STUDIES OF RELIGION

1 UNIT and 2 UNIT COURSES

In 1996 the examination in Studies of Religion was attempted by a total of almost 5870 candidates, of whom 5434 presented for the 1 Unit course and 463 for the 2 Unit course, making this subject one of the fastest growing Higher School Certificate subjects of recent years. The continuing growth in candidature indicates the popularity that Studies of Religion has in schools, especially in the 1 Unit course.

It must be pointed out that both the 1 Unit and 2 Unit courses have Preliminary and HSC courses which must be studied for a certain number of hours. The 2 Unit course is not more difficult than the 1 Unit course, it is merely twice as long. As a result, the examination for the 2 Unit course is twice as long as that for the 1 Unit course and students are required to answer a greater number of questions.

Both 1 Unit and 2 Unit answers are marked together, using exactly the same standard and marking scheme. When the marks are collated, for questions which have different marks for 1 Unit and 2 Unit, the conversions are done mathematically. Each student's response is double-marked by separate markers and, if their assessment of the response differs, it is marked a third time

The Higher School Certificate is based on the Students' Outcomes which are listed for each topic in the Studies of Religion Syllabus; teachers and students should make frequent reference to this document. The wording of the questions refers to and, whenever possible, actually quotes from the Outcomes listed in the Syllabus document. **Students should** *read all parts* of the question and *plan their answers* before they begin to write.

On the other hand, questions are structured in such a way that students presenting prepared answers will seldom gain maximum marks. As in other HSIE subjects, students should be warned of the consequences of simply providing previously prepared answers. Moreover, those who provide information about *only one variant* of a religious tradition (rather than the tradition as a whole) should be warned that their answers will be penalised.

Students should be encouraged to attempt questions in areas of the Syllabus that they have actually studied. Sometimes questions in other parts of the examination paper may look appealing, but those who attempt questions in areas they have not studied seldom attain high marks. Their answers tend to be superficial, lacking in depth or appropriate examples, and seldom make adequate comparison, when required, between appropriate religious traditions and the variants within those traditions.

In spite of these comments which apply to only a minority of candidates, the standard of the examination process continues to rise each year.

It is particularly encouraging to note that Studies of Religion is being introduced in an increasing number of government and non-government schools at both 1 Unit and 2 Unit levels.

This report should be read in conjunction with the 1996 Studies of Religion Sample Answers.

SECTION 1: FOUNDATION STUDIES

Question 1: Compulsory

This question included the pie chart on "Religious Affiliation in Australia". This pie chart provided information from the 1991 census.

(a) Name ONE denomination from the 'Other Christians' category and ONE religious tradition from the 'Others' category.

Considerable criticism was levelled at this part of this question, with teachers, in particular, claiming that this was primary school work and that every student would automatically score 2 marks. This was not the case.

The responses showed that a large number of students could not recognise the *difference* between a Christian denomination and a religious tradition *as it is understood in the context of the Studies of Religion Syllabus* and this should be examined as a matter of urgency.

For example, a large number of students erroneously placed Judaism in the 23% 'Other Christians" category (that is Christian but neither Catholic **nor** Anglican). Some had no idea of what a denomination or a religious tradition is and listed things such as Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah and Baptism.

Any of the generally recognised Christian denominations was accepted but the generic *Protestant, Church of England or C of E* (included in the 24% Anglicans) or Roman Catholic (included in the 27% Catholics) were not accepted.

In the 26% Others category, the recognised name of every religious tradition other than Christianity was accepted, but not variants, and not New Age, No Religion nor Scientology which are not religious traditions in the context of the Studies of Religion Syllabus.

(b) Give two reasons for the large percentage of Catholics and Anglicans in the Australian population.

This was worth two marks and required one well-expressed paragraph on the influence of the First Fleet and two hundred years of immigration including post-war immigration.

(c) In 1971, 0.8% of the Australian population belonged to religious traditions other than Christianity. By 1991 this figure had increased to 2.7%. How is this increase reflected in the changing experiences of life in Australia?

This part was worth 6 marks and was considered to be suitably thought-provoking, since it required candidates to use information in an analytical fashion in order to explain why the proportion of the population belonging to a religious tradition other than Christianity had increased from 0.8% to 2.7% between 1971 and 1991 and to show how the increase is reflected in 'the changing experiences of life in Australia'.

The better responses commented on the diversity of religion in Australia and provided accurate evidence and specific examples rather than the generic *immigration*.

The best responses discussed the changes rather than simply listing them, and their examples were of religious change rather than cultural change.

Less successful answers either did not provide sufficient information or their answers reflected an inadequate knowledge of the variants within traditions; as a result they scored lower marks

General Comments

Some answers to Question 1(b), whilst being well and sometimes superbly written, were far too long relative to the 2 marks available, especially when compared with the length required for answers to part (c) which were worth 6 marks.

SECTION II: FOUNDATION STUDIES

2 UNIT ONLY

Question 2: Aboriginal Spirituality (2 Unit course only: 414 responses)

This question began with the poem and map which were to be used as stimulus material. Given that the heading within the box was ABORIGINAL MAP OF AUSTRALIA, it was assumed that students would recognise the fact that the map was an illustration of the poem and that the two items should be discussed together.

A poem and an Aboriginal Map of Australia were included here.

- (a) Name TWO aspects of Aboriginal spirituality referred to in the above poem and illustration. Comment on their significance in Aboriginal spirituality.
- (b) In recent years there has been a revival of Aboriginal beliefs, ritual practices, spirituality and cultures.

In what ways has this revival contributed to contemporary Australian spirituality?

Above Average Responses

- (a) In responses to this part candidates were able to identify two aspects of Aboriginal spirituality and show clear comprehension and understanding of them. They correctly focused the discussion on the connection of the aspects in terms of Aboriginal cosmology.
- (b) In this part candidates understood and clearly demonstrated the direction of the question. Examples selected for discussion ranged from the increasing inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in our national and religious identity to their contribution to our growing appreciation of our need for tolerance, acceptance of diversity with minimal factual error, and reconciliation. The best answers provided a historical perspective as a focus for the answer. They presented a range of ways in which Aboriginal spirituality contributes to contemporary Australian spirituality.

Average Responses

For part (a) these included an answer in which one aspect was treated well, but provided little coverage of the second, or an answer which was very descriptive but lacked a stimulus focus. The two specific aspects were often treated in isolation without demonstrating awareness of their essential interconnection within Aboriginal spirituality.

Below Average Answers

Candidates in this category focused on the change in the social status of Aboriginal people in Australian society. Mostly they included only a few disjointed facts on Aboriginal spirituality as well as some inaccuracies or irrelevancies.

- (b) The answers to this part were vague and lacked appropriate examples.
- (c) Here the weakest candidates were unable to provide a single relevant example of recent attempts to overcome differences between Aboriginal spirituality and contemporary Australian spirituality.

Question 1 (1 Unit) or Question 3 (2 Unit) : Social Issues (5135 responses)

The Australian churches are involved in social justice and welfare issues like political rights, land rights, unemployment, gambling and poverty.

Choose ONE of these issues OR another you have studied, and:

- (a) name and outline the issue
- (b) describe the contribution of the churches to his issue
- (c) comment on how successful the contribution has been.

Above Average Responses

The best of these responses offered a *clear understanding* of the ways in which various religious institutions have met and continue to meet the need(s) which they have identified over the years. The issue chosen was clearly connected with social justice and/or welfare and the connection was made clear. Specific information was given with accurate reference to particular Christian denominations. In these responses students included information based on historical data while emphasising and evaluating present-day church activities, the success of such activities being shown in quantitative and qualitative terms. Evidence was presented and the best examples referred to the **churches**, rather than concentrating on **one** church or organisation.

Average Responses

These responses offered a more generalised approach. They named the relevant issue, but gave very little outline other than a definition and superficial description, usually on one church or institution such as St Vincent de Paul or the Salvation Army, often based on general knowledge

rather than what had been studied in the Studies of Religion Course. There was a tendency to list rather than integrate information as well as some indication of prepared answers which did not fit the question.

Below Average Responses

These showed little understanding or knowledge of the requirements of the Studies of Religion Syllabus and consequently showed little understanding of social justice or welfare issues, making almost no reference to the role of Australian churches in the issue selected. For example, political rights were treated as history only and some responses tended to be on an emotive and personal level rather than a factual level.

At this point there is a need to emphasise to schools that the Studies of Religion Syllabus is *outcomes driven*. It must also be pointed out that the last section of the Foundation Studies, i.e. the Social Justice section, must be covered as thoroughly as other sections of the Syllabus.

Question 4 (2 Unit and Question 3 (1 Unit) : Spiritual Search (772 responses)

A significant proportion of Australians claim no religion. However, there are many indications of dissatisfaction with material values and searching for a spiritual dimension in life.

- (a) Name and describe TWO groups or movements that are involve din such a search for the spiritual dimension in life.
- (b) Choose ONE of these groups or movements and discuss its search for the spiritual dimensions of life. In your answer, refer to the developments of religious diversity in Australia.

Above Average Responses

These had a very good understanding of the search for the spiritual dimension of life, away from the mainstream Christian denominations. There was an informed discussion of religious diversity and candidates linked their answers to the spiritual search of the group. Examples included New Age Spirituality, Scientology, Anglo-Europeans leaving mainstream Christian denominations and converting to Buddhism.

Average Responses

In these, candidates wrote in general terms about what the various groups outside the mainstream Christian denominations had to offer in the way of spiritual search, or wrote about diversity. There were some prepared answers on religious diversity which were not related to the question.

Below Average Responses

Here candidates named groups but provided only a limited number of facts about them. Some found the stimulus misleading, took the words *no religion* and then wrote about that, sometimes at great length. Some of the groups or movements identified by candidates in this category as being involved in the *spiritual search* included the following (in alphabetical order but using the spelling provided by the candidates):

Age of Movement, Anarchism, Ancient Astronomy, Antioch, Australian Rules, Benign Buddhist Monks, Brotherhood of the Bright Spiritual Light, Celestines, Children's Variety Club, Chinese, Christ and Surf, (Christian) Surfers, Civil Religion, Combined Churches Association, Dissatisfied Christian Movement. Contraception. 'Doorknockers'. Evangelicals, Falling Down Cult of Canada, Ferals (Byron Bay), Festival of Lights, Flynn of the Inland Service, Free Fishes, Ecumenism, Gay and Lesbian Group, Generation X, Gothics, Hairy Christians, Hairy Chritina, Heaven and Hell, Indians, Inner Peace Movement (Mowguai Temple), Inner-faith marriages, IVF, Little Pebble Group, Middle Age People, Migration, Minority Ethnic Groups that focus on Relaxation, Multicultural Nation, Naturalists, Nihilists, Nomads from Queensland, Nominalists, Occult, Other People, Pentecostal Church such as Buddhists, People, Philosophy, Quasi Religious Movements, Rastafarianism, Reformation, Sporting Teams, Schools, Seakism, Sectarianism, Smith Family, Snake Cult, St Vincent de Paul, Syncretism, The Dissatisfied Christiana Movement, The Law, Unknowns, Wowserism, Young People, Youth groups, Young Population of Contemporary Australian Society.

SECTION III: CROSS-RELIGION STUDIES

In the section of the paper, 2 Unit candidates were required to select TWO questions while 1 Unit candidates were required to select ONE question only. Teachers and students are reminded of the instructions at the beginning of this section; viz:

NOTE: In Section III the term 'religious tradition' refers only

to Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, or Judaism. Candidates should demonstrate an awareness of the whole tradition and not simply focus

on one variant of a tradition.

Because these questions have different numbers on the 2 Unit and the 1 Unit papers, they will be referred go by their name in the Syllabus.

Question 5: Rites of Passage (3186 responses)

- (a) Why are religious rites of passage important to any society?
- (b) Describe the ritual associated with ONE rite of passage in ONE religious tradition you have studied. How does this ritual reflect the beliefs and practices of the people involved?
- (c) Compare the ritual you have described with a similar rite of passage of another religious tradition you have studied. Analyse their common features and differences. Show how these relate to the teachings of the TWO religious traditions.

Above Average Responses

The factual aspects of this topic had been very well taught (and learnt), and the quality of responses was considerably better than in previous years. Above average candidates explained in part (a) how the rite of passage *transports an individual* from one state to the other. The responses were written in an articulate and logical manner and provided adequate recognition of the variants within a particular religious tradition. They reflected an understanding of the rituals associated with the rite of passage and the symbolism associated with those rituals. The answers were well organised, emphasised equally the two traditions chosen and, most important of all, acknowledged variants within those traditions.

Average Responses

These answers offered factual details related to the question but were unable to offer any synthesis. Candidates often knew the different elements of the Rites of Passage studies, but did not adequately relate that knowledge to the question. They did, however, offer some concept of what a rite of passage is and provided appropriate examples.

Below Average Responses

In these, candidates displayed a superficial understanding of what a rite of passage is but their responses lacked suitable detail, although they tried hard to provide any synthesis of knowledge and focused on a limited description of Rite of Passage.

Question 6: Religion and Ethics (2951 responses)

- (a) Describe the relationship between ethics and moral behaviour.
- (b) Choose ONE religious tradition you have studied. Using examples, show whether a clear ethical system exists in this tradition.
- (c) Choose TWO ethical issues. With reference to a religious tradition different from that chose in part (b), discuss the ethical guidance given, and the sources of this guidance, for these two issues.

Above Average Responses

These responses included a good working definition of *ethics* and *moral behaviour*. In part (a) they showed clear understanding (with examples) of both ethical systems in the TWO religious traditions they had chosen and the actual sources from which those ethical systems have been derived. The very best answers had a clear understanding of the rational and practical construction of ethical systems and used a broad range of examples to support the position taken.

Average Responses

These often showed a thorough knowledge of the topic but failed to discuss the questions asked or, sometimes, even misinterpreted the questions.

There was little skill in analysis evident in the answers, and some confusion about what issues needed to be treated in part (c), with some responses examining two minor issues from within the same broad issue. Some did not use variants of religious traditions to answer the question.

Below Average Responses

There was little understanding of *ethical systems* as a system of thought and answers frequently touched on only one variant within a tradition, particularly Christianity. Sometimes candidates chose ethical issues not designated in the Syllabus. Although this was a question on Religion and Ethics, a small group of students chose issues which were not ethical issues at all and, as a result, gained few marks.

Question 7: Sacred Writings and Stories (222 responses)

- (a) Give THREE reasons why believers identify particular writings and stories as 'sacred'.
- (b) Describe the origins of sacred writings and stories of TWO religious traditions. Comment on similarities and differences in these origins.
- (c) Identify ONE theme in the sacred writings and stories of TWO religious traditions. Using examples, analyse the treatment of this theme in the TWO traditions.

Above Average Responses

This was thought to be a challenging question and offered a good scope for discrimination between candidates. In it students were expected to be familiar with the Syllabus Outcomes. It gave the better students sufficient scope to show their understanding and to develop their analysis. The very best answers in this group were based on *detailed* knowledge of the texts. In them candidates cited specific relevant texts, analysed them in relation to the origins and themes, and also compared and contrasted various sacred writings from their chosen religious traditions. Most importantly, these candidates answered the question that was asked on the examination paper.

Average Responses

In these responses candidates generally knew about the texts but showed little intimate knowledge of them. There was either little or no analysis or a disproportionate treatment of the two traditions. At times the treatment of the texts and themes was superficial.

Below Average Responses

There appeared to be students who had chosen this question without having studied this area of the Syllabus, consequently their responses were very poor. For those who had studied the area, the clearest discriminator was knowledge of the texts and how such knowledge applied to specific questions.

Question 8: Ways of Holiness (120 responses)

- (a) Describe THREE difficulties that believers may have to overcome in following ordinary ways of holiness in their everyday lives. Refer to ONE religious tradition only.
- (b) Using examples from the religious tradition yo u have studied, discuss how society has influenced the ways of prayer and expressions of spirituality of the ordinary believer.
- (c) Identify any special ways of holiness in TWO traditions. Analyse the ways in which these have developed in response to changes in the TWO religious traditions.

Above Average Responses

These identified the key words in the question and discussed them accurately. They provided three *distinct* responses to the difficulties in part (a) and showed a high degree of familiarity with the ways in which society has affected the development of prayer over a period of time.

In part (c) they displayed thorough understanding of *special* ways of holiness. They were aware of the changes that have taken place within ordinary and special ways of holiness and provided a good discussion of the responses to change as well as lucid analysis of *how* and every *why* the changes took place in two traditions. The very best responses provided a discussion of variations in special ways of holiness within each of the traditions they had studied.

Average Responses

In these candidates tended to respond only at the level of description. They described, often at great length, the ordinary ways of holiness within the tradition but generally were not so competent in describing the special ways of holiness. In part (a) the difficulties were not as clearly defined or explained. Some students possessed little concept of changes to ways of holiness within religious traditions, while weaker answers either contained inaccuracies or used poor examples.

Below Average Responses

These were only basic attempts at answering the question. They confused the distinction between ordinary and special ways of holiness while, in the poorest answers, candidates appeared to be unaware of any special ways of holiness at all. Sometimes they made only brief mention of the TWO traditions they were supposed to have studied, concentrated only on one variant or included major inaccuracies.

Question 9: Teachers and Interpreters (126 responses)

It would he nice to think that religious beliefs are constant and unchanging, but every age interprets religious beliefs in new and different ways. There are always new insights that change religious ideas and practices.

- (a) Do you agree that every age interprets religious beliefs in new and different ways? Illustrate your answer with TWO examples from ONE religious tradition.
- (b) Choose an individual (other than the founder) or a school of thought from a religious tradition different from that used in part (a). Describe the new insights they presented that led to change in religious ideas and practices.
- (c) Analyse the role of significant teachers and interpreters in causing or healing divisions within their religious traditions. Use examples from TWO religious traditions.

Above Average Responses

Students in this category examined all parts of the question in detail and did more than merely describe individual teachers or interpreters or schools of thought within religious traditions. They successfully synthesised knowledge and integrated examples with statements made about individual persons or groups. It was generally felt that the questions had an effective structure and ranked the students well.

Average Responses

These responses were very descriptive. They reflected a reasonable knowledge of the lives of the teachers or interpreters that had been studied but showed that here candidates were unable to use the higher order skills. They usually illustrated their statements with examples, but some answers were repetitive, while some used the same people in part (b) as they did in part (a).

Below Average Responses

These answers were brief and were full of inaccuracies showing, by the students' inability to interpret the question, that they had not studied the topic. They were repetitive and the tradition chosen in part (a) was often also use din part (b); some answers had no relevance to the question at all.

Question 10: Women and Religion (567 responses)

Women can be said to have played an integral part in the development of religious traditions.

- (a) Comment on this statement using TWO examples from ONE religious tradition.
- (b) Choose a religious tradition different from that used in part (a). Describe TWO examples where women have been influential EITHER in the life of the founder OR in the religious stories of the early period of that tradition.
- (c) Contemporary women have had to develop their own responses to the challenges facing their religious traditions at the end of the twentieth century. Describe ONE of these challenges. Discuss how women today, from TWO religious traditions, have influenced the responses of their traditions to this challenge.

Above Average Responses

The three parts of this question examined *the whole topic* and allowed for flexibility in the examples which the student could choose. Candidates were given a chance to show what they had studied and part (c) was appropriately searching. All parts of the question were carefully analysed and answered and the best responses referred to appropriate source documents.

In part (a) the best responses chose appropriate examples and reflected an accurate understanding of the historical framework within which their responses were developed. In part (b) these candidates showed their understanding of the term *early period* and *accurately* defined this term. They demonstrated their skills of clear and critical analysis with a good synthesis of information.

Average Responses

The information in these responses tended to be biographical, with little attempt at synthesis or evaluation. Students provided detailed information about the women chosen but were unable to show appreciation of the influence that these women had on their particular religious tradition. Some answers lacked both freshness and spontaneity.

Below Average Responses

These answers, which provided little specific information or knowledge, often contained inaccurate statements, while a confusion of time-frames sometimes resulted in totally incorrect examples being chosen. Part (c), in particular, was very poorly handled by the candidates in this category. Often the response was generic rather than consisting of specific examples as required by the question. There was little understanding of the influence of such women on religious tradition.

MARKING SCALES FOR SECTION II: SOCIAL ISSUES QUESTION

Question 2 I Unit Question 3 2 Unit

	Best		Above Average		Average		Below Average		Well below Average		
Part (a) 3	3	10%	3	20%	2	40%	1	20%	1	10%	
Name and outline the issue	 Clearly names social justice or welfare issue Response outlines the sense in which the named term is a social justice or welfare issue. Clear description. Issues which are not self-evidently social justice/welfare issues must be argued from a social justice/welfare point of view to score in this range. 				Names social just welfare issue Definition of a te poverty is" No attempt to ou how the term is a or welfare issue A purely descript response	erm, e.g.	Issue named only OR An example of issue not named (See page 23 of Syllabus for reference)				
Part (b) 5	5	10%	4	20%	3	40%	2	20%	1	10%	
Describe the contribution of the churches to the issue	More than one denomination Clearly defined connection betwissue, institution contribution Some historical perspective		More than one denomination or one done well Some connection between the issue/institution and its contribution		 Maybe different issue to part a One denomination or list of institutions Contribution not necessarily connected to institution or issue 		 One denomination General description Little or no understanding of issue. 		Some related facts		
Part (c) 7	7 6	10%	5	20%	4 3	40%	2	20%	1	10%	
Comment on how successful this contribution has been Comment on how successful this contribution has been. • Responses dealing with historical issues must make reference to ongoing/contemporary context of the issue.	Clear description contribution Some attempt to demonstrate suc failure) of churce Evidence/ suppor validates candid choice. Maybe some disc of far reaching e Relationship of contribution to vasociety.	cess (or hes ort that ate's cussion ffect.	Clear description of the contribution Two denominations or institutions or one done well Demonstrated success or failure. Must include contemporary context.		Perhaps only one denomination Limited/narrow view of issue Descriptive/or solely historical Maybe only addressed one part of the answer (limited view) Little or no description		Generic list of church organizations Emotive Little or no description		Some related fact.		

In Part (a) the percentage of scripts in each category should be interpreted less tightly than normally is the case.

Anticipated range of mean and standard deviation: MEAN 8.5 STANDARD DEVIATION 3.5

MARKING SCALES FOR SECTION III: RELIGION & ETHICS QUESTION

	Best		Above Average		Average		Below Average		Well Below Average			
Part (a) 6	6	10%	5		20%	4	3	40%	2	20%		
This part generally requires factual description	describes both shows relationship in detail and accurately could give examples to illustrate OR excellent demonstration		describes both AND shows relationship in some way could give good example without demonstration of relationship good attempt to describe relationship		unclear idea of relationship attempt at definitions		no relationship at all could have attempted at relationship only one definition		no relevant facts no relationship			
Part (b) 9	9	10%	8 7		20%	6	5 4	40%	3 2	20%	1	10%
This part requires specific explanation.	 Argues for clarity/non clarity justified by use of examples must use variants no significant errors 		demonstrates clarity/non clarity with justification by correct examples OR states clarity/non clarity with justification by examples no significant errors		 states 2 correct examples use of 1 variant only some errors clear references to sources of system without justification 		 statement without examples 1/2 relevant facts OR example only 		 incorrect data no relevant facts 			
Part (c) 15	15 14 13 12	10%	11 10	9	20%	8 7	6 5	40%	4 3 2	20%	1	10%
This part requires higher order skills and synthesis.	2 issues, different tradition from part (b) clearly demonstrated guidance and linked to accurate sources		limited discussion of sources and guidance no link between source and guidance		 use of same tradition as part (b) one issue discussed only OR either guidance OR sources 2 issues, different tradition to (b) but weak and limited discussion 		identified tradition and 2 issues inaccurate discussion no links		attempt to answer, no relevant facts 2 issues, different tradition to part (b)			

You may exercise mild discretion if candidates give responses in one Section which would have been rewarded in another.

Anticipated range of mean and standard deviation: MEAN 15 STANDARD DEVIATION 7