a common good by respecting the beliefs of all people. The Islamic core belief of submission to the will of Allah teaches that

adherents must be devoted to him and remain steadfast in their Muslim faith. Part of Allah's will is for Muslims to uphold the 5 pillars, which are an essential component of their faith, one of these pillars zakat involves almsgiving where adherents donate to the poor. This reflects Eboo Patel's belief that Muslims are "commended to help others" as adherents demonstrate their submission to Allah by helping others. This aligns with Article 18 as by helping the marginalised, despite maintaining a more Islamic focus, they are aiding the human rights of all people, allowing them "freedom of thought, conscience, and religion."

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that when preparing students for external assessment, teachers consider:

- providing students with various opportunities that offer strategies to unpack questions, enabling them to identify cognitions required in the responses and respond accordingly rather than only summarising stimulus material
- teaching and learning opportunities that enable students to practise structuring longer responses, using logic and intention in organising their ideas in paragraphs. High-level responses are constructed to incorporate religious teachings that link to the question, incorporate examples from the stimulus and make specific reference to the context
- engaging with a broad range of materials that enables interrogation by students. Such opportunities expose students to unfamiliar stimulus, requiring them to analyse perspectives on human rights within and across traditions, encouraging application of specific teachings and concepts, and avoidance of superficialities.