

2024 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject:	Religious Studies
Level:	1
Achievement standard(s):	91918, 91919

General commentary

This was the fourth year that the Level 1 Religious Studies achievement standards were offered. 2024 was the first year that these achievement standards moved status from RAS (Review of Achievement Standards) to BAU (business as usual). Because of this, the number of candidates who entered and sat these assessments increased by over 100% from 2023.

Successful candidates were able to craft a response to their choice of question and demonstrated an understanding within two different religious or spiritual traditions, and not just outline aspects from other areas of the Social Science curriculum.

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 91918: Demonstrate understanding of a characteristic of religious or spiritual traditions

Assessment

The assessment consisted of three questions. Candidates were required to answer one question by referring to two religious or spiritual traditions.

Commentary

The assessment results highlighted several key areas where candidates' responses fell short, preventing them from achieving higher grades. Below is an analysis of the trends observed across the responses and some recommendations for improvement.

A small number of candidates saw this examination as a platform to discuss their opinions of other religious groups in a very negative way, while some chose to get very political about past and current governments. Candidates must move past this and address their chosen question to meet the explanatory notes of the achievement standard.

A number of responses to question one missed outlining the meaning of the characteristic. Even if this is not directly asked for in the question, it is expected that candidates understand what is required to reach the different levels of the achievement standard.

Many responses demonstrated surface-level engagement with the material. For instance, candidates frequently identified key rituals or beliefs, but needed to explore their broader implications or connections. Encouraging candidates to delve deeper into the significance of these elements and their broader theological and social contexts could significantly improve the quality of responses.

Successful candidates provided a quality of evidence within their responses. Excellence-level responses required detailed, specific, and well-supported explanations.

Candidates must be guided to effectively incorporate diverse and precise evidence to substantiate their arguments.

While candidates often compared aspects of different religious traditions, the comparisons were frequently superficial, focusing more on similarities than differences. Candidates should engage in detailed, nuanced comparisons, highlighting convergences and divergences with equal rigour to attain higher grades.

A lack of understanding of the theological context behind certain rituals or beliefs was evident. For instance, candidates found it difficult explaining the theological foundations underpinning practices, such as Communion. Ensuring a robust grasp of these contexts is critical for developing higher-quality responses.

Candidates often overlooked opportunities to explore the broader implications of rituals and beliefs. For instance, aspects such as the impact of religious practices on communal identity, ethical living, or spiritual renewal were rarely addressed. Encouraging candidates to consider these dimensions could enhance their responses.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- correctly described the aspect in two religious/spiritual traditions, with meaning explicitly or implicitly included. This meant that candidates could identify and describe key rituals or beliefs within two different religious or spiritual traditions. They provided statements that included the significance or meaning of these aspects, either directly or through implied understanding
- described multiple rituals within the religious traditions they discussed, in Question 2. While they could describe these rituals accurately and provided some context about their importance, they generally required more detail to reach Achievement with Merit. This was because their descriptions, although correct, needed more depth and comprehensive analysis to explore the significance and implications of the rituals fully. As a result, their responses were awarded Achievement marks, recognising their fundamental understanding and accurate descriptions, but not the higher level of insight and detail required for Merit.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- provided detailed descriptions and relevant evidence for the aspects they discussed. However, while their responses were rich in information, they often needed to make explicit connections to the broader impact of these aspects on the religious or spiritual traditions
- demonstrated a good understanding of the rituals or beliefs within the traditions, but needed to explore the more profound significance or implications of these practices. For example, they might have explained the rituals accurately, but did not delve into how they shaped the lives of adherents or the community
- included comparisons between different religious or spiritual traditions, which helped to highlight similarities and differences. However, these comparisons were often superficial and needed to fully explore the unique characteristics of the deeper theological or cultural contexts
- showed an ability to identify key themes and concepts within the traditions, but needed more analytical depth to connect these themes to broader societal, ethical, or spiritual implications
- used clear and balanced evidence to support their explanations, but the evidence could have been more sufficiently detailed and specific to support their arguments fully. More precise and comprehensive evidence would have strengthened their responses.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- focused on ethical beliefs within their responses to Question 1. Candidates were able to provide more comprehensive and insightful answers. They described the ethical beliefs and explored their significance and implications within the religious or spiritual traditions. By doing so, they demonstrated a deeper understanding of how these beliefs shape the actions and behaviours of adherents
- examined the impact of aspects that led to social justice actions. Candidates often made connections between their ethical beliefs and their practical applications in promoting social justice. For example, they might have discussed how the ethical teachings of a religion inspire adherents to engage in charitable activities, advocate for human rights, or work towards social equality. By highlighting these connections, candidates showed how ethical beliefs are not just theoretical concepts, but have real-world implications that contribute to the betterment of society.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- answered about only one religious/spiritual tradition with enough detail for Achievement. This meant that while candidates provided a detailed and accurate description of one religious or spiritual tradition, they could have done better for a second tradition. For example, a candidate might have thoroughly explained the significance of Easter in Christianity, but did not provide any level of detail for a ritual in another tradition, such as Passover in Judaism
- compared Catholics to Christians, where Catholics are Christians
- confused philosophy with religion, for example, Epicurus and Mos Maiorum.

Achievement standard 91919: Demonstrate understanding of perspectives of different religious or spiritual communities on an issue

Assessment

The assessment consisted of three questions. Candidates were required to address one question based on their chosen context, by writing a report incorporating the perspectives of two religious or spiritual communities.

Commentary

Candidates engaged well with the topic areas for the scenarios, however, more could have been done to explain the applicable principles behind the scenarios.

Even though it was a requirement of the 2024 Achievement Standard – 91919, some candidates found it difficult to reach Achievement with Excellence by examining two different religious or spiritual communities on an issue and staying within the recommended word count.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- identified and described a perspective of two religious or spiritual communities on an issue, however, their description of the two communities may have been unbalanced
- identified appropriate examples, however, they were somewhat limited in their detail.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- explained the principles behind the perspectives of two different religious or spiritual communities on the issue
- provided examples of religious principles that enhanced their explanation

- used direct quotes that were pertinent to the explanation.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- discussed how the principles informed the perspectives of different religious or spiritual communities on an issue, with reference to the wider social context
- gave examples of both principles and how the principles were applied in broader social context
- interwove their examples into their discussion to highlight important points.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- described only one religion
- did not provide examples for their response.