



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2008

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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General Introduction

1.1 The Syllabus

The syllabus for Religious Education at Leaving Certificate, Higher and Ordinary levels, was introduced in September 2003 and was first examined in 2005. Initially the syllabus was introduced on a phased basis for candidates that had been involved in the phased introduction of the Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus. From September 2005 all schools could offer the Religious Education Leaving Certificate syllabus. The syllabus is available on the website of the Department of Education and Science (www.education.ie) under the topic headed: 'Curriculum, Syllabus & Teaching Guides'.

The syllabus content is structured around the following three units of study:

Unit One Section A The Search for Meaning and Values

Unit Two Any two of:

Section B Christianity: Origins and Contemporary Expressions

Section C World Religions

Section D Moral Decision-Making

Unit Three Any one of the following (excluding the two sections designated for coursework in a given year):

Section E Religion and Gender

Section F Issues of Justice and Peace

Section G Worship, Prayer, and Ritual

Section H The Bible: Literature and Sacred Text

Section I Religion: the Irish Experience

Section J Religion and Science

Each year two sections from Unit Three of the syllabus are designated by the State Examinations Commission for coursework. The coursework component is designed to allow candidates

- Opportunities for personal engagement on an issue of interest or concern
- Develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes outlined in the objectives of the section designated for coursework
- Engage in extended research, analysis and reflection on a chosen topic
- Develop skills of research, analysis, evaluation, critical thinking, communication and reflection (*Religious Education Leaving Certificate Guidelines for Teachers* - NCCA page 142).

Each of the syllabus sections includes a statement of:

- Aims, which set out the broad purpose of the section and show how the section is related to the overall aims of the syllabus
- Sub-sections, each of which contains:

- Objectives, which give an indication of the direction from which the content should be approached
- Topics and descriptions of content, which present the areas of study
- Learning outcomes, which indicate the expected depth and breadth of engagement with the topics.

The syllabus is offered at both Ordinary Level and Higher Level. The objectives, topics, descriptions of content and learning outcomes that are designated only for candidates taking the Higher Level, are printed in black type within each section of the syllabus.

1.2 The Examination

The assessment of Religious Education in the Leaving Certificate examination is based on the aims, objectives, and learning outcomes of each syllabus section. Candidates' personal faith commitment and/or affiliation to a particular religious grouping are not subject to assessment for national certification. At both Ordinary Level and at Higher Level, the examination consists of two components:

- (a) A terminal written examination paper with a mark allocation of 320 marks (80%)
- (b) Coursework with a mark allocation of 80 marks (20%).

Marks for the terminal written examination paper and the coursework component are combined to give the candidate's final mark which is awarded out of a total of 400 marks.

The Written Examination Paper

At Ordinary Level and Higher Levels, all sections of the syllabus, apart from the sections designated for coursework in a given year, appear on the examination paper. As outlined in the 2004 sample papers, the terminal written examination at both Ordinary Level and Higher Levels consist of the following three units:

- Unit One which contains questions designed to assess aims, objectives, and outcomes from Section A (The Search for Meaning and Values) of the syllabus. Ordinary Level candidates are required to answer two of three questions given in this unit, each of which carries a total of 40 marks. Higher Level candidates are required to answer one of two questions given in unit one, each of which carries a total 80 marks.
- Unit Two has questions designed to assess aims, objectives, and outcomes from syllabus Section B (Christianity: Origins and Contemporary Expressions), Section C (World Religions) and Section D (Moral Decision-Making). Both Ordinary Level and Higher Level candidates are required to answer questions on two of these three syllabus sections. The questions in each section of unit two carry a total of 80 marks and the entire unit carries a total of 160 marks.

- Unit Three consists of questions designed to assess aims, objectives, and outcomes from four sections in Unit Three of the syllabus, excluding the two sections designated for coursework in any given year. Both Ordinary Level and Higher Level candidates are required to answer questions on one of the four sections in unit three of the examination paper. The questions in unit three of the papers at Ordinary Level and Higher Level are marked out of a total of 80 marks.

The Ordinary Level paper is of 2 hours duration, while the Higher Level paper is 2½ hours.

The Coursework Component

Coursework is a mandatory component of the Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus and accounts for 20% of the examination. In the first year of the Leaving Certificate Religious Education course, a list of prescribed titles for coursework is made available by the State Examinations Commission in a circular to the management authorities of second level schools and posted on the State Examinations Commission website (www.examinations.ie). A choice of two titles is given for each of the designated sections from unit three of the syllabus and candidates are required to submit coursework on one of the prescribed titles.

In December 2006, the State Examinations Commission issued the prescribed titles for Leaving Certificate Religious Education 2008 (Circular 104/06). Candidates were required to base their coursework on one of the following titles taken from either Section G or Section J of the syllabus:

Section G: Worship, Prayer and Ritual

- Human beings have been described as ‘symbol makers’. Profile the importance of symbol making for people in secular and religious life today.
- ◆ Buddhism ◆ Christianity ◆ Hinduism ◆ Islam ◆ Judaism
An exploration of the features which mark a particular place as sacred for one of the above major world religions.

Section J: Religion and Science

- The ‘God of the Gaps’ arises when God is inserted into a situation which seems to have no reasonable explanation. Research one such case and explore the implications of this understanding of God for the relationship between religion and science.
- Science and religion need each other as guides in their search for truth. An investigation of the evidence for this statement in the approach taken by science and religion to either the debate about origins *or* questions about the beginning and ending of life.

Titles for coursework are common to Ordinary Level and Higher Level. A candidate’s Coursework Booklet is examined at the level at which he/she took the examination.

In the final year of the Leaving Certificate course, the State Examinations Commission provides school authorities with pro-forma booklets for the submission of the coursework component. Each candidate is required to give a summary of his/her investigation of the title chosen from the prescribed list by addressing a number of points set out in Part A of the coursework booklet. Through the treatment of questions set out in Part B of the coursework booklet, each candidate is expected to give his/her personal reflection on the learning, skills and experience gained through undertaking coursework on the chosen title.

The recommended range of length for completing the coursework booklet at Ordinary Level is within a minimum of 1,000 and a maximum of 1,500 words. At Higher Level the recommended range of length is a minimum of 1,200 and a maximum of 1,500 words (*Religious Education Leaving Certificate Guidelines for Teachers* - NCCA page 143). Candidates wishing to illustrate their coursework, may do so in the blank spaces provided at the foot of each page. All graphics or images used by a candidate must be drawn or scanned directly onto the booklet. Candidates are not permitted to attach or affix material to the coursework booklet. When complete, the coursework booklet is sealed by the candidate in a tamper-proof envelope supplied by the State Examinations Commission and submitted on or before a designated date prior to the written examination.

1.3 The Candidature

The total number of candidates taking Ordinary Level and Higher Level Leaving Certificate Religious Education 2005-2008 is illustrated in the following table:

Year	Total Number of Leaving Certificate candidates	Number (and %) of total LC candidature taking Religious Education	Number (and %) of Ordinary Level Religious Education candidates	Number (and %) of Higher Level Religious Education candidates
2005	54,073	80 (0.1%)	4 (5%)	76 (95%)
2006	50,955	352 (0.7%)	62 (17.6%)	290 (82.4%)
2007	50,873	535 (1.1%)	118 (22.1%)	417 (77.9%)
2008	52,144	778 (1.5%)	168 (21.6%)	610 (78.4%)

Table 1: Number (and %) of Leaving Certificate candidates taking Religious Education 2005 – 2008.

Exemplar materials, demonstrating the standard applied in the different components of the examination are appended to the end of this report. This report should be read in conjunction with the examination papers and the marking schemes for 2008. These are available for downloading from the website of the State Examinations Commission at www.examinations.ie.

2. Ordinary Level

2.1 Introduction

The 2008 Ordinary Level Terminal Written Examination Paper (320 marks)

Unit One (80 marks)

This unit contains three questions designed to assess aims, objectives, and outcomes from Section A (The Search for Meaning and Values) of the syllabus. Candidates are required to answer any two of the three questions. All of the questions are divided into two parts which candidates are required to answer. Question 1 consists of part (a) and part (b) each of which carry 20 marks. Part (a) of question 2 and question 3 is divided into two sub-parts each of which carry 10 marks and part (b) carries 20 marks.

Unit Two (160 marks)

This unit of the examination paper consists of questions designed to assess aims, objectives, and outcomes from Section B (Christianity: Origins and Contemporary Expressions), Section C (World Religions) and Section D (Moral Decision-Making) of the syllabus. Candidates are required to answer questions on any two of the three sections in this unit of the examination paper. Each section in unit two of the examination paper is marked out of a total of 80 marks. All of the sections are divided into three parts which candidates are required to answer.

In Section B part (a) candidates are required to answer i) and ii) each of which carry 10 marks. Part (b) of this section carries 20 marks and gives candidates the choice of answering one of the three options given in the question. Part (c) is worth 40 marks.

In Section C part (a) carries 20 marks and gives candidates the choice of answering from two of the four options given in the question. Part (b) is sub-divided into i) which carries 10 marks and ii) which carries 20 marks. Part (c) is worth 30 marks.

In Section D candidates are given a choice of answering one of the two options given in part (a) of the question which carries 20 marks. Part (b) and part (c) carry 30 marks each.

Unit Three (80 marks)

Candidates are required to answer any one of the four sections in unit three of the paper. The questions in this unit are designed to assess syllabus aims, objectives, and outcomes from Section E (Religion and Gender), Section F (Issues of Justice and Peace), Section H (The Bible: Literature and Sacred Text) or Section I (Religion: The Irish Experience).

In Section E candidates are required to answer one of parts (a), (b), (c) or (d) each of which carries 80 marks.

Section F is divided into part (a) and part (b) each of which carries 40 marks.

In Section H part (a) candidates are required to answer i) and ii) each of which carry 20 marks. Part (b) of this section carries 40 marks.

Candidates who choose Section I are required to answer part (a) which carries 40 marks and either part (b) i or part (b) ii which carry 40 marks each.

2.2 Performance of Candidates

The number and percentage of candidates achieving each grade in Ordinary Level Religious Education in 2008 and in the previous three years is illustrated in the following table:

Year	Grade:	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG	Total
2005	No.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	4
	%									25	25		25	25		100%
2006	No.	0	1	0	1	3	3	3	7	11	8	14	9	2	0	62
	%	0	1.6	0	1.6	4.8	4.8	4.8	11.3	17.7	12.9	22.6	14.5	3.2	0	100%
2007	No.	0	8	5	8	13	7	13	14	8	13	12	9	8	0	118
	%	0	6.8	4.2	6.8	11	5.9	11	11.9	6.8	11	10.2	7.6	6.8	0	100%
2008	No.	1	12	3	9	18	5	16	31	5	14	30	15	6	3	168
	%	0.6	7.1	1.8	5.4	10.7	3	9.5	18.5	3	8.3	17.9	8.9	3.6	1.8	100%

Table II: The number and percentage of Ordinary Level candidates achieving each grade 2005 – 2008.

The percentage of candidates who obtained A grades, A+B+C grades, D grades and E+F+NG grades in Leaving Certificate Religious Education Ordinary Level 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 is shown in the following table:

Year	No. of Candidates	A %	A+B+C %	D %	E+F+NG %
2005	4	0	0	50	50
2006	62	1.6	28.9	53.2	17.7
2007	118	6.8	57.6	28	14.4
2008	168	7.7	56.6	29.2	14.3

Table III: Summary of outcomes by grade for Leaving Certificate Religious Education (Ordinary Level) 2005 - 2008.

The 2008 Ordinary Level results are from a total candidature of 168 which is a 43% increase on the 2007 figure. While the grades achieved by candidates in 2008 are within range of those achieved in recent years, the change in cohort has contributed to the increasing spread of grades illustrated in the following table:

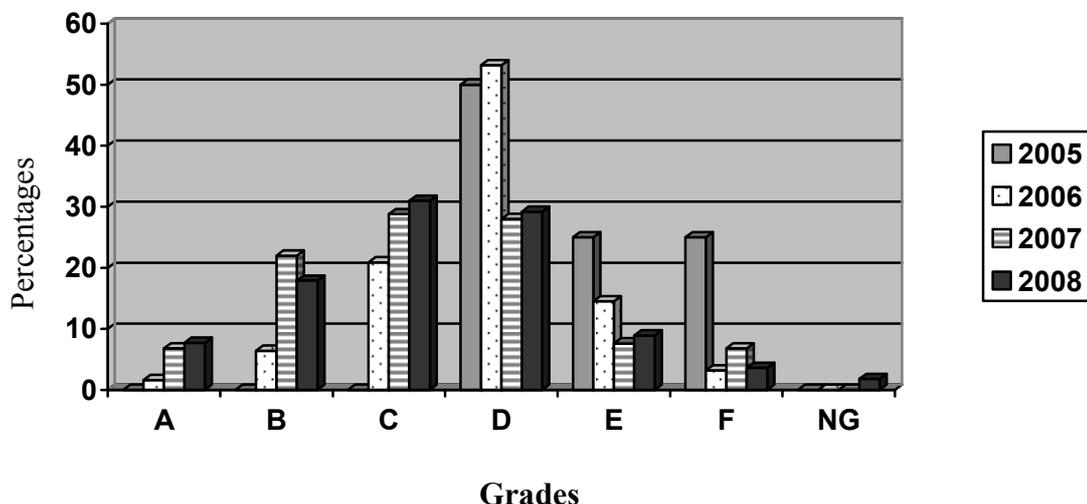


Table IV: Distribution of grades for Leaving Certificate Religious Education Ordinary Level 2005 - 2008.

The gender breakdown of the 2008 results in Ordinary Level Religious Education is illustrated in the following table:

Grade	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG	Total
Total No.	1	12	3	9	18	5	16	31	5	14	30	15	6	3	168
Total %	0.6	7.1	1.8	5.4	10.7	3	9.5	18.5	3	8.3	17.9	8.9	3.6	1.8	100%
No. Female	1	9	2	5	15	3	7	21	4	9	20	4	4	1	105
% Female	1	8.6	1.9	4.8	14.3	2.9	6.7	20.0	3.8	8.6	19.0	3.8	3.8	1	100%
No. Male	0	3	1	4	3	2	9	10	1	5	10	11	2	2	63
% Male	0	4.8	1.6	6.3	4.8	3.2	14.3	15.9	1.6	7.9	15.9	17.5	3.2	3.2	100%

Table V: Summary of outcomes by gender for Leaving Certificate Religious Education Ordinary Level 2008.

Analysis was conducted on the relative popularity of questions and performance of Ordinary Level candidates in each section of the examination paper and each part of the coursework booklet. The statistical data in this report relating to the answering of each section of the paper and each part of the coursework booklet is based on a random sample of 24% of the total number of candidates.

Table VI below ranks each section of the examination paper and each part of the coursework booklet in two ways. Firstly, all the sections of the paper and parts of the coursework are ranked according to candidate performance and secondly according to

their popularity among candidates. Under the heading ‘Performance’ the average marks per section of the paper and part of the coursework and corresponding rank order is given. Under the heading ‘Popularity’ the response rate per section of the paper and part of the coursework and corresponding rank order is given.

2008 Ordinary Level Leaving Certificate Religious Education				
	Performance		Popularity	
Paper:	Average Mark	Rank Order	Response Rate	Rank Order
Section A	56 (70%)	3	40 (100%)	1
Section B	59 (74%)	1	13 (32.5%)	6
Section C	27 (34%)	7	22 (55%)	5
Section D	42 (53%)	5	31 (77.5%)	3
Section E	37 (46%)	6	10 (25%)	7
Section F	*	8 (JOINT)	2 (5%)	8 (JOINT)
Section H	*	8 (JOINT)	2 (5%)	8 (JOINT)
Section I	51 (64%)	4	27 (67.5%)	4
Coursework Parts A & B	58 (73%)	2	39 (97.5%)	2

* Because a very small percentage of candidates opted for questions in Section F and Section H it is not possible to engage in any meaningful statistical analysis of candidate performance.

Coursework	Average Mark	Rank Order
Coursework Part A	30 (75%)	1
Coursework Part B	28 (70%)	2

Table VI: Ranking of Ordinary Level examination paper sections and coursework parts according to Average Mark and Response Rate

2.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

Section D was the most popular choice in unit two and Section I the most popular choice in unit three of the paper.

Examiners noted that candidates used the overlap in the content of sections within the syllabus to good effect. The answer of candidates to questions assessing a particular section of the syllabus frequently drew on what the candidates had studied in relation to the aims, objectives or outcomes of another section of the syllabus.

Examiners noted that some candidates did not appear to be familiar with concepts that are central to the syllabus’ aims, objectives and outcomes being assessed in the examination. This was particularly evident in the relation to the concepts of ‘Agnosticism’ in Section A Question 2 (a) i, ‘divine revelation’ in Section A Question 3, ‘inter-faith dialogue’ in Section C question (b)i, ‘reconciliation’ in Section D question (b), ‘empowerment’ and ‘denomination’ in Section E question (d) and ‘pre-Christian’ in all parts of Section I.

Examiners noted that a number of candidates did not present a coursework component or did not complete the required number of sections or parts of questions in the examination paper.

Unit One Section A The Search for Meaning and Values (80 marks)

Average Mark: 56 (70 %) Response Rate: 40 (100%)

Questions 1 was the most popular choice of candidates in Section A of the examination paper and both parts (a) and (b) yielded excellent responses. In response to question 1 (a) candidates gave an accurate account of one example of where a sense of the sacred can be seen in society today. Candidates frequently referred to an increased interest in different types of prayer and statistics which show that people value religious ceremonies which mark particular occasions in life such as birth, marriage, death etc. In response to question I (b), the majority of candidates had no difficulty in giving reasons why a sense of the sacred could help a person searching for the meaning of life today. Candidates frequently described how the belief/teaching of a world religion could help a person find answers to questions about the purpose of life, and the problem of suffering.

Some candidates did not attempt question 2 (a) I, and the performance of many who did attempt the question was somewhat disappointing. Some had difficulty in giving an accurate account of the meaning of agnosticism. However most candidates did attempt the rest of the question without difficulty and the responses to questions 2 (a) ii and (b) yielded some very good answers. In response to question 2 (a) ii, candidates gave an accurate account of the way in which atheism involves the view that there is no God. Question 2 (b) yielded some good responses from candidates who looked closely at ways in which atheism could influence a person's search for the meaning of life.

Question 3 was the least popular question in Section A. Candidates responses were rather disappointing. Examiners reported that when there was little or no evidence of a candidate understanding the meaning of the term 'divine revelation' his/her performance in response to this question tended to be weak.

Unit Two (160 marks)

Examiners reported that a number of candidates answered questions in only one of the sections in unit two of the examination paper. Questions in Section D were the most popular choice for candidates in this unit of the examination paper. Examiners commented that in response to questions in Section B and Section C, candidates frequently left unanswered the parts of questions that required the recall of specific information or required detailed knowledge of a syllabus topic.

Unit Two Section B Christianity: Origins and Contemporary Expressions (80 marks)

Average Mark: 59 (73%) Response Rate: 13 (33%)

Some candidates did not attempt part (a). The responses of those who did attempt this question were frequently disappointing and candidates had difficulty showing knowledge of the evidence for the existence of Jesus that can be found in the writings of Pliny the Younger and Tacitus, as required in the question.

Part (b) produced a range of responses from candidates which varied from fair to excellent in standard. Some candidates' answers did not show knowledge of why the writings of an Evangelist *or* Saint Paul *or* Josephus are an authoritative source of evidence for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth as was required in the question.

Part (c) was consistently answered to a high standard. Candidates gave accurate information on the ways in which the resurrection of Jesus influenced his disciples' sense of mission. Candidates frequently referred to the way in which the disciples sensed that Jesus would be with them and this gave them an impetus to act etc.

Unit Two Section C World Religions (80 marks)

Average Mark: 27 (34%) Response Rate: 22 (55%)

Some candidates did not attempt to answer all the parts of Section C. Frequently it was part (a) and part (b) that candidates did not attempt to answer and many who did attempt these parts of Section C produced disappointing answers. Some candidates did not have an understanding of the concepts and phenomena associated with Primal religion. Similarly in response to part (b) i and part (b) ii, some candidates did not understand the meaning of the term 'inter-faith' dialogue. Examiners reported that a number of candidates confused 'inter-faith' dialogue with inner faith dialogue.

The performance of candidates was generally very good in response to part (c), and they displayed no difficulty in presenting the similarities and/or differences between the ways in which an important moment in life is celebrated in two of the major world religions listed in the question.

Unit Two Section D Moral Decision-Making (80 marks)

Average Mark: 42 (53%) Response Rate: 31 (78%)

The performance of candidates in answering part (a) ranged from fair to excellent in terms of the criteria outlined in the marking scheme. Candidates who choose to answer the question with reference to 'personal sin' performed well and they gave an accurate example and account of the way in which 'personal sin' involves any wrong chosen freely by an individual which has consequences for himself/herself or for those directly affected by the wrong done. Similarly, candidates who chose to answer the question

with reference to ‘social sin’ performed well in so far as they gave an accurate example and account of the way in which ‘social sin’ refers to the social consequences of wrongdoing.

Some candidates did not attempt to answer part (b). Examiners noted that some candidates did not appear to have knowledge of a Christian denomination’s understanding of reconciliation. Most candidates gave good answers to part (c). Frequently candidates referred to the similarities/differences in the way degrees of seriousness in moral failure are recognised or in the rites associated with atoning for moral failure etc.

Unit Three Section E Religion and Gender (80 marks)

Average Mark: 37 (46%) Response Rate: 10 (25%)

Generally candidates responded well in Section E. Part (a) which required candidates to trace the role of either two men or two women in Hebrew salvation history was not a popular choice among candidates. Part (b) about the roles of men and women in one early Christian community and part (c) about the way in which the depiction of Mary, the mother of Jesus in the Gospels, influences the roles of men and women in a Christian denomination, were the most popular parts of this section among candidates. Examiners noted many candidates drew on what they had studied in Section B of the Leaving Certificate Religious Education syllabus.

Some candidate responses in part (d) did not focus on the question asked. Such candidates frequently profiled empowerment or freedom for men and women in society in general, but failed to trace the way in which either has been promoted by a Christian denomination as required in the question.

Unit Three Section F Issues of Justice and Peace (80 marks)

Average Mark: 24 (30%) Response Rate: 2 (0.05%)

The questions in Section F were not popular among candidates in unit three of the examination paper. Candidates who attempted the questions in Section F generally performed better in response to part (b) than they did in response to part (a).

Some candidates attempted only one part of Section F. Some candidates also did not do everything required within part (a) and part (b) of the question. Examiners reported, for example, that in response to part (a), some candidates set out information on one rather than two of the religious perspectives on justice and peace listed in the question. Similarly in answering part (b), some candidates gave an account of the way in which the teaching of one rather than two of the world religions encourages care of the environment as the question required.

Unit Three Section H The Bible: Literature and Sacred Text (80 marks)

Average Mark: 34 (43%) Response Rate: 2 (0.05%)

Section H was not a popular choice among candidates in completing unit three of the examination paper. The response of candidates who did attempt this question was rather disappointing. Even though the biblical texts in part (a) are prescribed, Examiners noted that some candidates appeared to be ill-prepared for the detailed knowledge required of these biblical texts in the question. Similarly in response to part (b) some candidates failed to set out accurate information on two different stages in the process of writing *either* the Hebrew Scriptures *or* the Gospels.

Unit Three Section I Religion: The Irish Experience (80 marks)

Average Mark: 51 (64%) Response Rate: 27 (68%)

Section I was the most popular choice among candidates in three of the examination paper. The general performance of candidates in answering questions on Section I was good. Candidates frequently drew on what they learnt when studying Section A and Section B of the syllabus.

In response to part (a), candidates gave accurate information on the ways in which a place in Ireland showed evidence of religious belief and/or practice in pre-Christian times. ‘Newgrange’ was the most popular archaeological site to which candidates referred.

The performance of candidates in response to part (b) i was not consistently high. Some candidates referred to sagas or myths that showed evidence of religious belief in Christian rather than pre-Christian times. Examiners noted that some candidates appeared not to understand the meaning of the term ‘pre-Christian’. In such cases, candidates frequently wrote about Christian beliefs and practices when answering part (a) and part (b).

2008 Coursework (80 marks)

Average Mark: 58 (73%) Response Rate: 39 (98%)

The prescribed titles for Section G were more popular than the titles for Section J. Examiners reported that the most popular choice of title among the candidates was the following from Section G:

◆ Buddhism ◆ Christianity ◆ Hinduism ◆ Islam ◆ Judaism

An exploration of the features which mark a particular place as sacred for one of the above major world religions.

Examiners noted that while candidates engaged with the full range of prescribed titles the least popular titles was the following from Section J:

The 'God of the Gaps' arises when God is inserted into a situation which seems to have no reasonable explanation. Research one such case and explore the implications of this understanding of God for the relationship between religion and science.

In the vast majority of cases, the coursework was well done, but sometimes the coursework booklets exceeded the recommended range of length for Ordinary Level candidates. The ability to sort and edit information and present ideas concisely and cogently is part of the key skills to be developed through coursework (*Religious Education Guidelines for Teachers* – NCCA page 143)

Coursework - Part A (40 marks)

Average Mark: 30 (75%) Response Rate: 39 (98%)

The general performance of candidates in completing Part A of the Coursework Booklet was very good. Examiners reported that the indication of sources used and the summary of findings were particularly well done. However some candidates omitted to outline the steps taken and skills used in engaging in coursework on the title chosen from the 2008 prescribed list.

Coursework - Part B (40 marks)

Average Mark: 28 (70%) Response Rate: 39 (98%)

The performance of candidates in completing Part B of the Coursework Booklet was generally very good. The candidates who performed well showed evidence of substantial personal engagement with the chosen 2008 prescribed title in responding to each of the set questions in Part B of the Coursework Booklet. Examiners noted that candidates' answers to the first three set questions in Part B were particularly good. Some candidates weakened the quality of their answer to Part B by not giving detail or not focusing on the personal insights they had gained through doing coursework on the chosen 2008 prescribed title. Similarly, some candidates only focussed on the processes involved and made little no reference to the 2008 prescribed title they had chosen.

2.4 Conclusions

- The majority of Ordinary Level candidates showed a good knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the syllabus aims, objectives and outcomes
- Some candidates exceeded the recommended range of length for the Ordinary Level coursework booklet
- Candidates who attained less than a Grade D generally demonstrated poor knowledge, understanding or awareness of the syllabus aims, objectives and outcomes being assessed in the examination
- It appeared that some candidates did not read the questions carefully
- Some candidates did not complete the coursework component, did not attempt all the sections or parts of questions that were required in the examination and answered questions in a general way.

2.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

- Students should become familiar with the layout of the paper, with the examination paper requirements, and with the mark and time allocations. Attention should also be given to other aspects of examination technique, such as reading the questions carefully and developing answers as required
- Students should be familiar with the commonly used question cues such as ‘describe’, ‘explain’, ‘compare’ etc.
- Students should be encouraged to attempt all the sections or parts of questions that were required in the examinations and complete the coursework component
- Students should be encouraged to focus on the chosen prescribed title in their treatment of set points and questions in the coursework booklet
- Particular attention should be given to developing students’ key skills through coursework
- Teachers and students should adhere to the key stages in coursework-completion
- In completing the Coursework Booklet, students should follow the guidelines specified in the document entitled ‘General Guidelines for Completion of the Coursework Booklet’ issued annually by the State Examination Commission accompanying the Coursework Booklets to second level schools.

3. Higher Level

3.1 Introduction

The 2008 Higher Level Terminal Written Examination Paper (320)

Unit One (80 marks)

This unit contains two questions designed to assess aims, objectives, and outcomes for Section A (The search for meaning and values) of the syllabus. Candidates are required to answer any one of the two questions. Both questions are divided into part (a) and part (b) which carry 40 marks each. The questions in unit one are marked out of a total of 80 marks.

Unit Two (160 marks)

This unit of the examination paper consists of questions designed to assess aims, objectives, and outcomes for Section B (Christianity: Origins and Contemporary Expressions), Section C (World Religions) or Section D (Moral Decision-Making) of the syllabus. Candidates are required to answer questions assessing any two of the three sections in this unit of the examination paper: All of the sections are divided into part (a) and part (b) both of which are compulsory. Each section in unit two of the examination paper is marked out of a total of 80 marks.

In Section B part (a) candidates have the choice of answering the question in relation to two of the four options given in the question. Parts (a) and (b) carry 40 marks each.

Section C part (a) carries 40 marks and in part (b) for 40 marks candidates have the choice of answering from one of the five options given in the question.

In Section D part (a) is worth 40 marks. Part (b) carries 40 marks and gives candidates the choice of answering from two of the seven options given in the question.

Unit Three (80 marks)

Candidates are required to answer questions on any one of the four sections in unit three of the examination paper. The questions in this unit are designed to assess the aims, objectives and outcomes from Section E (Religion and Gender), Section F (Issues of Justice and Peace), Section H (The Bible: Literature and Sacred Text) or Section I (Religion: The Irish Experience). The questions on each section in unit three are marked out of a total of 80 marks.

In Section E candidates are required to answer either part (a) which carries 80 marks, or part (b) which is sub-divided into i. which carries 30 marks, and ii. which carries 50 marks.

Section F consists of one question which carries 80 marks.

Candidates are given a choice in Section H of answering either part (a) or part (b) for 80 marks.

Section H consists of part (a) and part (b) with carry 40 marks each.

3.2 Performance of Candidates

The number and percentage of candidates achieving each grade in Higher Level Religious Education in 2008 and in the previous three years is illustrated in the following table:

Year	Grade:	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG	Total
2005	No.	8	11	5	7	16	10	5	9	2	2	1	0	0	0	76
	%	10.5	14.5	6.6	9.2	21.1	13.2	6.6	11.8	2.6	2.6	1.3	0	0	0	100%
2006	No.	12	29	14	25	49	14	27	44	14	21	28	10	3	0	290
	%	4.1	10	4.8	8.6	16.9	4.8	9.3	15.2	4.8	7.2	9.7	3.8	0.7	0	100%
2007	No.	17	37	27	45	78	38	45	59	15	26	19	7	4	0	417
	%	4.1	8.9	6.5	10.8	18.7	9.1	10.8	14.1	3.6	6.2	4.6	1.7	1.0	0	100%
2008	No.	31	48	48	59	78	47	57	87	34	42	45	22	11	1	610
	%	5.1	7.9	7.9	9.7	12.8	7.7	9.3	14.3	5.6	6.9	7.4	3.6	1.8	0.2	100%

Table VII: The number and percentage of Higher Level candidates achieving each grade 2005 - 2008.

The percentage of candidates who obtained A grades, A+B+C grades, D grades and E+F+NG grades in Leaving Certificate Religious Education Higher Level 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 is shown in the following table:

Year	No. of Candidates	A %	A+B+C %	D %	E+F+NG %
2005	76	25	93.5	6.5	0
2006	290	14.1	73.7	21.7	4.5
2007	417	12.7	83	14.4	2.7
2008	610	13	74.6	19.8	5.6

Table VIII: Summary of outcomes by grade for Leaving Certificate Religious Education Higher Level 2005 - 2008.

The 2008 Higher Level results are for a total candidature of 610 which is a 46% increase on the 2007 figure.

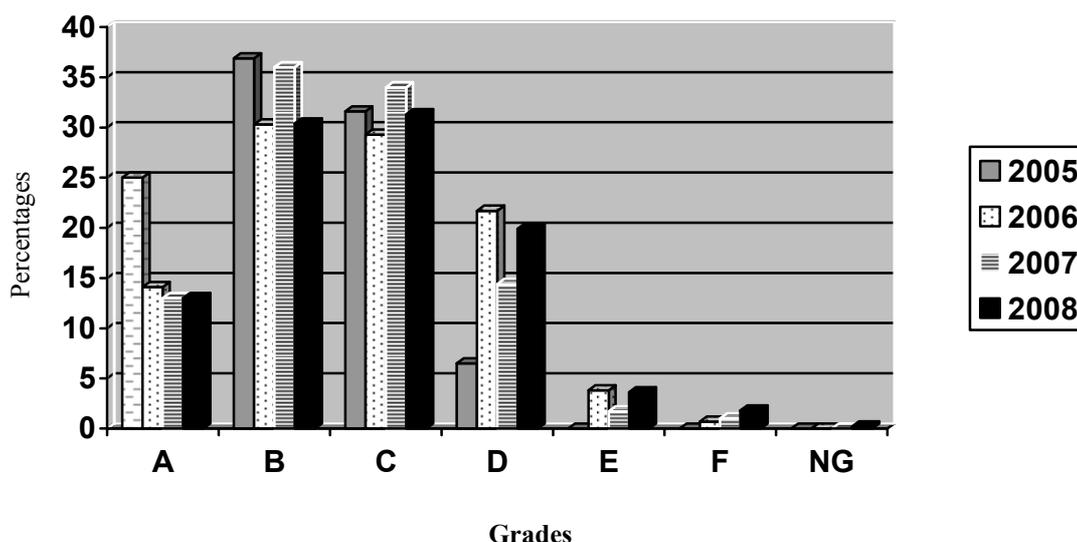


Table IX: Distribution of grades for Leaving Certificate Religious Education Higher Level 2005 - 2008.

The gender breakdown of the 2008 results in Higher Level Religious Education is illustrated in the following table:

Grade	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG	Total
Total No.	31	48	48	59	78	47	57	87	34	42	45	22	11	1	610
Total %	5.1	7.9	7.9	9.7	12.8	7.7	9.3	14.3	5.6	6.9	7.4	3.6	1.8	0.2	100%
Female No.	18	30	31	35	47	25	26	42	16	21	23	6	10	0	330
Female %	5.5	9.1	9.4	10.6	14.2	7.6	7.9	12.7	4.8	6.4	7	1.8	3	0	100%
Male No.	13	18	17	24	31	22	31	45	18	21	22	16	1	1	280
Male %	4.6	6.4	6.1	8.6	11.1	7.9	11.1	16.1	6.4	7.5	7.9	5.7	0.4	0.4	100%

Table X: Summary of outcomes by gender for Leaving Certificate Religious Education Higher Level 2008.

Analysis was conducted on the relative popularity of questions and performance of Higher Level candidates. The statistical data in this report relating to the answering of candidates is based on a random sample of 33% of the total number of candidates.

Table XI below ranks each section of the examination paper and each part of the coursework in two ways. Firstly, the sections of the examination paper and parts of the coursework are ranked according to candidate performance and secondly according to their popularity among candidates. Under the heading 'Performance' the average marks per section of the examination paper and part of the coursework and corresponding rank order is given. Under the heading 'Popularity' the response rate per

section of the examination paper and part of the coursework and corresponding rank order is given.

2008 Higher Level Leaving Certificate Religious Education					
		Performance		Popularity	
Paper		Average Mark	Rank Order	Response Rate	Rank Order
Section A		51(64%)	3 (JOINT)	196 (98%)	2
Section B		48(60%)	6	151 (76%)	3
Section C		49(61%)	5 (JOINT)	131(66%)	4
Section D		50(63%)	4	116 (58%)	5
Section E		53(66%)	2	50 (25%)	8
Section F		51(64%)	3 (JOINT)	51 (26%)	7
Section H		44(55%)	7	13 (7%)	9
Section I		49(61%)	5 (JOINT)	90 (45%)	6
Coursework Parts A & B		59 (74%)	1	198 (99%)	1

Coursework:	Average Mark	Rank Order
Coursework Part A	30 (75%)	1
Coursework Part B	29 (73%)	2

Table XI: Ranking of Higher Level examination paper sections and coursework parts according to Average Mark and Response Rate

3.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

The answering of candidates was, generally, of a high standard. The majority of candidates displayed very good knowledge, understanding and awareness of the aims, objectives and outcomes of the syllabus and an ability to apply these to the questions asked. In answering questions on specific sections of the examination paper, candidates frequently drew on what they had studied in other sections of the syllabus.

Candidates omitted parts of questions. Examiners noted that it appeared some candidates had not read the questions carefully or did not appear to be familiar with the meaning of terms commonly used in the assessment of Leaving Certificate Religious Education. Examiners noted this was particularly evident in the response of candidates to question which used terms such as ‘compare’ and ‘assess’. In some instances candidates did not appear to be familiar with concepts that are key to the syllabus aims, objectives and outcomes. Examiners reported that this was particularly evident in relation to the concepts of ‘reductionism’ in Section A (b), ‘denomination’ in Section B (b), ‘synoptic problem’ in Section H (b) and ‘secularisation’ in Section I (b).

Unit One Section A The Search for Meaning and Values (80 marks)

Average Mark: 51(64%) Response Rate: 196 (98%)

Question 1 was the most popular question in unit one of the examination paper. In response to part (a), the majority of candidates presented accurate information on two points from Socrates' thinking regarding the goal and purpose of life. Candidates frequently referred to Socrates' idea that the purpose of life was to lead a morally good life and the key to living a good life was to find truth and wisdom. Some candidates referred to only one point from Socrates' thinking or did not set out accurate information on the points to which they referred.

A small number of candidates who answered part (a) did not attempt to answer part (b). Candidates performed well in part (b) when they gave an accurate account of the approach taken by agnosticism and reductionism to questions about the goal and purpose of life. Examiners reported that some candidates appeared to have had difficulty in giving an account of the approach taken by reductionism. While other candidates gave a brief account of agnosticism and reductionism, they failed to identify how questions about the goal and purpose of life would be approached from these viewpoints.

Candidates who choose to answer Question 2 in unit one performed well in part (a) when they gave an accurate account of the way in which two major world religions refer to the will of God/gods/the divine being made known to members of their world religions. Examiners reported that candidates frequently described the understanding of divine revelation in one rather than in two major world religions. Some candidates confused Buddhism with Hinduism in part (b).

Unit Two (160 marks)

Section B was the most popular in unit two. However, the questions across all three sections of this unit proved popular with candidates and most performed well in the two sections they choose to answer.

Unit Two Section B Christianity – Origins and Contemporary Expressions (80 marks)

Average Mark: 48 (60%) Response Rate: 151 (75%)

Most candidates who choose Section B answered well. Candidates who performed well in response to part (a) did so by evaluating the evidence for Jesus of Nazareth in two of the sources named in the question. Some candidates did not address what was asked in the question and simply provided formulaic answers, based perhaps on textbook information. Examiners reported that information about Pliny the Younger and Tacitus were frequently confused by candidates.

In response to part (b), candidates presented accurate information on one way in which the work of a Christian denomination is carrying on the mission of Jesus today. Examiners noted that while some candidates gave an accurate account of the work of a Christian denomination, they neglected to give an account of the way in which the work of a Christian denomination is carrying on the mission of Jesus. Examiners also noted that some candidates did not have an accurate understanding of the concept of 'denomination'.

Unit Two Section C World Religions (80 marks)

Average Mark: 49 (61%)

Response Rate: 131 (65%)

The majority of candidates who performed well in response to Section C answered both parts of this section as required. In part (a), candidates presented the similarities and /or differences in the way in which the community of believers was structured at a global or local level in two of the world religions listed in the question. Some candidates did not answer all that was required in a question. Some candidates compared two world religions in a very general or vague way without reference to the way in which the community of believers is structured in the world religions.

Examiners noted that the performance of a candidate in response to part (b) was not always consistent with his/her performance in response to part (a) of the section.

Unit Two Section D Moral Decision-Making (80 marks)

Average Mark: 50 (63%)

Response Rate: 116 (58%)

A small number of candidates did not attempt both parts of Section D. Candidates performed well in response to part (a) and gave an accurate account of the stages of moral development proposed by one moral theorist. The majority of candidates in answer to part (a) described the stages of moral development outlined by Jean Piaget or Lawrence Kohlberg.

In response to part (b) some candidates referred to particular moral issues to illustrate the approach taken to making moral decision in the moral philosophies/theories they had chosen. Some candidates examined the approach to making moral decisions in one rather than in two of the moral philosophies/theories. Examiners noted that candidates frequently confused Deontological Ethics with Teleological Ethics.

Unit Three (80 marks)

Section I was the most popular of the sections chosen by candidates in unit three of the examination paper. Examiners reported that the majority of candidates performed well in the section they choose from unit three. Some responses were rather vague.

Unit Three Section E Religion and Gender (80 marks)

Average Mark: 53 (66%)

Response Rate: 50 (25%)

Part (b) of Section E proved to be a more popular choice among candidates than part (a). Candidates who choose part (a) traced the development of feminist forms of spirituality and frequently referred to a number of characteristics of feminist spiritualities. Some candidates gave descriptive answers referring to Nano Nagle and Edwina Gately in a way which showed an understanding of the perspectives of feminist spiritualities. Some candidates tended to set out general information on religion and gender, or on equality issues, with little or no evidence of responding to the particular focus of the question as asked in the paper.

Candidates performed well in response to part (b)i and most presented accurate information on three main characteristics of feminist theologies. Candidates frequently referred to the way in which feminist theologies explored how feminine experience can give an added dimension to what people think about the divine. Candidates who performed well in part (b) ii were able to look closely at the relationship between feminist theologies and one Christian denomination.

Unit Three Section F Issues of Justice and Peace (80 marks)

Average Mark: 51 (63%)

Response Rate: 51 (25%)

Candidates focused on examining a conflict situation and drawing conclusions about the role of dialogue in the process of conflict resolution. Northern Ireland and the Middle East were the two conflict situations most often discussed. Some responses were general and did not refer to the role of dialogue in resolving conflict.

Unit Three Section H The Bible and Sacred Text (80 marks)

Average Mark: 44 (55%)

Response Rate: 13 (7%)

Section H was the least popular choice of candidates in unit three of the examination paper. Examiners reported that part (a) was a more popular choice than part (b) among the small number of candidates who answered this section.

Candidates performed well in part (a) and evaluated the evidence for the Bible as both a classic text and a sacred text. Some candidates did not address what was being asked in the question and instead wrote in a general way about the Bible. Other candidates presented a good evaluation of the evidence for the Bible as a sacred text, but neglected to evaluate the evidence for the Bible as a classic text.

Candidates displayed an ability to identify and look closely at the elements within two issues that are central to explaining the relationship between the synoptic Gospels. Candidates frequently referred to how the similarities and differences between the

synoptic gospels raises issues regarding who wrote the gospels, what sources were used, when they were written etc.

Unit Three Section I Religion: the Irish experience (80 marks)

Average Mark: 49 (61%) Response Rate: 90 (45%)

Section I was the most popular choice of question among candidates in unit three of the paper and produced some very good responses. Examiners commented on the high standard of response to part (a) where candidates set out accurate information on the main trends in the pattern of religious belief and practice in Ireland today. Some candidates set out information on trends in a general way without referring to trends in the pattern of religious belief and practice in Ireland today.

Candidates who presented excellent answers to part (b) examined secularisation or focused on examples of a decline in the significance of religion for individuals and society and drew conclusions regarding its influence on the pattern of religious belief and practice in Ireland today. Examiners noted that in response to part (b), ‘secularisation’ was not always understood.

Coursework (80 marks)

Average Mark: 59 (74%) Response Rate: 198 (99%)

Examiners reported that the Higher Level candidates engaged with the full range of 2008 prescribed titles. The most popular choice of title among candidates was the following title from Section G:

◆ Buddhism ◆ Christianity ◆ Hinduism ◆ Islam ◆ Judaism

An exploration of the features which mark a particular place as sacred for one of the above major world religions.

The majority of candidates completed excellent coursework, but in some cases the coursework booklets exceeded the recommended length for Higher Level candidates. The ability to sort and edit information and present ideas concisely and cogently is part of the key skills to be developed through coursework (‘Religious Education Guidelines for Teachers’ – NCCA page 143)

Coursework Booklet Part A (40 marks)

Average Mark: 30 (75%) Response Rate: 198 (99%)

Examiners reported a very good performance by candidates in completing Part A of the Coursework Booklet with many candidates giving a full and relevant summary of their findings. Most candidates focused appropriately on the chosen title in responding to the

three set points. Candidates who conducted interviews seemed to enjoy this type of research, as did those who visited particular sites or encountered guest speakers.

Examiners noted that some candidates responded to the set points in a general way and did not refer sufficiently to their chosen 2008 prescribed title.

Coursework Booklet Part B (40 marks)

Average Mark: 29 (73%) Response Rate: 198 (99%)

The performance of candidates in Part B of the Coursework booklet was also very good. Candidates showed evidence of having reflected on the set questions in relation to their chosen 2008 prescribed title. Examiners noted particularly good responses from candidates to the questions regarding the perspectives encountered and the most valuable part of doing the coursework on the chosen title.

Some candidates did not respond to the five set questions. In such cases, the candidate frequently repeated the summary of their investigation from Part A of the Coursework booklet and showed little or no evidence of meeting the criteria set out for Part B in the marking scheme for Higher Level coursework. Examiners noted that some candidates in Part B omitted reference to their reflection on the different perspectives encountered, their identification of the questions that arose, or their identification of what had been the most valuable part of doing coursework on the chosen 2008 prescribed title.

3.4 Conclusions

- The majority of those who attempted the required number of sections in the examination paper and coursework component presented very good answers.
- Examiners noted the skill and creativity with which candidates utilised the overlap that exists between the content of the different syllabus sections in responding to questions in the different units of the examination paper
- Some candidates did not fully engage with what was being asked in a question or appeared not to have read the questions carefully
- Some candidates did not appear to be familiar with the meaning of question cues such as ‘compare’ and ‘assess’ etc.
- Some candidates did not appear to be familiar with concepts such as ‘reductionism’ in Section A (b), ‘denomination’ in Section B (b), ‘synoptic problem’ in Section H (b) and ‘secularisation’ in Section I (b).
- The ability to sort and edit information and present ideas concisely and cogently was particularly lacking in the Coursework Booklet of candidates who did not adhere to the recommended maximum length of 1,500 words for Higher Level.

3.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

- Students should have a knowledge and understanding of the concepts that are central to the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the syllabus
- Students should be familiar with the meaning of key question cues used in the examination
- As part of their preparation for the examination, students should become familiar with the layout of the paper, with the examination paper requirements, and with the mark and time allocations. Attention should also be given to other aspects of examination technique, such as reading the questions carefully and developing answers as required
- Students should be encouraged to answer the required number of sections and parts of sections in the examination paper
- Students should be encouraged to focus on the chosen prescribed title in their treatment of set points and questions in the coursework booklet
- Particular attention should be given to developing students' key skills through coursework so that in completing the Coursework Booklet they adhere to the recommended range of length for Higher Level i.e. a minimum of 1,200 words and a maximum of 1,500 words
- In completing the Coursework Booklet students should follow the guidelines specified in the document entitled *General Guidelines for Completion of the Coursework Booklet* issued annually by the State Examination Commission accompanying the Coursework Booklets to second level schools.

4. Exemplars of Standard

The following is a selection of exemplar material from the examination scripts and coursework journals of candidates who entered the Ordinary Level and Higher Level Leaving Certificate Religious Education in 2008. These exemplars should be read in conjunction with the Ordinary Level and Higher Level examination papers and marking schemes utilised for the purpose of assessing candidates' answers. The answers of the candidates are typed in italics. The exemplars below are reproduced as they were written except where, because of ambiguity arising from the hand-written script, it has been edited to indicate the likely meaning. Square brackets are used to indicate where such editing has occurred.

A brief commentary on the item appears after each exemplar.

4.1 Ordinary Level Exemplar Material

2008 Examination Paper

Unit One Section A Question 3 (a) i

In religious traditions what does the term 'divine revelation' mean?

Answer:

Divine revelation is the way in which God reveals himself to humanity. There are two types of divine revelation. One [type is] universal/general revelation which happens at all times to all people and in all places for example through good deeds or nature. The second type of divine revelation is particular /historical revelation. This happens in a special way in a particular place and at a particular time e.g. Jesus Christ.

Marks awarded: 10 marks out of 10 in Section A Question 3 (a) i.

Comment:

- The candidate's answer sets out accurate information on the concept of divine revelation.

Unit Two Section B Question (b)

Explain why the writings of one of the following are an important source of evidence for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth. • An Evangelist – Matthew or Mark or Luke or John • Saint Paul • Josephus

Answer:

Saint Paul is an important source of evidence for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth. This is so because he is an authoritative source. He is authoritative because it is clear he was not always a follower of Jesus. St. Paul originally named Saul had been a harsh persecutor of the Christian people for years before he converted to a Christian (which was on the road to Damascus). Because St. Paul had such a change of heart (a

metanoi(a) it reveals to us that there must have been a great leader, to whom one would want to follow. St. Paul's metanoia involved travelling and converting people to set up numerous Christian communities. The first of these communities were set up along the Mediterranean coast. St. Paul communicated with those communities through letters. These letters would contain such questions from the communities as how to live a better Christian life and St. Paul would reply with wisdom and advice. He [St. Paul] is a good source for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth as he [Jesus] is mentioned a number of times in his [St. Paul's] letters. St. Paul tells his communities to live as Jesus Christ did.

Marks awarded: 20 marks out of 20 in Section B Question (b)

Comment:

- The candidate's answer presents reasons why the writings of Saint Paul are an authoritative source of evidence for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth
- The candidate answered in a coherent, comprehensive form, and makes reference to everything that is required in the question.

Unit Two Section C Question (a)

Primal religion has many unique features such as –

●Mana ●Shaman ●Tabu ● Totem

Describe what is meant by two of the above in primal religion

Answer:

A Shaman can be described as a medicine man, a healer or someone who has immense power. For the ancient Indians, they believed that their Shaman had a connection to their ancestors and the afterlife... Through these Shamans praying for you, this would give you great power in battle and great prosperity in life.

Tabu was when they could not kill animals. They believed animals were sent from the gods and were sacred so they could not kill them.

Marks awarded: 14 marks out of 20 in Section C Question (a)

Comment:

- The candidate's answer sets out a descriptive account of the meaning of Tabu and Shaman which shows an understanding of the way in which both are linked with the sacred in primal religion
- A fuller account and greater accuracy in relation to the way in which Tabu can refer to any person, object or place that is set 'apart' to channel the power of the spirit world, is necessary for full marks.

Unit Three Section I Question (a)

Ireland has many archaeological sites that show evidence of religious beliefs and practices in pre-Christian times. Outline the ways in which one place in Ireland shows evidence of religious belief and/or practice in pre-Christian times.

Answer:

Newgrange shows evidence of religious belief or practice in pre-Christian Ireland. [It was] built in the middle to fourth centuries BCE. It is a large Passage Grave situated in the Boyne Valley, Co. Meath. It is made of earth [and] large stone slabs also known as monoliths.

During the winter solstice on the 21st of December the sun shines through the Roof Box situated above the entrance to the tomb, down the 9m long passage and into a chamber. [Inside] the chamber are three plinths with a stone basin in each. Remains of 3 or 4 people were found here during the excavations that took place during the 1960s.

Throughout the passage grave there [are] engravings of art on the stone slabs, consisting of circles and spirals. It is evident that some sort of religious practice took place at Newgrange. The sun clearly had some value to the people who built Newgrange. As they relied on the sun for their crops to grow it is evident that they worshipped the sun. Newgrange is [evidence] of this. They also laid the remains of their dead in the chamber at Newgrange. The sun and the remains of the dead are linked somehow at Newgrange. [The] search for meaning and [the] mysteries of life empowered the people of Newgrange and [there] is evidence of some sort of religious practice and belief at Newgrange. [The] sun may have been their god.

Marks awarded: 36 marks out of 40 in Section I Question (a)

Comment:

- The candidate's answer sets out substantial information on the pre-Christian beliefs/practice associated with archaeological site at Newgrange
- Greater accuracy in relation to the dating of Newgrange and more substantial information on the ways in which the features referred to in Newgrange show evidence of religious belief and/or practice in pre-Christian times, is necessary for full marks.

Coursework 2008 Title SECTION G

◆ Buddhism ◆ Christianity ◆ Hinduism ◆ Islam ◆ Judaism

An exploration of the features which mark a particular place as sacred for one of the above major world religions.

Coursework Booklet Part A

... give a summary of your investigation on the title you have chosen from the prescribed list for coursework. Please ensure that your summary includes:

- ✓ **An indication of the sources of information that you used e.g. web based materials, literature, and other sources**
- ✓ **An outline of the steps you took and the skills you used in investigating your chosen title**
- ✓ **A summary of your findings on your chosen title.**

Answer:

I chose Knock for my coursework as I was interested in the apparition and the amazing stories associated with this sacred place. I found many sources of information which prove that Knock is a sacred place. I found lots of sources on the internet, the library, leaflets, books and some very helpful DVD's.

One source I found was a DVD called It was interesting as it showed what Knock is all about and why it is such a sacred place. It told us about - certain hymns that [show] Knock is a holy place - The Lady of Knock is an example ... the apparition, and about how people of all walks of life are welcomed and catered for in Knock. There is counselling and prayer groups and lots of activities happening all the time. Pilgrims come to [Knock] to encounter the healing presence of Jesus.

I borrowed a book from the school library called by which told the story of a man who went on pilgrimage around different places. It emphasized [how] sacred altered time is a distinctive feature of pilgrimage. This book helped me understand how pilgrimage can help us in our lives. Another source was when my class watched a short film ... made by ... about Glendalough and how it became a place of pilgrimage. By watching this I was able to compare and contrast the features which make [Knock} a place sacred, [with] Glendalough a place of pilgrimage made sacred by its many tombstones and [being] founded by a holy figure like St Kevin... both are places where people go in search of meaning. People go to these places in search of peace and solitude. They both have monuments which people visit, and historical value....

I looked up the websiteand read through what it said about Knock. I found that there are miracles at Knock all the time and people have rediscovered old wisdom there. Knock has grown to the status of an internationally recognized Marian shrine . Mother Theresa of Calcutta visited the shrine in June 1993. ...Knock is not just a place to pray...it is also a community [which] has family programmes and counseling for [those] who needs it. Another reason [Knock] is sacred is [because] the Popes visited [the shrine] in 1979.

Another helpful source of information I found was a book called by It discusses the importance of symbols in Knock. It shows [how] symbols are part of prayer and help us to understand the mystery of God. The main symbols [associated with] Knock are Mary, the Cross, the Lamb, the Statues and the Holy water. The lamb is universally recognized as a symbol of innocence and simplicity. Jesus is compared to the [lamb] to shows ... his obedience unto death. There are also statues built in order to symbolize what happened at the apparition. The statues are of Mary, St. John the evangelist and St. Joseph. Symbols are powerful in religion, and the people of Knock can relate to them. People find meaning and a sense of spirituality in them.

Another source of information I found on Knock was a book called by it was about how Mary appeared to people in Knock in 1879 and describes in detail what was seen by all 15 witnesses the night of the apparition. In this book Mary is given her 2 titles - Queenship [and] Mother of the Lamb, as she still offers the supreme sacrifice of love. These features are a big part of what makes Knock sacred.

We organized to go to Knock as this would give us a chance to really feel the experience of being on pilgrimage and to learn about why Knock is so famous... We used a lot of steps organising this trip to Knock. We first discussed why we should go to Knock ... We then rang the people who take care of Knock and arranged to come up for a tour of the shrine. In our class then we sorted out transportation up and back from Knock ... When we arrived at Knock we went into the prayer centre for a talk with one of the counselors. We then were given a tour... brought to Knock museum and given more information on the history of Knock. [After] a break we went back to the prayer [centre] for a service of healing and for confession. We organized to go to confession one by one. No one had to [go to] confession if they did not wish. We organized to meet the bus in the car park at 6 o'clock and to be dropped back at school. Overall [we got] a lot of useful information for our project from our trip.

It was very important that we used our skills to sort out the money for transportation. We also used our communication skills when we rang and asked the people of Knock if they could give us a tour of the shrine. We asked the tour guides about the apparition and used our communication skills to speak to them. We used our enquiry skills when we looked up helpful websites about sacred places on the internet and picked out important points from them. We used our research skills while reading the handouts on Glendalough by taking out the important points which show it is a sacred place.

I discovered that many different features can make a place sacred. We also used our research skills when we read It told us the intricate details of what happened the night 15 people saw the apparition. We used our discussion skills to find out what were the most important aspects of Knock which makes it so sacred. I used my critical thinking skills to compare Knock to Glendalough and find out [about] the accuracy of the information on the apparition. We used our enquiry skills to find out as much information as we could about this sacred place. I found out [Knock] is a sacred place [because] it helps people to develop faith. It helps out people in good and bad times. It's a place of retreat for people in need of refuge or someone to listen. We also used our observational skills to see the many beautiful buildings, statues and gardens. We [saw] the Basilica, named by the Pope in 1979. It can hold over 3000 people. We visited the other church inside [which] there were giant statues of the apparition, made of pure white marble from Rome. The lamb was the center-piece on the altar. Many people sat in silence in the church praying. Outside of the church was a giant set of rosary beads given as a present to Knock years ago.

We also used our reflection skills while reading the handout on Glendalough and thought about the differences and similarities between these places. Glendalough was founded by St. Kevin and run by monks while Knock is famous for its apparition and the counseling services [that are] available to the public. We examined the mystery of the apparition by examining the book We read the individual stories and found that all of them were very similar, though some were very sure the 3rd figure was St. John... We discovered from the Glendalough handout and video that any place with a religious background or a place of historical background can have religious significance to people. As we went through I discover that the monks there would sing hymns, write manuscript with ink made from natural sources. The place had a lake where St. Kevin

would reflect. I also discovered that the pilgrims ...who went there believe that the water that collected in the hollow of the stones had healing properties...

We found useful information in the DVD We were told about the Basilica as a religious feature of Knock. It had 5 columns and holds 10,000 people. People of all walks of life come here to pray. We discovered the Basilica was named by Pope John Paul in 1979. Knock had many features I didn't know about like the Chapel of Reconciliation where people go for prayer and counseling.

Marks awarded: 35 marks out of 40 in Coursework Part A

Comment:

- The candidate's answer gives a very good indication of the sources of information, and summary the findings from the investigation of the chosen title
- The outline of the steps taken and skills used need to be focused on the chosen title with the ideas presented concisely and cogently.

Coursework 2008 Title SECTION J

Science and religion need each other as guides in their search for truth. An investigation of the evidence for this statement in the approach taken by science and religion to *either* the debate about origins *or* questions about the beginning and ending of life.

Coursework Booklet Part B

...give your personal reflection on the learning, skills and experiences gained through undertaking coursework. Please ensure that this includes your answer to the following questions:

- ✓ **Why was the title of interest to you?**
- ✓ **What different perspectives did you encounter in doing coursework on your chosen title?**
- ✓ **What questions arose for you through doing coursework on this title?**
- ✓ **What personal insights have you gained through doing coursework on this title?**
- ✓ **What has been the most valuable part of doing coursework on this title?**

Answer:

...I chose to do my project on the relationship between science and religion because it was of great interest to me, as the issues and differences raised were very controversial and I thought it would be very important and interesting to investigate how science and religion actually helped each other in their search for meaning.

...Whilst researching the different topics mentioned in my project, many personal questions were brought up for me, and I had to question my beliefs and opinions on certain things. I think the fact that I found myself asking myself what I believed in after I researched the different areas was very important because I was able to get a more rounded view of the varied stances on issues such as abortion, IVF and euthanasia. I

reflected on my past opinions and morals and asked myself if I still believed in the same thing. So, by researching and reading about different stances, it enabled me to educate myself and update my opinion, and it also helped me think more about our future and major world issues more thoroughly and so my attitude changed which to me was one of the most valuable parts of my project.

...I encountered quite a few different perspectives whilst researching my chosen title. First of all I found out a lot more about the Catholic Church's views and beliefs on varying big issues like abortion or genetically modified life. It made me open my eyes to what was happening around me, and also I formed my own unique opinion on the Church's attitude and beliefs. [I] found that I don't agree with much of what they say and therefore, that lead me to lean more to the scientific side of things.

During my research into the science areas I found that I agreed more with what they were trying to put forward. I found that a lot of peopleseemed to be against many things scientists were doing for the good of humanity as they felt it was harming morality and humanity.

This therefore lead me to realize how many different opinions there really are in the world and just like me everyone is entitled to have their say and hold their own opinion on morality and humanity.

...One of the insights I gained during my work was a certain view on stem-cell research, whereby I found an argument for the use of stem-cells in important experiments and research in ... developing treatment and cures for so-far incurable diseases and conditions such as cancer, Parkinson's [disease] and heart disease. I think many people don't realize how the use of stem-cells in scientific experiments can be so vital for our future and for life today.

Having said all this, I also discovered how religion and science work together and help each other on their journey for truth and meaning in the world. Both areas are on a constant search for what [is] the true meaning to life on Earth and both enable the other [to] further develop their views because they are each coming out with new revelations and ideas ... This influences people's minds and makes them think more deeply about major issues in their world. Coming from my point of view this is extremely important because it helps shape humanity and without varying ideas and beliefs the world would be very normal and there would be no variation.

Marks awarded: 29 marks out of 40 in Coursework Part B

Comment:

- The candidate's answer shows clear personal engagement with the approach taken by science and religion to questions about the beginning and ending of life
- It gives good, rather than substantial, evidence of –
 - Assessing what has been the most valuable part of doing coursework on this coursework title
 - Balancing different perspectives
 - Showing the skills of judgement and evaluation

- The candidate's answer could provide more supporting evidence for the conclusions drawn and show more cogent engagement with the statement in the coursework title that science and religion need each other as guides in their search for truth.

4.2 Higher Level Exemplar Material

2008 Examination Paper

Unit One Section A Question 2 (b)

Outline how two religious practices are influenced by the understanding of divine revelation found in one major world religion you have studied.

Answer:

In Judaism the concept of divine revelation has impacted and influenced a number of its religious practices. The festivals of Judaism and the Rites of Judaism offer an insight into how their understanding and experience of divine revelation has permeated through their religious practices. In the festivals of Rosh [Hashanah] and the Feast of Tabernacles we see acknowledgement and thanksgiving from the Jewish people to God for his intervention in their history. We also see this in the rites of initiation in Judaism as they acknowledge the historical covenant between God and the Jews.

During the feast of Rosh [Hashanah] the Jewish [people] bear witness to God's creation as they give thanks for the year that is gone and welcome the New Year. The concepts of God as creator and of universal revelation are to the fore as Jews feast and give thanks. Apples dipped in honey are eaten as a sign of hope for the sweetness of the year to come. In essence, the Jews focus on the gifts of God in the natural world. Another element to this festival is the concept of God as judge and it involves preparation for repentance. This is done by blowing the Shofar (rams horn) to call Jews to repent in preparation for Yom Kippur. This is directly linked to the historical revelation of God and the covenant made by God with the Jews to obey the Mitzvot (the laws) – 10 commandments. Breaking these laws requires repentance. Historical revelation is also seen in the festival of the Tabernacles in which Jews acknowledge the suffering of their ancestors in the wilderness and how God lead them to safety during the exodus, under the direction of Moses.

We see a similar adherence to giving thanks for God's historical revelation in the rites of initiation in Judaism. In the Bar Mitzvah, a young Jewish boy becomes initiated as a responsible and mature member of Jewish society. The boy must read from the Tanak in public. Such study of the scriptures was demanded by God in the Covenant he made with Abraham which is central to historical revelation in Judaism. The young boy is also expected to keep the Mitzvot and to fast on Yom Kippur, a symbol of his initiation into the Jewish tradition which has been shaped by God's intervention.

We also see the universal revelation of God feature in the rites of Judaism and in particular the ritual of Brit Milah. It involves the circumcision of the 8 day old baby Jewish boy. It is an important feature of universal revelation as the birth represents one of the wonders of God's creation and is thus celebrated in prayer by a registered Mohel.

Marks awarded: 38 marks out of 40 in Section A Question 2 (b)

Comment:

- The candidate's answer sets out information on how the understanding of revelation influences religious practices associated with the festivals and rites of initiation in Judaism
- A fuller account of how the Jewish understanding of revelation influences the rites of initiation, referred to in the candidate's answer, is required for full marks.

Unit Two Section B Question (a)

**Assess the evidence for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth presented in the writings of two of the following: ● JOSEPHUS ● PLINY THE YOUNGER
● SAINT PAUL ● TACITUS**

Answer:

In the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus and the Roman historian Tacitus we see a number of key pieces of evidence for the life of Jesus. Both sources are secondary sources as no primary sources on the existence of Jesus of Nazareth exist. However there [are] a number of key features which can be found [in] both sources which mark them as authoritative and worthy of analysis and consideration.

It is not unusual to find a lack of primary sources on the life of a historical figure. Interestingly there are no primary sources for the life of Socrates. However it is the manner and tone of the Roman historian Tacitus which marks his historical account of Jesus and Christianity, as a secondary source, worthy of closer examination. Although Tacitus lived in the generation following Jesus he was familiar with its founder 'Christus' and [with] his followers.

He first mentions them in relation to the burning of Rome in 64 CE. It is clear from his writing that he has a general antipathy towards Christianity which he sees as a subversive cult and 'a plague'. He also writes in detail grizzly accounts of how Nero tortured the Christians of Rome. Many of these accounts are now considered to be untrue. He acknowledges existence of Jesus as a historical figure yet does so in a less than favourable light. This suggests that Tacitus' account is somewhat authoritative in cementing the [existence] of the figure of Jesus.

*Further evidence for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth can be seen in the writing of Josephus, the Jewish historian. Josephus came from a similar cultural background to Jesus and was born only 4 years after his death. As a young man Josephus was involved in the Great Jewish Rebellion and his forces were overrun by Emperor Vespasian in Galilee in 66 AD. He also wrote a number of other authoritative books such as his 7 volume account of *The Jewish Wars* and his 20 volume account of *Jewish Antiquities*. He joined the retinue of Vespasian in Rome and later that of his son Titus. He also adopted the family name Flavius. Interestingly Josephus [didn't] write of Jesus until later in his life. He refers to him [Jesus] as a central figure in unrest in Palestine. However unlike Tacitus, [Josephus] portrays him [Jesus] in a positive light as 'a wise man, doer of wonderful works'. It is clear then that Josephus would have known of the*

historical figure of Jesus and heard of the nature of his public ministry. Josephus is considered by many to be an [authoritative] historian of the period.

Marks awarded: 40 marks out of 40 in Section B Question (a)

Comment:

- The candidate's answer provides substantial evaluation of the evidence for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth in the writings of Tacitus and Josephus

Unit Two Section C Question (b)

Outline the origins and main religious practices of one of the following:

- African Traditional Religion • A New Religious Movement
- Baha'i Faith • Chinese Religion • Sikh Religion

Answer:

I wish to examine the origin and main religious practice of the Hare Krishna New Religious Movement. The NRM began with Swami Prabhupada a successful Indian pharmacist. He had begun publishing his religious views in a magazine called 'Back to the Godhead' since 1944. In 1958 he left his wife and five children in India. Following a positive response to his religious beliefs he travelled to America 1965 where his Western-style Hindu philosophy grew in support. In 1968 he founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness or ISKCON for short. Ever since the NRM has grown into a worldwide organisation [with] temples, spiritual centres, farming communities and schools.

Its main religious beliefs focus around the acceptance of Prabhupada as God's representative on earth and distributor of God's love. The main source of scripture is the Bhagavad Gita, a Hindu epic taken from Mahabharata, an account of Krishna. Krishna is believed to be the 8th reincarnation of the God Vishnu. Krishna declares that the way to salvation is through work, devotion and knowledge. Salvation is achieved through a personal relationship with Krishna. This is called returning to a state of 'original god consciousness'. Krishna also [is believed to be] the absolute truth, the one true source [of] salvation. It is believed that Jesus Christ was merely a pure devotee of Krishna visiting from another planet. It is also believed that the way in which a Krishna devotee lives their lives affects in what form they are reincarnated.

The religious practices of the Hare Krishna focus on 9 main devotional acts to Krishna which include: hearing about Krishna, chanting Krishna's name, reading and mixing with other devotees, working in the temple, preparing food for sacrifice, praying to Krishna, encouraging others to know Krishna, establishing a personal relationship with Krishna and encouraging others to chant Krishna's name. Devotees must be vegetarians [and] are not allowed to smoke, eat fish or eggs [and] drink tea or alcohol. They must submit completely to the temple leader who arranges marriages. Extramarital affairs are forbidden and sex within marriage is purely for procreation. Cleaning is also important and Krishnas must shower daily. Krishnas are recognisable by their shaven heads, saffron robes and street processions.

Marks awarded: 38 marks out of 40 in Section C question (b)

Comment:

- The candidate's answer sets out substantial information on the origins and practices of a New Religious Movement as required in the question.
- The information on the origins of the ISKCON movement needs to be more comprehensively developed by reference to the founder leaving his family to become a Hindu monk etc. for full marks.

Unit Three Section E Question (b) i

Outline three characteristics that feminist theologies have in common.

Answer:

Theology itself literally means 'faith seeking understanding'. Feminist theology arose in the reaction to an extreme completely andocentric dominated theology, devoid of any female input or recognition. Quite the opposite, women have found themselves oppressed by all male-theology; written by males about males. Theology in order to be whole, factual, theology must include a balance between both genders. Feminist theology does not wish to override male theology completely as Elizabeth Johnson, a noted female [theologian,] points out, that would give rise to the same problem in reverse, but rather they [feminist theologian] envision a world where the two can coalesce.

Feminist theologies have three main characteristics in common. They all recognise biases towards females throughout the history of Christianity for example. They recognise that women have been oppressed and suppressed throughout the long history of Christianity; including in the Scriptures e.g. It is acknowledged that because Jesus is male, it is assumed that God is male and male only.

The second characteristic that they all share is they all challenge these biases whether in a religious or social context. They challenge the biases that have been placed on women throughout the centuries. By challenging these biases they lead [the] way into taking action against the biases inherent in other theologies, which leads to the third characteristic that they all share. They all wish to reconstruct humanity's vision [and challenge] the biases innate in our culture's history.

They do not wish to overthrow male theologies or males in general but wish to find a balance. They aim to bring women out from the depths of the margins of the Church and bring them to the surface so that they too can have a say, an opinion and an equal opportunity to influence the world and its inhabitants. They believe in the differences between the genders and support [the view] that through these differences a greater balance can be achieved.

Marks awarded: 28 marks out of 30 in Section E question (b) i.

Comment:

- The candidate's answer sets out accurate information on three main characteristics of feminist theologies
- A fuller account of how the third characteristic, referred to in the candidate's answer, can involve dialogue on the male and female understandings of issues such as images of God, the Kingdom of God etc. is required for full marks.

Coursework 2008 Title Section J:

The 'God of the Gaps' arises when God is inserted into a situation which seems to have no reasonable explanation. Research one such case and explore the implications of this understanding of God for the relationship between religion and science.

Coursework Booklet Part: A

... give a summary of your investigation on the title you have chosen from the prescribed list for coursework. Please ensure that your summary includes:

- ✓ **An indication of the sources of information that you used e.g. web based materials, literature, and other sources**
- ✓ **An outline of the steps you took and the skills you used in investigating your chosen title**
- ✓ **A summary of your findings on your chosen title.**

Answer:

The sources I used for my project were ... by which gave me valuable information on the nature of the relationship between religion and science and was truly comprehensive.by ... which was all about Christian faith and reflection which was very useful when answering my Part B. ... by ... which gave insightful ideas into today's troubled world and where religion can fit in times of great anxiety. ...' by ...which was a first hand account of where God was inserted into a situation which had no other explanation for it. by which was truly informative on natural theology and the similarities and differences between religion and science. I also interviewed a Benedictine monk on his opinions of God of the Gaps to gain a different perspective on a very ambiguous topic.

In this essay I will research Darwin's theory of evolution and 'natural selection' and its implications in a 'God of the gaps' situation and how it shaped relationships between religion and science.

The circumstances of the creation of human kind has bewildered humanity since the beginning of time and many theorists of religion and science alike have developed many hypotheses to explain humanities origin. The idea of when science is unable to explain something that religion steps in to offer an explanation for the unexplainable is at its simplest a 'God of the gaps' argument. This worked quit well while due to the lack of scientific technology or any other satisfactory explanation our existence was understood in relation to a heavenly deity. However in recent times science has

exceeded expectations and it now explains many things previously explained only by the existence of God. Thus the 'gaps' in which God resided have shrunk. Furthermore it would be illogical to argue for the non-existence of God due to the achievements of science and similarly to argue for the existence of God on the basis of the failures of science because neither of these arguments would provide dependable proof for the existence or no-existence of God, although with further scientific advancements it is possible that these gaps may become restricted.

One particular case where God was inserted into a situation which seemed to have no other reasonable explanation is in the popular movement of creationism. This is based on the biblical account of Genesis where God created the world in seven days and created man in his image. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' and this was widely accepted up to the mid 18th century and was seen for some as Joseph McCann puts it 'a protest against the worst excess of secular modernity strengthened by the evolutionary world view'. In other words God created determinable species and creation was understood as being at the service of men. The literal and theological truth of the Book of Genesis came to be viewed as a scientific account and no rival theory existed at the time to contradict the notion of a 'Special Creation'. However no theory afterwards came as close as Darwin's theory of evolution which shook the foundations of the Creation Story.

Darwin's theory of evolution caused a storm of controversy in his own time according to Fachtna McCarthy, his theory suggested that it was in fact not a special creation that had brought about all life's species including humans, but that of accidental variations of characteristics inherited from previous species evolved into others. The implication for this was that the idea of fixed species and special creation from the beginning of life unravelled and [this] caused much controversy for Darwin... In fact, according to Darwin it was 'mere chance and the unrelated outcomes of survival of the fittest' that determined how humanity came to be and not God who had designed us from the beginning. This idea of 'uniformism' suggested that the world would have been a lot older than six thousand years, as considered back then and geological features on the earth's surface account for this. So where did the creation story stand if it was scientifically impossible that the world was created in seven days. What were the implications? Darwin's theory sowed doubt in the trustworthiness of the bible. Where evolution explained creation as a series of 'successful mistakes'... creation was interpersonal and species flourished or declined on their ability to adapt and survive regardless of a transcendent power interacting or not. Existence as a cruel and useless passion contradicted the presence of a kind, loving God depicted in the book of Genesis. It also challenged the dignity of the human being as a moral, superior intellectual species. According to evaluation humans could not be seen as set apart or specially designed or even created at the origin of time. We are all subject to the laws of biology and mechanics.

So did Darwin's theory of evolution fill another 'Gap' in which God had been residing until then? The theory of evolution is still today a controversial topic but it did constrict, as it were, the ability of a God to be ever present in the forming .of all species throughout life due to this biological breakthrough. In other words this implicated that the Gap in which God could have been hiding with regard to creation has been

overtaken by science. Not all scientists or religious theologians accepted [Darwin's] theory and ... some did but with marked differences of opinion. For Darwin he believed that God provided the material or mechanism by which the process of evolution and natural selection was possible. Like Einstein he believed that 'God does not play dice with the cosmos'. Others stressed the immanence of God, the indwelling of God in creation as Milton Steinberg puts it 'the still unremoved scaffolding of the edifice of God's creativity', not as complementary as that of design or the proverbial clockmaker God (mechanism) who was seen as the impoverished God. This theory of evolution motivated many to see God's continuous activity in the world from the beginning of a still inexplicably remote creation and led them to consider the possibility 'that God finished his work of creation ages ago and left the rest to us.' Harold S. Kushner

Marks awarded: 32 marks out of 40 in Part A

Comment:

- The candidate's answer is a good treatment of the set points for Part A of the Coursework Booklet, with the indication of sources of information particularly well done
- The candidate's answer does not entirely fulfill the criteria for the awarding of marks in that –
 - A fuller account of the way in which the steps taken and the skills used are related to the chosen title is required
 - In the summary of the investigation more supporting evidence for the conclusions drawn in relation to the implications for the relationship between religion and science is required.

Coursework 2008 Title Section G

Human beings have been described as 'symbol makers'. Profile the importance of symbol making for people in secular and religious life today.

Coursework Booklet Part: B (40 marks)

...give your personal reflection on the learning, skills and experiences gained through undertaking coursework. Please ensure that this includes your answer to the following questions:

- ✓ **Why was the title of interest to you?**
- ✓ **What different perspectives did you encounter in doing coursework on your chosen title?**
- ✓ **What questions arose for you through doing coursework on this title?**
- ✓ **What personal insights have you gained through doing coursework on this title?**
- ✓ **What has been the most valuable part of doing coursework on this title?**

Answer:

This title certainly stood out to me as a topic I would like to investigate further. I found, particularly, the investigation of human beings as symbol makers to be quite

compelling. The symbol section of my course work was very interesting and this title grasped my attention as it gave me an opportunity to research and investigate this subject further. I also wished to discover why human beings find it necessary to create symbols and what they can represent.

Through my research I discovered many different perspectives. It brought to light just how differently symbols can be interpreted. This I most shockingly discovered while researching the destruction of the World Trade Centre. I discovered that following the 9/11 attacks many Palestinians took part in street celebrations, although the Palestinian authorities immediately condemned the attacks....This was a glaringly obvious example of the different perspectives I witnessed while doing my coursework. However I also witnessed other different perspectives on admittedly not so controversial issues. These perspectives mainly dealt with the differing interpretations that many took from symbols [and their] meanings. These different perspectives appeared in both religious and secular symbols.

Many questions arose during my research of this topic. I found myself asking questions like: How can so much importance be placed on such seemingly unimportant objects? Take for example a national flag, although it is little more than a striped cloth, it conjures up immense feelings of pride and it can represent so much: the country's history, culture, government, people, traditions and customs. This is why the desecration of a flag, in many countries is illegal and although not illegal in Ireland it is discouraged by the government. This was seen at the 2002 FIFA World Cup when thecompany was reprimanded by the Irish government for selling Irish flags with [the company] logo at the centre.

I also wondered how symbols offer support to people who are suffering. This question arose during my research of the World Trade Centre cross, but it was something I had queried beforehand with my investigation of religious symbols. I asked myself - how can so many people find solace and comfort in a symbol? During times of great grief or worry, many people look to the cross or pray using rosary beads. I wondered what the significance of these objects was, and why they played such an important role in the process of grieving and worry. During my research I came to realise that these were symbols of a person's close connection to God and a symbol that God is with them. The cross also reminds people that Jesus laid down his life so that we could be saved, and many people find great comfort in this.

I have learned much about myself and about the world around me. The subject which I studied forced me to look at the world and the use of symbols in a new way. I can now consider different interpretations of symbols which I would previously [have] taken for granted. I learned the importance of symbols both in a religious and secular context.

Finally I learned of the great power of symbols – to ignite fear, pride, joy, sorrow, anger or hurt. Researching this title also allowed me to reflect on myself as a symbol maker. There is a particular symbol which I use as a symbol of myself ... It is often used in place of my signature on things such as birthday cards, but is understood by my friends and family to be a symbol of myself. Before investigating my chosen title I had never really looked into the meaning of this symbol. This was classically seen at the

end of Hollywood movies, where a happy ending is represented with the main character performing a happy kick at the films conclusion to represent his joy. I realised that this was a symbol of my own happiness and personal joy.

Perhaps the most valuable part of studying this title was gaining a greater understanding of human behaviour, why humans have the desire to create symbols and for what purpose and how these symbols have the ability to offer reassurance, solace and comfort but also to infuriate and hurt. It gave me a greater insight into how the human mind thinks which is truly a valuable lesson.

Marks awarded: 34 marks out of 40 in Part B

Comment:

- The candidate's answer shows personal reflection on the learning, skills and experiences gained through undertaking coursework on the chosen prescribed title
- In the candidate's treatment of all the set questions in Part B of the Coursework Booklet, a closer focus on tracing the importance of symbol making for people in secular and religious life today, is required for full marks.