

# 2024 VCE Religion and Society external assessment report

## General comments

The 2024 Religion and Society examination was completed well, with many responses demonstrating students' broad understanding of the knowledge required in the study, although supporting details were often missing. Where students were required to draw on skills in their responses, such as describing, evaluating, demonstrating and examining, they often made claims but lacked supporting detail for these claims or else the claims were irrelevant.

Responses in this examination demonstrated that students have a broad understanding of religious traditions and religious denominations in general, as well as of the specific religious traditions or religious denominations. Many students were able to determine whether the question presented to them was intended to be about religions generally or was intended to be answered using the specific knowledge of religious traditions or religious denominations that they had studied.

Most students attempted to incorporate sources from their respective religious traditions or religious denominations when attempting to answer questions. These sources needed to be relevant and accurate to be awarded marks in the examination. Some responses included exceptionally detailed quotes, references, or statistics, but at times these details were unnecessary and were not relevant to the question at hand. Students should consider not only what they have learnt in terms of source material, but why they are adding it into their work. Material that does not expand on the question being asked can be considered irrelevant and will not be awarded marks. Students should not expect to be awarded marks simply for providing quotes they have memorised.

This examination included four questions for which students were required in their responses to clearly state or describe beliefs relevant to the religious tradition or religious denomination that they had studied. Responses to these questions demonstrated a divide between those that selected and described precise beliefs in a religious tradition or religious denomination, and those that referred to the categories of beliefs or vaguely and inaccurately described the beliefs of a religious tradition or religious denomination.

Responses that accurately and precisely described beliefs often referred to:

- the belief that God is the divine lawgiver
- the belief that God is the creator of the world and everything in it
- the belief that Allah is the most merciful
- the belief in the oneness of Allah
- the belief in the Trinity, one God in three persons
- the belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for salvation.

Responses that were vague or inaccurate often referred to:

- the belief in stewardship
- the belief in salvation
- the belief that suffering has meaning
- the belief in the life of Jesus Christ

- the belief in brotherhood/sisterhood
- the belief in creation.

Responses that inaccurately described the belief in the religious tradition or religious denomination could be significantly limited in their ability to engage with the question and enter into a deeper discussion of the way in which those beliefs, and the associated aspects of religion, were relevant to the religious tradition or religious denomination, its members or an individual studied. It is recommended that schools and students carefully select their beliefs in Unit 3 Area of Study 1 to ensure students can be fully prepared for the examination and equipped to offer depth in responding to the study design key knowledge and key skills.

Additionally, there were three questions for which students were required to describe the challenges faced by their nominated religious tradition or religious denomination. Responses were required to discuss three different challenges out of the four that students would have studied throughout the year. Students should prepare one to two very precise sentences on each of the four challenges they have studied throughout the year and be prepared to leverage these sentences in the questions focused on challenges. It is vital for responses to accurately describe the specific situation that the religious tradition or religious denomination faced, as it allows the assessor to understand and engage with the rest of the response and generally leads to a stronger response to the question. Where descriptions of the challenge were vague or inaccurate, the rest of the response could also suffer, as it made it difficult for the assessors to determine clear links between the challenge presented and the rest of the response.

Descriptions of the challenge being presented could have included details such as:

- a clear naming of the challenge as a precise event or situation, such as the Holocaust or the Arian heresies
- the date or time in which the challenge took place, such as 2016, or the 18th and 19th centuries CE
- where the challenge took place, such as in Australia, Europe, England, or even a global challenge/event
- what was being threatened in the tradition, or what opportunity was being presented by the situation, such as a link to a precise belief being threatened, a description of the heresies, or the number of adherents killed.

A number of responses in the examination could have been improved by being precise and accurate with their explanation of the challenge presented. Suggestions for improvement include the following:

- Arian heresies in the Christian tradition (4th century) – explain Arius' teaching precisely and why it was heretical.
- Evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin (19th century) – explain what Darwin's theory proposes about creation and its apparent incompatibility with beliefs regarding creation in religion.
- Riba in the Islamic tradition (7th century to present) – explain the unjust charging of interest on loans and its contradiction of Quarnic verses.
- The heresies of Baruch Spinoza (17th century) in Judaism – explain what Spinoza's philosophy was and how it contradicted the divine authority of the Torah, or his rejection of the immortality of the soul.

This examination required students to know and understand the function of the aspects of religion across all areas of study. In particular, the specific way in which the aspects of religion are involved in challenges, or used in the resolution (or attempted resolution) of challenges; the role of particular aspects of religion in responding to the search for meaning; or the expression of beliefs in the religion, and the way in which aspects of religion are affected in significant life experiences. Students should familiarise themselves with the idea that when beliefs are expressed, they must be experienced through the remaining aspects of religion – texts, rituals, social structures and so on – as is the unique phenomenological experience of religion. When questions ask for responses to describe, identify or explain the way in which a belief is expressed, or how the expressions of beliefs change, or how the expressions of beliefs influence the search for meaning, students should engage with the aspects of religion directly and by naming them.

The range of individuals used in case studies for Unit 3 Area of Study 3:

- Oscar Romero
- Teresa of Kolkata
- CS Lewis
- Elie Wiesel
- Jan Ruff O’Herne
- Pope John Paul II
- Esther Wachsman
- Malcolm X
- Desmond Doss
- Helen Prejean
- Marc Weiner
- Rob Galea
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Cardinal Bernardin.

Some case studies were not successful choices, as there was little to say about how particular beliefs were changed as a result of the significant life experience. Some lower-scoring responses did not utilise case studies effectively to support arguments or evaluations, as they focused on excessive biographical detail and did not identify the chosen figure’s precise religious beliefs.

The range of challenges used for Unit 4 Areas of Study 1 and 2:

- Climate change / environment
- Euthanasia / Voluntary Assisted Dying / Victorian Act
- Artificial contraception
- Riba in Islam
- Women’s ordination
- Same-sex marriage
- Justice for refugees
- Modernity
- Baruch Spinoza
- Protestant Reformation
- the Black Death
- Medieval Anti-Semitism
- Crusades (from Christian or Islamic perspective)
- Islamophobia (Bendigo Mosque)
- Arian Christological Controversy
- The Great Schism
- Heliocentrism/Galileo
- Roman persecution of early Christians
- The Nazi Holocaust (from Jewish or Christian perspective)
- Death of Mohamed
- Early Muslim persecution
- Industrial Revolution – abuses of human dignity

- Darwin's Theory of Evolution or Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection
- Modern-day slavery.

Some of these challenges were not successful choices, as responses indicated confusion over the focus of the challenge. In both Unit 4 Areas of Study 1 and 2, the focus of the challenge is the religious tradition, not an individual or group. Also, the religious tradition or religious denomination is the focus for discussion of the stances, the supporting responses, and the consequences of the religious tradition or religious denomination. The knowledge and understanding of some challenges presented in responses seemed limited by insufficient research. There were also factual errors and, for the detailed challenge of Area of Study 2, a lack of relevant wider context. Some challenges were so broad over time and place that responses made unsupported overgeneralisations rather than staying with a focused timeframe in order to address the question. In their responses, students are recommended to limit the timeframe to the stated historical or contemporary period. This requires selecting content from their broad study that best fits the question.

## Specific information

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

This report provides sample answers, or an indication of what answers may have been included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

## Section A

### Question 1a.

Mark	0	1	2	3	Average
%	6	30	40	25	1.9

This was a general question. Responses were to be from the perspective of religion generally.

Responses that were completely from the perspective of a specific tradition received no marks. Responses that included a mixture of general and tradition-specific points received marks for the general points, assuming they were a plausible interpretation of the question.

Responses had to show understanding of the difference between the nature of human life and the purpose of human life.

Some responses put nature and purpose together and still made valid points about both.

Students needed to be deliberate in saying what religion's purpose was in answering questions about the nature and purpose of human life.

Points that responses could have made (not exhaustive) included the following:

- The purpose that religions may have in answering questions about the nature of human life is to provide
  - an understanding of the origins of human life
  - an understanding of the dignity of human life.

- The purpose that religions may have in answering questions about the purpose of human life is to provide
  - reasons for living
  - direction for how humans should live
  - spiritual direction.

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

*Religion provides a meta narrative that provides adherents with an understanding or a way to make sense of the origins, meaning and beginning of their existence on earth. Religious traditions also provide ethical principles and moral teachings that guide human behaviour to be underpinned by good behaviour choices, providing meaning to individual life and supporting the cohesion of society in general.*

## Question 1b.

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	17	19	30	23	11	1.9

This was a religious tradition or religious denomination-specific question. Responses needed to accurately name the tradition. Responses needed to clearly state the selected belief, make at least two points and be theologically correct.

The stated belief had to be about the nature and purpose of human life according to the tradition named. This could be expressed as a connected statement or as two separate statements.

The belief had to be relevant to the purposes of religion stated in Question 1a; the link needed to be clear.

Some responses answered this question incorrectly by discussing religion generally.

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

*In the Catholic Tradition, adherents are offered that their nature is derived from being created in the image of a loving God. This is exemplified where 'God is love', according to 1 John 4:8, and God created human beings in his 'image' and that of his 'likeness' (Genesis 1:26). This, therefore, provides purpose in the meaning of existence, where humans have been created for love. As such, the call to 'love one another as I have loved you' (John 15:12) underpins the roles humans should provide on earth to fulfil their designed nature.*

## Question 2

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	15	32	26	22	2.5

This was a general question. Responses were to be from the perspective of religion generally.

Responses that were completely from the perspective of a specific religion received no marks. Responses that included a mix of general and tradition-specific points received marks for the general points, assuming they were accurate.

The focus of this question was on why religion generally takes stances to challenges; it was not about the different types of stances.

Each of the two reasons needed an explanatory statement.

Points that could have been made (not exhaustive) included the following.

Religions take stances to challenges:

- to avoid losing key members of their leadership, leading to splits in the religious community
- to prevent losing groups within their community who might create their own variations of the religion, or leave entirely, fragmenting the original religion
- to adapt their theology to incorporate a new way of understanding and practising the religion
- to make changes to include those ideas in their thought and practice to ensure their continued existence
- to encourage their adherents to free up discussion about the challenge
- to prevent loss of respect for the leaders and confusion among adherents
- to maintain integrity, authenticity and continuity of the tradition
- to safeguard the heritage of the tradition.

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

*1. A religious tradition may take a stance on a challenge to protect the reputation of the institution. Arising ethical and moral issues, from an everchanging society, may compel religious traditions to position themselves with the change to remain credible within wider society.*

*2. A stance may also be taken to retain the status quo. While being living institutions in society, religious traditions may seek to uphold their fundamental beliefs, teachings and moral codes, thus holding the opinion of being against any change that may be presented from society.*

### Question 3

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	11	23	20	23	10	4	2.8

This is a general question. Responses were to be from the perspective of religion generally.

Responses that were completely from the perspective of a specific tradition received no marks. Responses that included a mix of general and tradition-specific points received marks for the general points, assuming they were accurate.

The emphasis of the responses should have been on how the interpretation of the significant life experience caused beliefs to be expressed differently.

Points that responses could have made (not exhaustive) included the following:

- The experience may be interpreted as a spiritual experience that confirms one's beliefs; this may even lead to increasing one's faith and commitment. These could be expressed through increased attendance at rituals, increased personal prayer, and involvement in social and religious communal activities.
- If the experience is interpreted as the person being punished or abandoned by their Ultimate Reality, previous understanding of held beliefs could be negated. This may lead to questioning or even rejection of those beliefs, which may weaken the person's faith, leading to less commitment. These could be expressed through decreasing involvement in rituals and personal prayer, and distancing from the religious community.
- If the experience is interpreted as the person being rewarded by their Ultimate Reality, existing beliefs may be strengthened. As a result, this may mean a person is inspired to follow the rituals more often, and/or to delve deeper into the religious texts and ethical guidelines of their tradition.
- Even a bad significant life experience may be interpreted positively, leading a person to be inspired by their beliefs to a desire for a new way of life, expressed in greater involvement in the social structure of the religious tradition and passing on lessons learnt from the positive interpretation of the experience.

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

*1. If adherents interpret a significant life experience as a calling by the ultimate reality towards a devout life/lifestyle they may increase and strengthen the expression of their beliefs. This may involve partaking in an increased number of rituals or going on a pilgrimage to a sacred place revered in their tradition.*

*2. If adherents interpret a significant life experience as that they have been abandoned by the ultimate reality, they may lose faith in beliefs, interact less with the various social structures of the tradition, engage less in rituals or find themselves unable to enact a spiritual experience.*

## Question 4a.

Mark	0	1	2	3	Average
%	47	18	17	18	1.1

This was a general question. Responses were to be from the perspective of religion generally.

Responses that were completely from the perspective of a specific tradition received no marks. Responses that included a mix of general and tradition-specific points received marks for the general points, assuming they were accurate.

The focus of this question was on the sources of stances – that is, what religions use to decide on a stance. The question was not about the types of stances.

Points that responses could have made (not exhaustive) included:

- beliefs
- authority structures
- official teachings
- rulings of religious law
- rulings of secular law
- tradition
- key individuals
- community consensus
- interfaith dialogue
- ethical principles.

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

*1. The beliefs of the tradition. A religion will refer to their beliefs to determine their stance to a challenge as the beliefs are the basis of the religion.*

*2. The social structure of the tradition. A religion will refer to the social structure which consists of well-educated leaders/elders to determine a stance as they can use their knowledge.*

*3. The texts of the tradition. A religion will refer to the texts which contain the history and religious beliefs of the tradition to determine their stance.*

## Question 4b.

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	58	15	15	9	4	0.9

This was a general question. Responses were to be from the perspective of religion generally.

Responses that were completely from the perspective of a specific tradition received no marks. Responses that included a mix of general and tradition-specific points received marks for the general points, assuming they were accurate.

Responses had to make a clear link between the chosen source from the response to Question 4a. with the explanation of how that source could contribute to a stance against the challenge.

There had to be two such links stated in the response.

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

*The social structure and authoritative figures of a religion can provide direction and inform the adherents on the particular stance taken. They may draw on their power and knowledge to reaffirm key theological beliefs and teachings to act as a role-model for adherents to follow and take that same stance against challenges. The hierarchical structure of religious tradition also consolidate and create a communal identity guiding adherents to believe in those with the same identity and thus lead them into taking a stance against a challenge.*

## Question 5

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	8	22	25	24	12	5	3.2

This was a general question. Responses were to be from the perspective of religion generally.

Responses that were completely from the perspective of a specific tradition received no marks. Responses that included a mix of general and tradition-specific points received marks for the general points, assuming they were accurate.

Responses that stated or implied only one type of text (such as sacred texts) or named specific texts did not receive full marks.

The aspect texts should be understood as the numerous forms of communication used by religions (various written forms, visual or musical).

There was no need to relate statements to specific types of texts. Responses could be general for all texts.

Responses had to address how texts express meaning. This could be as two points or one detailed point.

Responses had to address how texts respond to the search for meaning. This could be as two points or one detailed point.

The points about expressing meaning and about responding to the search for meaning could be made separately or combined.

Points that responses could have made (not exhaustive) included the following:

- Texts express meaning by stating religious beliefs, ethical responsibilities, moral behaviour.
- Texts express meaning by elaborating, explaining and critically commenting on religious beliefs, ethical responsibilities, moral behaviour.

- Texts express meaning by informing, guiding, promoting, evaluating, inspiring adherents to understand the teachings, beliefs and practices of religions.
- Texts respond to the search for meaning by providing answers to existential questions.
- Texts respond to the search for meaning by providing accounts of people who model living the beliefs and ethics of religions.
- Texts respond to the search for meaning by providing inspiring words, music, song, images that demonstrate how answers to the big questions of existence.
- Texts respond to the search for meaning by providing a record of the history of the tradition and stories of the tradition's origin that establish its identity.

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

*Texts are the literature of the religion that can be oral, written or artistic; texts contain the history, laws, sacred stories and beliefs of a religious tradition. Texts can help teach, instruct and guide members on their quest to meaning in life. Texts provide acknowledgements of beliefs; this can enable and adherent to live a meaningful life due to the texts providing ethical principles, moral values and codes of behaviour that shape a person. Texts also validate beliefs; which in turn help provide answers to the great questions of life, the existential questions such as, where do we come from? What happens when we die? Is god real? This provides a frame of reference to help understand the world. Texts also provide comfort in the knowledge that there is a higher being or power and an ultimate reality, that is beyond oneself.*

## Section B

### Question 1

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	5	4	9	11	16	13	14	11	8	5	3	4.9

This was a religious tradition or religious denomination–specific question.

Two different religious beliefs of the selected tradition had to be stated clearly with accurate theology. Responses could use the same ritual for both beliefs. Either the same or different features of that ritual could be used to demonstrate each belief.

If two or more rituals were used, they may have been described in less detail but nevertheless adequately described expression of the beliefs.

No sources were requested in this question, therefore no marks were specifically allocated.

Many responses began with a lengthy definition of rituals, which was unnecessary for the question and did not earn marks.

Responses that did not correctly state the two beliefs were not able to clearly show how the named ritual or rituals demonstrated the belief.

Often ethical principles, ethical codes or social justice teachings were claimed as religious beliefs.

Many responses claimed that a named ritual showed a chosen belief but did not provide detailed description of the words or actions within the ritual that clearly demonstrated the belief.

Some students chose rituals that were not appropriate for their stated beliefs.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response:

*In the Catholic Christian tradition, the aspect of rituals express the belief in the incarnation – that the ultimate reality, assumed human form in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine. The annual ritualistic celebration of*

*Christmas, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December expresses the belief in the incarnation through the Gospel read during Mass; a version of the nativity story from Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, that describe the birth of Jesus; the way in which he entered the moral real. The belief in the incarnation is also celebrated through the Eucharistic ritual, which commemorates the action of the human Christ breaching bread with his disciples during the Last Supper, by sharing in the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ, thus expressing that God did take on human form, and continues to do so in the celebration of the Eucharist.*

*The belief in the resurrection – that Jesus rose from the dead, is also expressed through various rituals. The celebration of Easter expresses this symbolically through the ritual of lighting the Pascal Candle, representing that Jesus had come again into the world as a 'light' for the renewal and salvation of humanity. During the Easter celebration the priest exclaims "Christ is risen Alleluia," expressing the faith in the resurrection through a statement. It is also expressed through the proclamation of the prayer Nicene Creed "he rose again on the third day," which is proclaimed at every mass, a communal expression of the belief of the resurrection.*

## Question 2

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	14	8	12	16	15	13	11	7	5	3.5

This was a religious tradition or religious denomination–specific question.

The focus of this question was the beliefs of a particular tradition about the relationship between humans.

Responses had to contain clear, concise and theologically accurate statements of at least two religious beliefs about the relationship between humans.

Responses also had to provide an accurate and clear explanation of how the stated beliefs about the relationship between humans contributed to the search for meaning.

Sources were required. These had to be relevant to the points made in the responses and be correctly cited. To correctly cite secondary sources, generally the name of the author, title of text and page number must be included; for primary sources, citations must include the name of the text, chapter and verse.

Students are reminded that one or two words framed by inverted commas, with no cited reference, does not constitute an acceptable quotation.

Many responses did not state beliefs about the relationship between humans. Often ethical principles, ethical codes or social justice teachings about how humans should behave were claimed as the religious beliefs about the relationship between humans.

Explanations of how the stated beliefs (whether or not they were about the relationship between humans) contributed to the search for meaning were often vague, minimal or exaggerated.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response:

*The Jewish tradition holds the belief that the relationship between humans should be one of love and helpfulness, because humans are made in the image of God and must act in line with a God of love. This belief contributes to the search for meaning as it connects with ethical teachings such as "to love thy neighbour as thy love themselves" (Leviticus 19:18) and provides individuals with ethical guidelines to follow.*

*Additionally, the Jewish tradition holds the belief that G-d directly commanded humans to have a loving relationship with each other as a means of connecting to Him. The importance of this relationship of love is shown in the ethical code of the decalogue, 5 of the commandments are laws between humans e.g. "Do not kill" (number 6 of the 10 commandments)*

*The Jewish tradition also holds the belief that humanity's relationship with one another should be respectful, as "a vehicle to connect with G-d" (Rabbi Norman Lamm). As humanity is G-d's creation and humans are created in the image of G-d, imago dei, disrespecting one another is disrespecting G-d Himself.*

### Question 3

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	5	8	13	15	14	14	11	9	5	3	4.9

This was a religious tradition or religious denomination–specific question.

To guide students in their choice of the challenge, the instruction specified that if the same challenge was used in Questions 3 and 5, only one of those responses would receive marks.

Responses had to provide clear, concise and accurate identification of the challenge, the tradition, and the stance(s) and supporting responses taken by the tradition.

The focus of this question was an evaluation of how the stance(s) and supporting responses influenced the challenge, the tradition and the wider society; all three had to be addressed in the evaluation.

Sources were required. These had to be relevant to the points made in the responses and be correctly cited. To correctly cite secondary sources, generally the name of the author, title of text and page number must be included; for primary sources, citations must include the name of the text, chapter and verse.

Students are reminded that one or two words framed by inverted commas, with no cited reference, does not constitute an acceptable quotation.

The requirements of the question indicated that the challenge selected should have been the one studied in detail for Unit 4 Area of Study 2. Some students chose one of the challenges from Unit 4 Area of Study 1 and were unable to address the question adequately.

Many responses went into unnecessary introductory detail about the context of the challenge before beginning to answer the question.

High-scoring responses took a systematic approach, outlining one stance, its supporting responses and evaluating the influence upon the challenge, the tradition and the wider society, then proceeding to do the same with any other stance and its supporting responses.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response:

*A significant challenge to Shia Islam has been the ongoing criticism of enforced hijab in Iran since 1979 however it was intensified in September 2022 following the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody for improper hijab. In response to this., Shia authorities and the Islamic republic including Ayatollah Khomeini and Khomeini have taken a stance strongly against, defending their enforcement of hijab for all women in Iran. They reference Quran verse 33:59 which explains that the wearing of hijab ensures women are recognized as "virtuous and not harassed." As a result of their strong stance, backlash and criticism over the enforcement of hijab has increased with many calling the regime out for their use of violent and deadly measures. This has intensified the challenge itself leading to increased concerns for safety of women in Iran and backlash on the ethics of the authorities/regimes.*

*As a result of the stance taken, there has been an increased division among Shiites between those that support the Islamic republic's enforcement of the hijab and those that go against and speak out against it. This is leading to a growing schism within Shia Islam itself as individuals question the ethical values of the religion that are being used to justify brutal defense of the stance.*

*The wider society have witnessed the brutal measures taken by the Islamic republic including beatings in attempt to enforce their stance. This has led to increased protests worldwide demanding for an end to the brutal regime/enforcement as well as increasing questioning on the beliefs and ethics held by Shia Islam. This has led to an increase in negative views surrounding Islam as a whole.*

## Question 4

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	6	3	8	12	15	14	14	11	8	5	2	4.9

This was a religious tradition or religious denomination–specific question.

The religious beliefs are those of the person studied. Their understanding of those beliefs may not be in theological agreement with the official beliefs of the person’s religion.

Only one significant life experience was to be addressed.

Responses required:

- a clear, concise and accurate statement of the adherent and their tradition, and of the ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘where’ of their significant life experience
- a clear and accurate statement of the particular religious beliefs of the person involved in the significant life experience
- a clear, explicit and accurate demonstration of how faith in those particular religious beliefs was affected; this was the focus of the question.

Two different terms were to be addressed in this question:

- beliefs (ideas about)
- faith in those ideas (beliefs).

The definition of faith was provided: faith means to have trust, confidence and assured acceptance of the beliefs.

Sources were required. These had to be relevant to the points made in the responses and be correctly cited. To correctly cite secondary sources, generally the name of the author, title of text and page number must be included; for primary sources, citations must include the name of the text, chapter and verse.

Students are reminded that one or two words framed by inverted commas, with no cited reference, does not constitute an acceptable quotation.

A significant number of responses told the life story of their person, and may have only addressed the question with one or two overgeneralised sentences towards the end of the response.

In many responses the particular beliefs of the person were not identified.

Some responses incorrectly used the heading of a category of belief from Unit 3 Area of Study 1 as a belief.

Despite the definition of faith being provided in the examination, the terms ‘belief’, ‘faith’ and ‘religion’ were often used interchangeably, which meant many responses lacked clarity and meaning.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response:

*Marc Weiner is an American Orthodox Jew who endured a negative significant life experiencing commencing in July when his son Avi was born with multiple birth defects and eventually died at age 55. This event was significant for Weiner as he describes it as a “tragedy” that cause a profound shift in his beliefs, expressions and faith.*

*Before this significant life experience, Weiner maintained a steadfast confidence in the belief that God is immanent, meaning that He is close and constantly pervading the lives of his creations, serving as a “rock” (Adon Olam) in times of distress. Weiner frequently engaged with this belief through his performance of the ritual of prayer. Additionally, Weiner had assured acceptance that God is the lawgiver, who acts as a divine source or morality who “rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked” (Shema).*

*During his significant life experience, when Avi was born with “severe medical problems”, Weiner’s faith in God’s immanence initially intensified as he hoped that an immanent God would listen to his prayers and improve Avi’s condition. However, when Avi died, Weiner felt confused about God’s immanence, causing him to question how a loving God could do this and thus his relationship with God became “really strained.” Further, Weiner lost his faith in his belief that God is the just lawgiver because he could not comprehend how God could inflict such suffering on his innocent son. Consequently, He dropped “virtually all religious observances.” Yet Weiner continued to keep kosher (dietary requirements) illustrating that his faith wasn’t entirely undermined.*

## Question 5

To guide students in their choice of the two different challenges for this question, the examination instructed that the challenges used in Section B Question 5a. and Question 5b. must be different from the challenge used in Section B Question 3.

The requirements of this question indicated that it referred to the challenges studied in Unit 4 Area of Study 1. Each of these challenges had to have a main focus of theology, ethics or continued existence.

### Question 5a.

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	12	8	20	21	19	12	8	3.0

This was a religious tradition or religious denomination–specific question.

Responses required clear and accurate statement of the tradition and of the theological nature of the challenge – that is, the challenge was about particular beliefs held by the tradition.

The question then focused on an explanation of how particular aspects (other than beliefs) were involved.

Aspects (other than beliefs) could be the focus of the challenge and/or the means of response to the challenge.

No sources were requested in this question, therefore no marks were specifically allocated.

Many responses did not clearly identify the theology – that is, the religious beliefs that are the ideas involved in the selected challenge. Some only named aspects (other than beliefs) without explaining how they were involved in the challenge.

Some responses, after identifying the theological nature of the challenge, continued to only explain the involvement of the aspect beliefs, repeating information.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response:

*A theological challenge to 4th century CE Christianity was created by Arius. It was over the belief about the nature of the Son in the Trinitarian God (three coequal persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the one God). Arius said that the Son, being begotten by the Father, was not of the same substance (Homoousios). He was not co eternal or co equal with the Father.*

*The aspect of texts (scripture and theological writings) was used by both sides in this challenge. The Church leadership at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE created a new text the Nicene Creed to deny the views of Arius. It stated the official belief about the Father and the Son “true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father” (Nicene Creed).*

### Question 5b.

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	16	9	20	21	17	10	6	2.7

This was a religious tradition or religious denomination–specific question.

Responses required a clear and accurate statement of the tradition and of the ethical nature of the challenge – that is, the challenge was about particular ethical principles, moral values, ethical laws or teachings held by the tradition.

The question then focused on an explanation of how particular aspects (other than ethics) were involved.

Aspects (other than ethics) could be the focus of the challenge and/or the means of response to the challenge.

No sources were requested in this question, therefore no marks were specifically allocated.

Many responses did not clearly identify the ethics (ethical principles, moral values, ethical laws or teachings) involved in the selected challenge. Some only named aspects (other than ethics) without explaining how they were involved in the challenge.

Some responses, after identifying the ethical nature of the challenge, continued to only explain the involvement of the aspect ethics, repeating information.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response:

*An ethical challenge of Homosexuality experienced by the Jewish tradition began during the American civil rights movement in the 1960s and is still deemed a significant challenge to the Jewish tradition despite the Australian plebiscite into homosexual marriages in 2017. In the challenge of Homosexuality the ethical command to "Love thy neighbour as you would yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), comes into direct conflict with the ethical teaching "you shall not lie with a women as you would with a man" (Leviticus 18:22). The ethical confliction between Leviticus 19:18 and Leviticus 18:22 caused ethical debate amongst different denominations of Judaism.*

*The challenge of Homosexuality affected the aspect of rituals and symbols, as the ritualistic Jewish wedding ceremony was changed by the Reform movement to adapt to homosexual couples, including adapting the ketubah, the Jewish wedding agreement (aspect of texts). The Neo and Ultra-Orthodox denominations kept the traditional ritualistic Jewish wedding ceremonies and texts, allowing only the ritual to take place with heterosexual couples.*