Study of Religion subject report

2024 cohort

January 2025

Contents

Introduction

The annual subject reports seek to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement of internal and external assessment processes for all Queensland schools. The 2024 subject report is the culmination of the partnership between schools and the QCAA. It addresses school-based assessment design and judgments, and student responses to external assessment for General and General (Extension) subjects. In acknowledging effective practices and areas for refinement, it offers schools timely and evidence-based guidance to further develop student learning and assessment experiences for 2025.

The report also includes 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 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 internal and 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 senior subjects.

Subject highlights

94
schools offered
Study of Religion

88.42%
of students
completed
4 units

99.39%
of students
received a
C or higher

Subject data summary
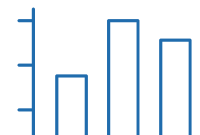
Subject completion

The following data includes students who completed the General subject.

Note: All data is correct as at January 2025. Where percentages are provided, these are rounded to two decimal places and, therefore, may not add up to 100%.

Number of schools that offered Study of Religion: 94.

Completion of units	Unit 1	Unit 2	Units 3 and 4
Number of students completed	4,259	3,988	3,766

Units 1 and 2 results

Number of students	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Unit 1	4,052	207
Unit 2	3,882	106

Units 3 and 4 internal assessment (IA) results

Total marks for IA
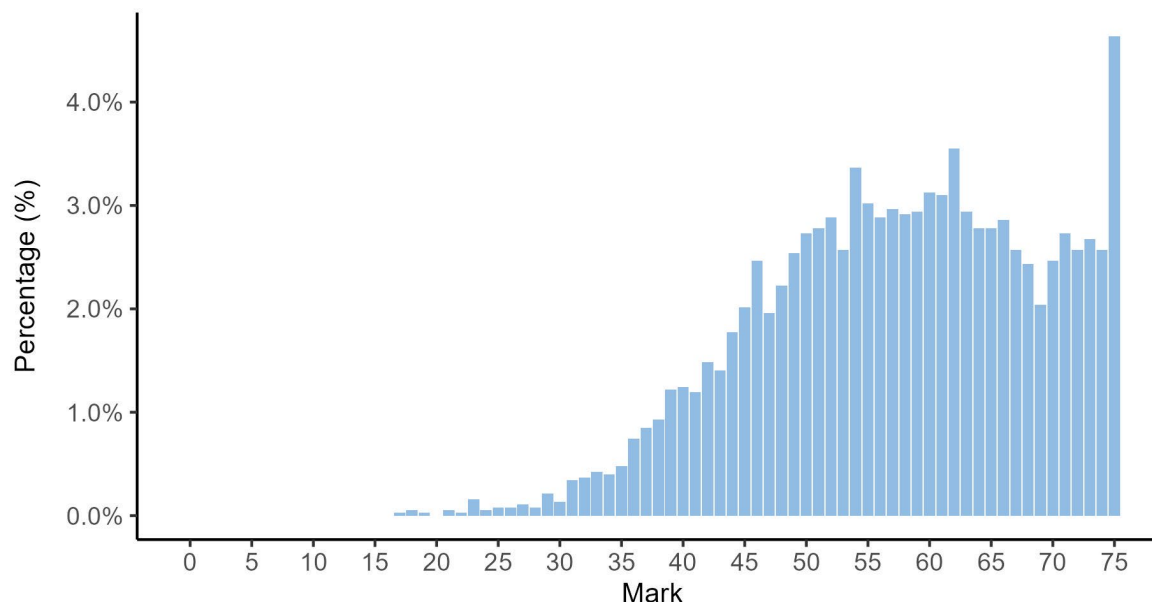
IA1 marks

IA1 total
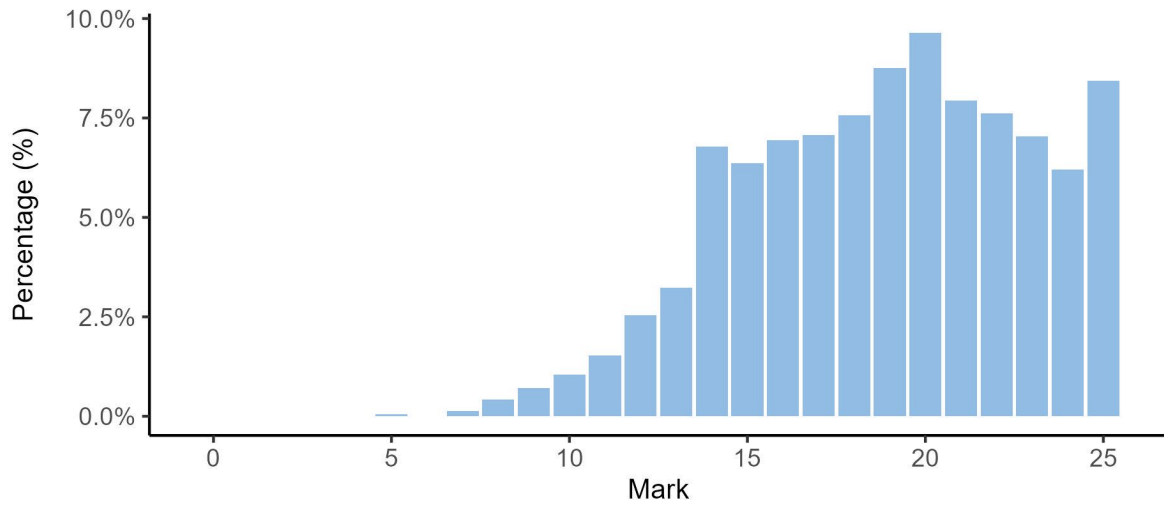
IA1 Criterion: Describing and demonstrating understanding
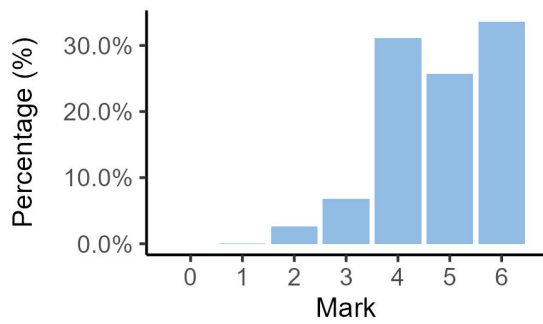
IA1 Criterion: Differentiating and analysing
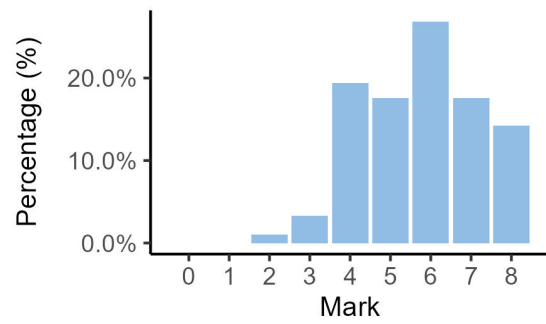
IA1 Criterion: Evaluating and drawing conclusions
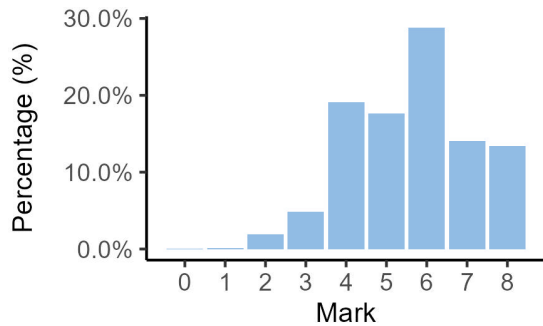
IA1 Criterion: Creating
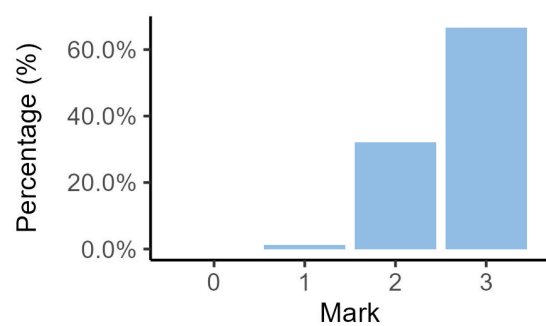
IA2 marks

IA2 total
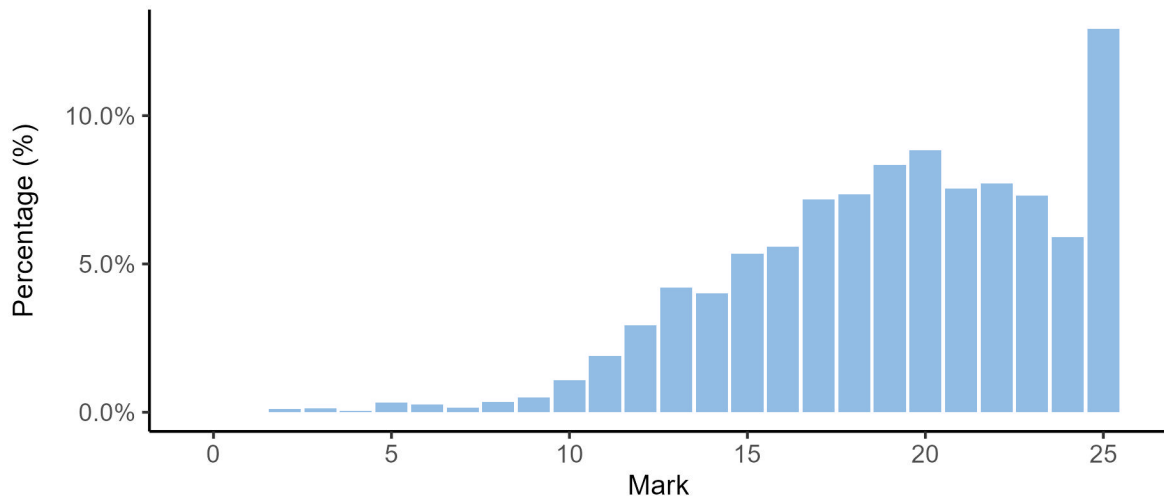
IA2 Criterion: Demonstrating understanding
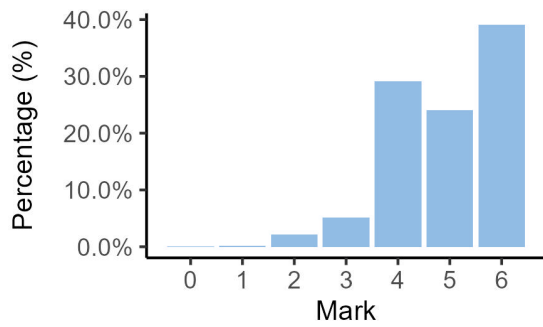
IA2 Criterion: Analysing
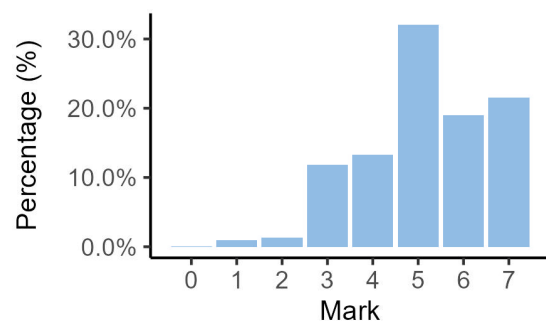
IA2 Criterion: Evaluating and drawing conclusions
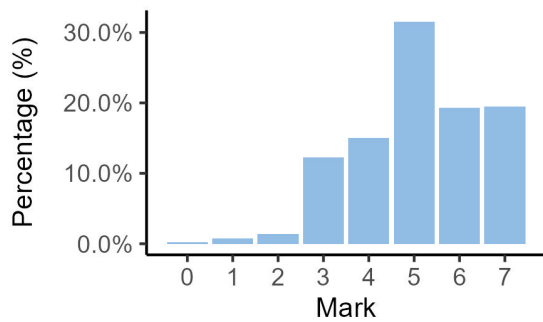
IA2 Criterion: Considering, organising and creating
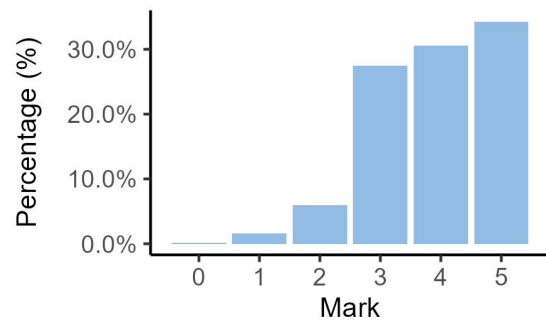
IA3 marks

IA3 total
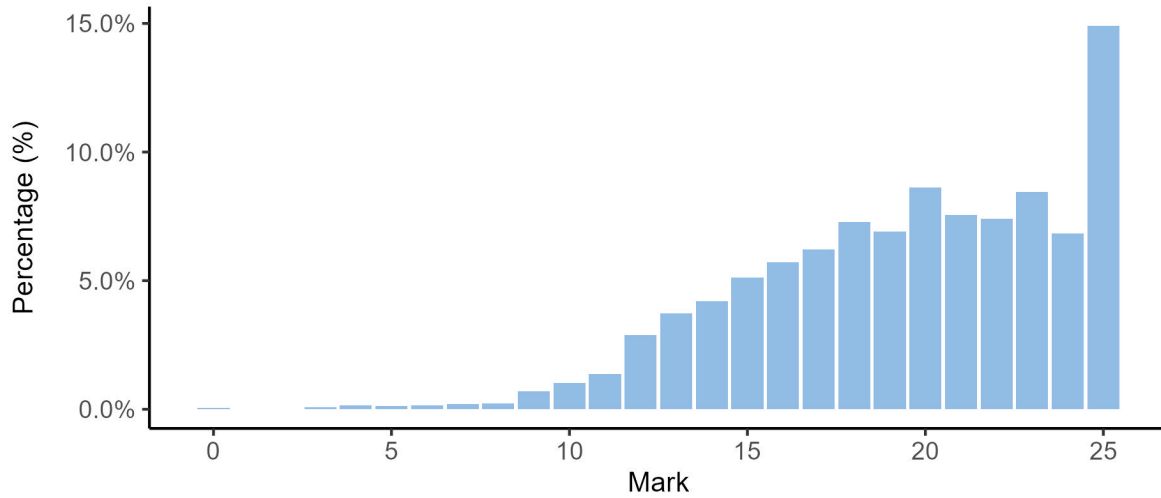
IA3 Criterion: Demonstrating understanding
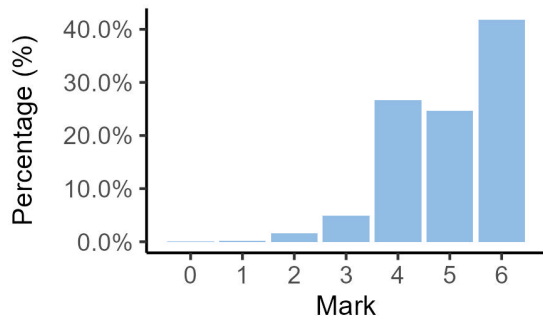
IA3 Criterion: Analysing
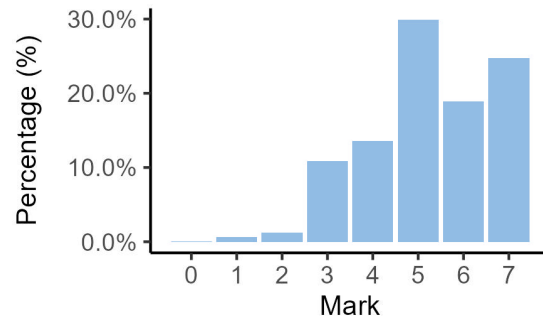
IA3 Criterion: Evaluating and drawing conclusions
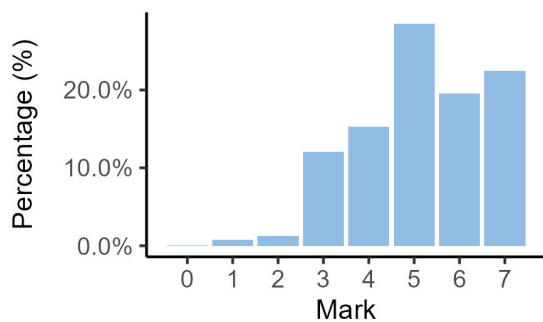
IA3 Criterion: Considering, organising and creating
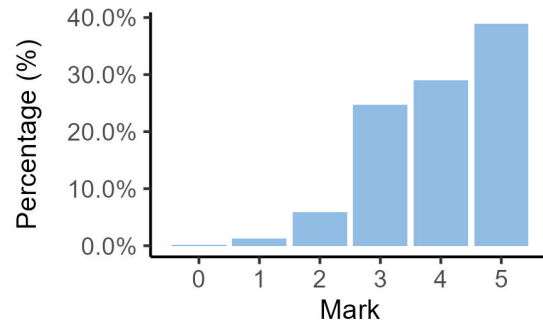
External assessment (EA) marks
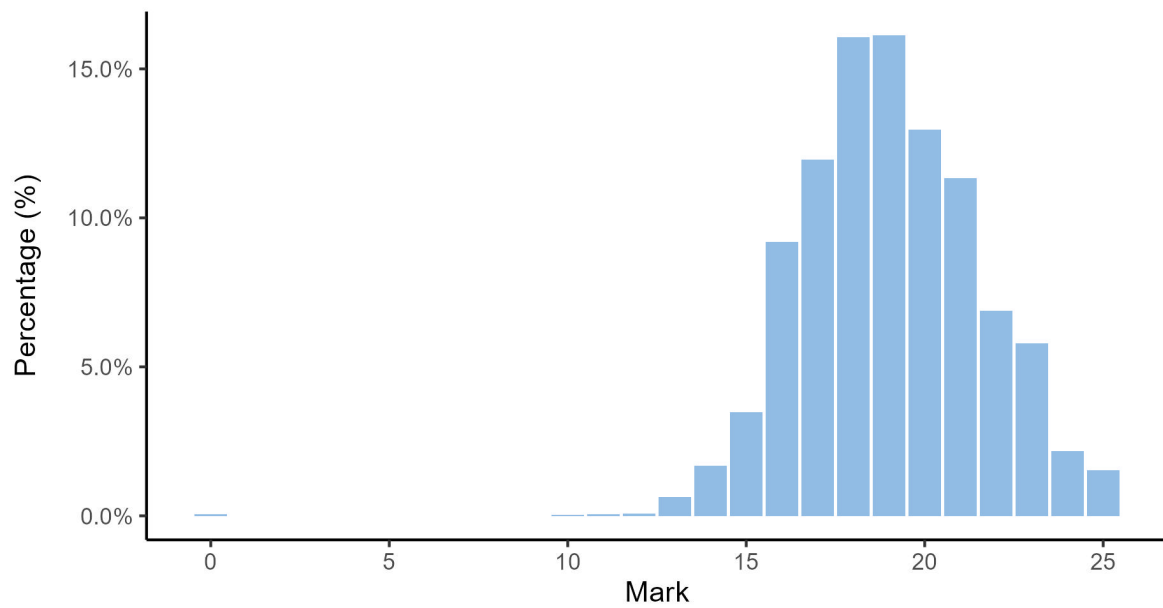
Final subject results

Final marks for IA and EA
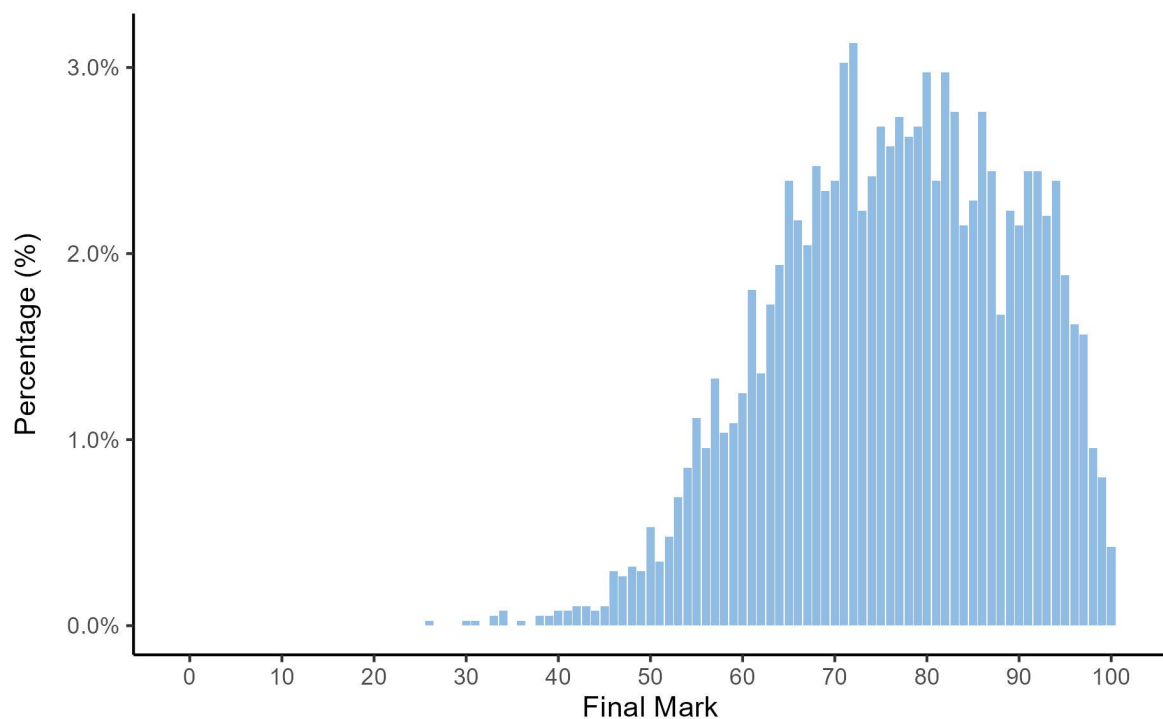
Grade boundaries

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	100–84	83–64	63–43	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	1,221	1,919	603	23	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 assessment. 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 v6.0*, Section 9.5.

Percentage of instruments endorsed in Application 1

Instruments submitted	IA1	IA2	IA3
Total number of instruments	94	94	94
Percentage endorsed in Application 1	31	77	31

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 v6.0*, 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	94	851	2	96.81
2	94	851	9	93.62
3	94	853	13	93.62

Internal assessment 1 (IA1)

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	58
Authentication	0
Authenticity	1
Item construction	5
Scope and scale	15

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- required students to analyse perspectives, from two religions, that form and inform a response to one of the social–ethical issues provided in *Unit 3 Topic 1: Social ethics* (Syllabus section 4.3)

- provided students with clear, detailed instructions that provided the opportunity to demonstrate understanding of the subject matter

- created an overall task that allowed for unique responses through the avoidance of prescriptive information or informed perspectives, affording students the opportunity to cover the required assessable objectives.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- allow students to demonstrate each of the assessment objectives in their entirety (Syllabus section 4.5.1). The task must require students to write an analytical essay and should include explicit instructions that align with each of the assessment objectives

- incorporate stimulus materials that adheres to the syllabus specifications (Syllabus section 4.5.1). This requires a balance of stimulus from each of the two religions and the social–ethical issues and includes a minimum of one piece of visual text. The stimulus materials should be

succinct enough to allow students sufficient time to engage with them in the prescribed 15-minute planning time

- include stimulus materials that do not provide direct teachings; rather, sources that can be integrated as evidence to support student understanding. Stimulus items should allow for the selection of evidence to support the analysis of perspectives, as well as evaluation and conclusions about the significance of religious ethical stances made by adherents to a social–ethical issue. Examples of stimulus can be drawn from sacred texts, official statements and media commentary or interviews that provide a position or belief. Where a stimulus item provides an explicit and justified perspective, students are denied the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and how they can apply their knowledge and understanding.

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	4
Language	1
Layout	0
Transparency	2

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- allowed for student engagement through a clear and legible structure that enabled students to identify what was required
- encouraged a variety of student responses through task directives and stimulus that avoided subjective language.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- contain stimulus material that avoids bias. The perspectives of one religious tradition should not be promoted over another. It is not the purpose of the task to have students make judgments about the religious traditions. Rather, judgments should be made about the significance of religious ethical stances made by adherents from both traditions in response to a social–ethical issue
- avoid content that has the potential to upset or offend, especially when using visual images that may be confronting
- provide clear labelling of stimulus and, where appropriate, include a context statement to assist with a deeper understanding the stimulus.

Additional advice

- Stimulus material should foreground religious perspectives. Information should not contain teachings or content that lead students to a common response but should rather act as a prompt for them to reveal their own understanding.

- Include stimulus from differing perspectives, particularly when there are multiple perspectives within a particular religion, e.g. within Christianity or Buddhism.

- Assessment tasks should reflect the teaching and learning that has occurred in class. It is not a requirement that the focus of the IA1 be unknown to students.

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	98.94	0.00	1.06	0
2	Differentiating and analysing	97.87	2.13	0.00	0
3	Evaluating and drawing conclusions	97.87	2.13	0.00	0
4	Creating	100.00	0.00	0.00	0

Effective practices

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

- in the Describing and demonstrating understanding criterion, the distinguishing features of the two religious traditions were used to show the differences between the beliefs and practices that influence decision-making of adherents from each tradition. This then provided a strong foundation for the development of the response to meet the upper performance-level descriptors in Criteria 2 and 3

- stimulus was incorporated into the essay to support students' ability to demonstrate their own understanding of religious expressions and the various perspectives on the social–ethical issue. There was evidence that students had successfully used a range of stimulus items as a catalyst to guide their discussions and link to specific beliefs and practices in the tradition to develop their responses in relation to their hypotheses

- responses had a clear introduction that allowed students to develop their ideas and arguments succinctly, a feature required for the upper performance level of the Creating criterion. A clear introduction foregrounded the religious traditions and allowed engagement with the social–ethical issue, showing thoughtful planning rather than a restatement of the question.

Practices to strengthen

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

- students recognise that the assessment objectives may be addressed in any order throughout the essay. Specifically, the Evaluating and drawing conclusions criterion is often evident towards the end of the essay; however, this is not always the most effective structure as evaluation can be expressed at any stage of the essay. Employing strategies to embed this assessment objective throughout the essay can produce a more succinct and robust response

- to achieve at the top performance level in the Differentiating and analysing criterion, students need to clearly identify perspectives of the two religions that inform a response to the issue. This can be interwoven with the differentiation between the religions to explore various stances and interpretations of texts and traditions that inform religious ethical responses to the social–ethical issue. For this analysis to be well-reasoned, it needs to be logical and justified, and interrelated through the effective use of the stimulus material.

Samples

The following excerpts have been included to provide examples of the ways religious traditions inform ethical decision-making when responding to a specific social–ethical issue.

Excerpt 1 demonstrates the distinguishing features of Christianity that inform adherents when responding to the social–ethical issue of slavery. It shows effective use of stimulus and introduces the perspectives from Christianity that inform religious responses to modern slavery. The excerpt shows effective connections between Criteria 1, 2 and 3.

Excerpt 2 is an early body paragraph that demonstrates discerning judgments made about the significance of Hindu adherents' stance in relation to care of the environment. The response has interwoven the features of Hinduism with an evaluation of how a Hindu adherent might be influenced by the teachings, giving examples of the impact on daily practice.

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

Excerpt 1

Not only is modern slavery and issue from a secular point of view, but also ml from a religious view. Interestingly, Christianity has many ethical teachings that allow adherents guidence on how to respond to modern slavery. For example, the teaching of Imago Dei encourages adherents to see others in the likeness of God. It is the theological term that represents the relationship between God and humanity. Christians have a deontological duty to uphold their ethical teachings and modern slavery directly violates this. Modern slavery involves "fundamental rights [being] discarded or violated" (source 3) and Imago Dei encourages christian adherents to respect dignity and worth, as well as helping the victims of slavery. "Anyone can be vulnerable to modern slavery." However, some groups are more in vulnerable than others" (source 1). It is a Christian duty to help those who are more vulnerable within society and Imago Dei allows urges adherents to assist others by upholding the innate dignity and worth of others. Modern slavery violates this because they aren't upholding "dignity [is] denied, scorned or trampled upon" (source 3). Imago Dei calls christians to treat others respectfully and help those who are victims of slavery, as everyone is made in the image of God and deserves to be treated as such.

The Greatest Commandment, as well as the New Commandment states that that Christians should love their neighbour as they love their God, and to love their God with all their being. Unfortunatly, modern slavery encourages the exploitation of others. "W through "human trafficking, child labour, forced labour and debt bondage" (source 2). This doesn't align with the ethical teachings, so Christians are encouraged to respond by assiting those in need. According to Source 1, "only 1 in 5 victims of slavery are identified" and a further "80% of victims do not get the support they need". This violated the Greatest commandment and New commandment as those in power are neither loving others in the way God loves everyone, or respecting what God has asked of Christians. Christians - through the ethical teachings of the Greatest and New Commandments - are tasked to "proclaim liberty to the captives" (source 4) just as God asked in Luke 4:16-21. Modern slavery is a direct violation of these teachings as it involves exploiting others and not treating them as equal.

Excerpt 2

The Hinduism core beliefs & teachings greatly ^within Hinduism impact their views on the environment & could affect their level of support towards the United Nations' declaration. As previously mentioned, karma is key to a Hindu's decision making, due to how karma affects one's next life. Most Hindu's view everything they do with ahimsa to help generate good karma. Polluting & destroying the environment would do the opposite, as destruction goes against the whole belief system of ahimsa. This is extremely influential to many Hindu's as this affects the varna in which they will be reincarnated into. This cycle of samsara & karmic consequences can be related to many dilemmas, but is quite useful when determining how to treat the environment. They may also respect the environment to align with their teaching of "respect for the divine" (source 3). Every atman or soul found on the Earth is all part of the same spirit, so by respecting nature, a Hindu would also be respecting themself & their own spirit (source 3). This shows the teleological approach used in Hinduism, not protecting the environment because it is stated in a law, but protecting the environment for good karma & other benefits of a healthy world.

Additional advice

- The purpose of the ISMG is to allow the matching of evidence in the student work to the assessment criteria. This allows for the awarding of marks that are a fair and accurate representation of the student work. Care must be taken to ensure that the marks are determined by the marks awarded on the ISMG.

Internal assessment 2 (IA2)

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	11
Authentication	4
Authenticity	1
Item construction	8
Scope and scale	2

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- guided students to investigate one contemporary ethical issue selected from the list of issues provided in Syllabus section 4.4.3, so students could address the required assessable objectives across all performance levels

- articulated the requirement for students to investigate how the religion influences a response to the contemporary ethical issue with clear instructions that aligned with the specifications (Syllabus section 4.5.2).

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- use the language of the syllabus as stated in the criterion (Syllabus section 4.5.2), ensuring consistency between the task and the ISMG

- refrain from asking students to produce research questions or notes as they are beyond the specifications of the task. Student notes used in research and preparation of the response are

not assessed. They should not be referred to in the task itself, but remain in the domain of teaching and learning

- support students to make appropriate choices by including examples of topics that will allow them to demonstrate the full range of performance-level descriptors.

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	0
Language	1
Layout	0
Transparency	2

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- used appropriate language and avoided unnecessary jargon, specialist and colloquial expressions
- provided task instructions that were clear accessible and avoided bias.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- avoid statements that may be contradictory or direct students to reach a certain conclusion
- clearly identify the topic/s, e.g. beginning and end of life, that students can choose from and include some suggested examples, e.g. reproductive technologies, palliative care. Examples can extend beyond those provided in the syllabus and may reflect a school preference. The inclusion of specific topics may depend on factors such as available resources, school context and cohort size.

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	98.94	1.06	0.00	0

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
2	Analysing	96.81	3.19	0.00	0
3	Evaluating and drawing conclusions	95.74	3.19	1.06	0
4	Considering, organising and creating	98.94	1.06	0.00	0

Effective practices

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

- responses were well-structured and allowed all criteria to be developed throughout the essay in a succinct and logical manner

- the beliefs and practices of the world religion, and the way these informed an individual's response to the contemporary issue (as required by the Demonstrating understanding criterion), were clearly conveyed. The understanding and explanations of the manifestations of adherents' convictions, expressed in response to a specific issue, was thorough and detailed by including all that was relevant to the discussion

- the information that underpinned analysis and evaluation throughout the essay was explicitly cited and originated from credible and authentic sources.

Practices to strengthen

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

- perspectives within a world religion that need to be identified for the Analysing criterion do not have to be the perspectives of denominations or strands within that religion. The perspectives identified can refer to social–cultural, gender or age influences or geographical locations. It is recommended that students signpost their analysis and ensure they discuss more than one perspective

- responses at the upper performance level in the Evaluating and drawing conclusions criterion show an understanding of religious ethics, approaches to ethical decision-making and ethical teachings that are related to the world religion. Clear and detailed judgments that bring together research and examination of the issue should be expressed in response to the initial hypothesis.

Samples

The following excerpts have been included to provide examples of ways religious traditions respond to a contemporary ethical issue. The selected issue is analysed from the perspective of one of the five major world religions.

Excerpt 1 demonstrates analysis of identified perspectives within Islam in response to genetic engineering. Although these may be minority perspectives, they are presented as valid perspectives within Islam. These perspectives are then supported by well-reasoned arguments.

Excerpt 2 shows discerning judgments drawn from an understanding of the religious ethics of Judaism. It provides an analysis of perspectives within the religion that have an impact on adherents and how they engage with ethical decision-making.

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

Excerpt 1

Whilst GE must fulfill certain criteria to be permissible, some prominent religious figures present minority perspectives in its application based on the way they define tampering. Whilst the main cross denominational Islamic organisations (IFA, IOMS, IIFA) agree that changing human appearances and capabilities are considered tapering with creation, Michigan based scholar and cardiologist Tammam Muhammad al-Lud'ami has a different opinion. This Muslim scholar in a majority Shia state believes that GE to "enhance genetic traits of the offspring" is acceptable because Islam promotes producing good descendants (2019). Similarly, Ali Al-Sistani, one of the most senior Shia Imams believes that if done with a positive intention, with "no side effects, then, in principle, there is no problem" with using GE to improve appearance or "achieve superior physical or mental capacity" (n.d.). A Sunni scholar says it is permissible to "restore" organs and bodies but only some believe this includes changing appearance (Daaghi, n.d). Mohammed Ghaly, a professor of Islam and Biomedicine at the Research Centre for Islamic Legislation and Ethics (CILE) in Qatar states that some scholars "see no harm" in using GE to enhance the capabilities of human such as speed, intelligence, strength or height, due the idea that human nature is "evolving and improvable" (Ghaly, 2019). These scholars argue that God gave them access to the knowledge and technology and therefore they should utilise it. However, this argument is considered weak by scholars (Isa, 2019) and goes against the majority opinion.

Excerpt 2

Most Jewish adherents oppose the idea of euthanasia because of the Jewish beliefs surrounding sanctity of life, ownership of one's body and obligation to preserve life. This prohibits the majority of adherents from choosing to partake in euthanasia in their lives, with a small group of Reform Jews arguing that euthanasia should be allowed (Goldburg, 2020). Most Jewish authorities adamantly reject euthanasia of any kind because of key Jewish beliefs (MJL 2018). Thus, these ethics significantly influence the stance adherents take against euthanasia, as majority of adherents follow the stance their tradition takes (Baeke, 2011). Majority of adherents are compelled to reject the notion of euthanasia because it goes against the beliefs regarding sanctity of human life, ownership of one's body and obligation to preserve life. However, a minority of individual Reform rabbis, have advocated for the allowance of euthanasia, arguing that there is a place for it within Judaism, dependent of the situation. Reform Rabbi Peter Knobel, a former head a Reform Judaism rabbinical association, has contended that euthanasia might even be a commendable deed in some circumstances. He points out that, when possible, there is "an obligation to try to alleviate patient's pain and suffering" (MJL, 2018). The minority of Reform Jews who believe euthanasia should be allowed within the tradition raise the idea that "the unequivocal voice of the halakhic literature renders it is most difficult to sustain an argument, based upon the citation of a few stories from the Bible and Talmud" (Prior, 2023). This means that although the Jewish tradition prohibits euthanasia, as Reform Jews, they consider themselves free to ascribe 'new' Jewish meanings to texts, allowing them to depart from tradition when they think it necessary to secure an essential religious or moral value (Goldburg, 2020). In the case of euthanasia, they challenge the majority view, emphasising the need to alleviate suffering, according to the teaching surrounding Tikkun Olam, which motivates adherents to engage in acts of social justice and compassion aimed at alleviating suffering. Furthermore, Rabbi Mark Warsofsky (2017), a Jewish Reform Rabbi, explains that "since tradition suggests it is forbidden to delay unnecessarily the inevitable and imminent death of a terminal patient, it is arguably our obligation to discontinue these therapies," resulting in the death of the patient. Hence,

> Reform Judaism challenges the prevailing view by prioritizing the relief of suffering, suggesting that it becomes a moral obligation to give patients the option of euthanasia, thereby allowing for a more dignified and compassionate end to suffering. Although the religious tradition of Judaism opposes the idea of euthanasia, divergence to this stance is taken by Reform Judaism, however, as the majority of adherents reject euthanasia, the general stance is the most influential when adherents are forming a response to euthanasia.

Additional advice

- To ensure that the correct mark is determined using the ISMG, care needs to be taken to apply the best-fit approach when a student response has characteristics from more than one performance level within a criterion (see Syllabus section 1.3.2).

Internal assessment 3 (IA3)

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	37
Authentication	4
Authenticity	7
Item construction	12
Scope and scale	31

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided a well-defined context, using appropriate scale that enabled students to adhere to the specifications of the assessment (Syllabus section 5.5.1)

- directed students to write an analytical essay that addressed the relationship religion had with the nation–state in a clearly defined time period.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- align with the subject matter of Syllabus section 5.3 where students are directed to 'analyse the ways religion has interacted with the nation–state through one example selected from this section'

- align with the assessment objectives where students are directed to evaluate the interaction between religion and the nation–state and the influence of this interaction in shaping society's response. The shaping of society's response is critical in fully addressing this objective

- narrow the required scale of focus (amount of information being investigated). If the scale is too broad (e.g. requiring investigation from long periods of time), it limits opportunities to develop responses that allow for achievement across all performance levels.

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	0
Language	0
Layout	0
Transparency	2

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- clearly provided a question that aligned to Syllabus section 5.3.3

- presented a context that ensured there was no bias

- used a clear, uncluttered layout with plain language and clear instructions.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- only provide scaffolding where appropriate to give instructions that inform students about processes they could use to complete the response.

Additional advice

- For those schools producing a task on the topic: 'Australian government legislation and the involvement of religious institutions regarding either Australian Aboriginal peoples and spiritualities or Torres Strait Islander peoples and religion', the investigation requires that the focus of the relationship should be between the nation–state of Australia through government legislation and a nominated, specific group of Aboriginal peoples or Torres Strait Islander peoples in a specific context. The topic is not focused on Christian relationships with the nation–state of Australia.

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	95.74	4.26	0	0
2	Analysing	95.74	4.26	0	0
3	Evaluating and drawing conclusions	95.74	4.26	0	0
4	Considering, organising and creating	100.00	0.00	0	0

Effective practices

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

- the focus of the Demonstrating understanding criterion was on how religion had interacted with the nation–state in a particular context. The foregrounding of religion allowed for the development of Criteria 2 and 3, which required an understanding of this interaction. The centrality of religion was particularly evident in the third descriptor in Criterion 2 when analysing perspectives to form arguments and the first descriptor in Criterion 3 regarding the making of judgments

- analysis of perspectives that influenced the interaction between religion and the nation–state was informed by an in-depth understanding of this relationship. Students selected specific events or incidents and explored the various perspectives that examined the religion's dealings with the nation–state situation. The specific nature of the context enabled the analysis to be thorough, using clear examples and reasoned arguments

- responses were succinct and logical with minimal errors, allowing for the hypothesis to be used and referred to throughout the essay.

Practices to strengthen

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

- responses show engagement with the interaction between religion and the nation–state, so judgments can be made about the extent to which that interaction shaped society's response. Judgments should be supported by thorough and justified arguments with detailed reference to the religion and its beliefs and practices, highlighting how these manifest in the context being investigated. This will allow students to achieve the upper performance levels in the Evaluating and drawing conclusions criterion.

Samples

The following excerpts have been included to provide examples of how religion has interacted with the nation–state in a specific context.

Excerpt 1 demonstrates a clear explanation of the relationship between Australian Aboriginal spiritualities and the Australian nation–state. This provides a foundation for the evaluation of the impact of that relationship on the specific society.

Excerpt 2 shows a thorough understanding of the relationship between the nation-state of Tibet and Buddhism to allow for discerning judgments about the extent to which that interaction shaped society's response. Politics, social structures and historical facts were appropriately mentioned in the context of the relationship without undermining the prominence of the religious focus of the task.

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

Excerpt 1

Indigenous Spirituality denotes the framework through which Aboriginal people's connection to Country and community exists. It stems from the perception that all elements of the world, including animate and inanimate entities, are interconnected. This relationship is not anthropocentric but rather one of co-existence and kinship. For the Noongar Peoples in the Perth region, connection to land signifies a close spiritual relationship with the ancestral beings. For instance, Noongar Elder Winnie McHenry recalls being taught by her father, "Don't break a tree, it is there to protect you," illustrating the reverence ascribed to the land and the Noongar tribe's sacred custodianship (Kaartdijin Noongar, 2013). This relationship is also conveyed in the Dreaming (Nytting) stories, foundational to Noongar spirituality, which explain the creation of the world and the moral order of the universe (Kaartdijin Noongar, 2013). Anthropologist William Stanner notes, the Dreaming "is a kind of logos of order transcending everything significant for Aboriginal man…[a] theory of how…the universe became a moral system" (Stanner 1979, p. 24). These stories inform the lore that underpins social and moral order within Noongar communities and are passed down by Noongar elders, who have mastered the skill of orally transmuting these stories inter-generationally. However, despite sharing core spiritual beliefs, the Noongar population comprises fourteen different language groups with distinct customs, beliefs and practices (Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2020). These variations arise due to differing proximities to natural sites; for example, Noongar tribes living further south, and east were dependant on the Karri and Jarrah forests, while those in the southern coastal area relied on hunting turtle and building fish traps (Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2020). Thus, Noongar people's relationship with the land is multifaceted and unique. However, ethnocentric perceptions of policymakers and white settlers led to the labelling of Noongar spirituality as primitive and atheistic, enabling the deterioration of Noongar culture (Tripcony, 2007). This mindset facilitated efforts by missionary institutions and orphanages, aiming to assimilate Noongar Peoples and undermine their heritage.

Excerpt 2

It is clear that Buddhism remained the pre-eminent influence in Tibet, despite external pressure imposed by Chinese authorities, being deeply intertwined with Tibetan cultural identity and social structures which provided resilience and continuity amidst political upheaval. The turbulent events of the 1950s in Tibet, marked by violent confrontations and political upheavals, reveal the profound resilience of Tibetan Buddhism. Despite the oppressive measures imposed by the Chinese state and the resulting devastation, including the destruction of sacred monasteries and immense loss of life, Tibetan Buddhism's enduring values of karmic retribution and selfless action guided the resistance. The Dalai Lama's leadership, grounded in principles of peace and cultural preservation, exemplified a deep commitment to maintaining Tibetan identity amidst adversity. This unwavering dedication, despite immense challenges, highlights Buddhism's pivotal role in preserving the spiritual and cultural fabric of Tibet. In reflecting on these struggles, it becomes clear that the spirit of Tibetan Buddhism continues to inspire and sustain a profound sense of unity and hope, even in the face of overwhelming external pressures.

Additional advice

- Teachers should draw the attention of students to a specific context identifying the details of the nation–state and the religion being investigated.

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 with five short response questions (60 marks).

The assessment required students to answer questions in relation to unseen stimulus items.

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 when they:

- responded to lower-mark questions with what was required, without over-writing or providing more than was necessary. They were clear and succinct with discriminating responses

- structured more detailed responses to address the requirements of the question. Students used clear topic sentences, followed by details that included reference to the stimulus and required religious teachings. A strong concluding sentence was used to finalise the response. This ensured all aspects of the questions and cognitions were addressed

- considered the scenario and stimulus provided when responding to more detailed questions. They were able to incorporate their knowledge and understanding of the religious tradition/s and apply this to the stimulus to answer the question thoroughly. This showed a robust knowledge of content and the ability to apply this to a specific focus

- drew on their knowledge and understanding of each religious tradition to identify differences as instructed.

Practices to strengthen

When preparing students for external assessment, it is recommended that:

- opportunities are provided for students to incorporate stimulus into practice responses to assist in addressing the question requirements, e.g. if students are asked to explain, they can include aspects of the stimulus to assist with the explanation, rather than providing a summary of the stimulus

- students avoid listing everything they know about a specific tradition or teaching and ensure they are referring to these in relation to the question asked. This requires the student to carefully read the question and apply their understanding to a particular statement or scenario provided by the question and/or stimulus

- students practise annotating stimulus items in planning time (i.e. 15 minutes), and consider the information contained in context statements as it often provides the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the stimulus.

Samples

Short response

The following excerpts are in response to Question 1. The question focused on the preamble in the *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam* and beliefs that underpin rights and freedoms integral to Islam. It required students to use stimulus to identify two beliefs and link them to binding divine commands.

Effective student responses:

- identified two Islamic beliefs

- provided accurate descriptions of how the beliefs underpinned rights and freedoms as integral to Islam

- were clear and succinct, including what was required without being verbose.

These excerpts have been included:

- as they both clearly identify two Islamic beliefs

- to show how the beliefs link to the preamble

- because they use stimulus to describe how the beliefs underpin the 'binding divine commands'.

Excerpt 1

The statement that "fundamental rights and freedoms are an integral part of the Islamic religion as they are binding divine commands", are underpinned by the Five Pillars of Islam, and the submission to the will of Allah. Stimulus 1 states that "God loves the charitable", highlighting the significance of adherents performing Zakat (charity) in upholding the fundamental human rights (Al Haqq) of the Islamic community (umma). Furthemore, Surah al-Ma'idah 5:92-93 highlights the importance of "Obey[ing] God and obey[ing] the messenger" and that "If you turn away" you will be punished. This projects the significance of submitting to the Will of Allah and the qadir, as Allah created human rights. Thus, by failing to uphold the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, adherents are rejecting the Will of Allah, thus breaking the Sharia Law. Ultimately, performing Zakat and submitting to the Will of Allah underpin the Islamic understanding of the preamble to the Cairo declaration.

Excerpt 2

The central teaching of the Islamic faith, 'Islam' which means submission to Allah, underpins the encapsulated message of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI) Preamble. As per Stimulus 1, the extract from Surah al-Ma'idah 5:92-3 highlights how Muslims who "believe" and "obey" Allah (Stimulus1) are ultimately aligning themselves with the message of the CDHRI Preamble, as they are abiding to their submission to Allah by fulfilling the "binding divine commands" of Islam (Preamble, CDHRI). Additionally, the teaching 'Greater Jihad', which is the internal struggle to purify one's heart against the lower self, underpins the CDHRI Preamble message as Muslims that remain "righteous" and also "charitable" (Stimulus 1) are upholding an "integral part of the Islamic religion" (Preamble, CDHRI). Therefore, both the doctrines of 'Islam' and 'Greater Jihad' underpin the understanding of the Islamic religious tradition as per the CDHRI Preamble.

The following excerpts are in response to Questions 2a) and 2b). Question 2a) required students to explain a Buddhist's duty to avoid evil, while Question 2b) asked students to explain a Christian's duty to others. Both questions required reference to a teaching from the relevant tradition and to the stimulus provided.

Effective student responses:

- identified a relevant teaching from each religion (Buddhism and Christianity)
- explained why a Buddhist has a duty to avoid evil, and a Christian has a duty to others
- linked to the provided stimulus.

These excerpts have been included to:

- demonstrate how a succinct response can be created
- show how stimulus can be effectively incorporated into a response
- indicate how a clear explanation can succinctly address the question.

Excerpt 1

A Buddhist adherent has a duty to avoid evil as this is how they attain good karma to help them achieve enlightenment, thus reaching Nirvana. The Dhammapada explains that it is ~~evil~~ easy to do things which are harmful (evil) to oneself, but it is difficult to do things good and beneficial to oneself. (32). However, it is through the practice of avoiding evil that one gains good karma to help them achieve enlightenment.

Excerpt 2

Christian adherents have a duty to express agape love to others, which is the practice of loving as God does. Colossians, a ~~too~~ letter in the New Testament, explains that all should "clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." (33). This shows that God bestows the duty of expressing agape love to all humanity to allow a harmonious nature within the community.

The following excerpt is in response to Question 3. The question required students to differentiate between Hindu and Jewish concepts of justice. It required students to identify perspectives and reach conclusions about the importance of identified teachings as a 'foundation of freedom … and peace'.

Effective student responses:

- identified relevant Hindu and Jewish perspectives on justice

- reached conclusions about the significance of Hindu and Jewish teachings and justice as a 'foundation of freedom … and peace'

- explained that Hindu and Jewish concepts and expressions of justice were different.

This excerpt has been included:

- to show how stimulus can be effectively used to identify perspectives and provide evidence when reaching conclusions

- as it clearly identifies and differentiates between Hindu and Jewish concepts of justice

- because it explores Hindu and Jewish teachings as a 'foundation of freedom…and peace' and articulates conclusions regarding their significance in both traditions.

Excerpt 1

From Stimulus 4, the Hindu perspective of justice is one individual control that, if followed, produces the Grace of God. This is encapsulated in the Hindu teaching of karma, where controlling the mind and following one's dharma produces Grace from God, which leads to the purification of the atman. The world view of Hinduism is cyclical, with the ultimate goal being the liberation of the atman with Brahman. Therefore, obtaining good karma is essential to progress towards the freedom of moksha. From Stimulus 4, by obtaining bad karma through destructive actions, 'intellect is destroyed'. It also emphasises how 'desire leads to anger'. Through this anger, one destroys peace, which shows how accruing good karma through following dharma is imperative to maintaining freedom and peace. This is only achieved through the mindfulness of an individual, showing how Hindus perceive justice as a consequence of action. Therefore, the point that 'one is ruined' can be considered justice for bad actions, since it disrupts freedom and peace.

From a Jewish perspective, justice is seen as a return from God for spreading good within the world. This can be summarised in the Jewish teaching of Tikkun Olam, meaning world repair. As God's chosen people through the covenant, Jews have an obligation to spread good in the

world and to live by example. This is emphasised in Stimulus 5, where someone in need must be given 'sufficient for whatever he needs'. By doing this, 'God will bless [them]'. This illustrates justice in a similar way to Hinduism, where it is ordained by a higher power, though is different in the way that Judaism places emphasis on the helping the community, whereas Hinduism emphasises control over oneself. By observing and practising Tikkun Olam, Jews uphold the Covenant with God, which provides foundations of freedom and peace, as discussed in the UDHR. This freedom comes in the form of God's protection, whereas peace is a by product of the Promised Land. This is another difference between the Hindu and Jewish relationship between freedom, peace, and justice. Hinduism again takes on an individual ~~perspective~~ illustration of freedom, where one's mental freedom is jeopardised as justice for bad actions, whereas as Jews are physically rewarded with freedom and peace on a community scale.