

Assessing homework

Some teachers' thoughts



SLSS Religious Education Support

Sources

www.borrowbooks.ie allows anyone with a local library card to reserve books through their local library.

Additional reading is one way in which students can develop their understanding of a topic.

Teachers' Guidelines mentions several books and websites related to each topic on the course. It may be worth accessing some of these occasionally.

Use techniques from Assessment for Learning etc.

Pitfalls noticed by teachers

- Omitting part of a question, e.g. part B, or only giving one example where two are required.
- Not setting a context for the reader – no relevant background information offered.
- Answers that lack substance – little attention to detail, or poor explanation / elaboration in the answers.
- Inaccuracies / errors of information.
- Knowledge and understanding not offered in a clear, concise manner.
- Answers too vague and general to merit high credit.

Teachers' recommendations

A homework answer should be coherent – have a beginning, middle and end. It may be useful to plan an answer in terms of the following:

Beginning	Middle	End
Set context. Relevant background information. Define terms.	Information: knowledge, understanding & skills. Use examples, references, links.	Conclusion. Sum up. Key point. New point or question.

- One key point in each paragraph.
-

- Adopt a simple formula:
 1. definition of term
 2. relevant examples
 3. elaboration / explanation / analysis etc
- Ensure relevance of answer to the question asked.
- Avoid generalisations & vagueness: be specific.
- Ensure answer is substantial / detailed / well explained.
- References where relevant.
- KUSA square – in relation to the objectives.
- Demonstrate engagement.

Before answering: instruct students to...

Read the question in its entirety so that they understand what is required in each part of the question.

Circle key words in the question – e.g. outline / two examples...

Adhere to time boundary. Expect students to write at greater length for a homework task than they may be able to write for National Assessment.

Brainstorm all relevant information / content / key words

Possible relevant links from elsewhere in the course to draw on to enhance the answer?

Begin with a clear statement / reference / quotation / definition⁶



Some teachers' observations on Answer 1:

Compare the way in which the community of believers is structured in two of the following major world religions:

- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism

General observations about Answer 1:

- Student had some understanding of the concept of '*community*' in 2 world religions, but only a limited understanding of how the community of believers is structured in the 2 religions, as specified in the question.
- This answer gives a general comparison between 2 religions. The question is not asking for a comparison between 2 religions.
- Quite a vague, loosely assembled collection of observations about the 2 religions but deviates from the point of the question. Therefore it strays into irrelevant material (e.g. the Five Pillars of Islam... these are mentioned but not for any specific purpose in terms of answering the question).

-
- Role of leadership and authority not explained sufficiently in the 2 religions.
 - Statements are made with no explanation or elaboration. The answer is definitely not substantial or detailed enough to merit a high level of praise.
 - It is inaccurate to say that the role of the Imam and that of the priest are the same – ‘in charge of prayers and the Mass’ etc.
 - There is unnecessary repetition about believers praying and believing in God.

Other specific criticisms:

- *Jesus and God are one but not everyone believes this... who is '**not everyone**'?* How does this relate to the question?

- *Some say that he was a prophet... Who is referred to here? Why is this point relevant in the answer?*

- *They both come together to pray... Who is '**they**'?* The point is unclear – do they assemble as separate communities or is this about inter-faith dialogue?

- Student mentions **holy days** e.g. Easter and Christmas; Ramadan & Eid-ul-Fitr. Some of the literature claims that the latter two are festivals, not holy days. Also, what effect do they have on the life or structure of the community of believers? This is not addressed in the answer.

- Role of the **Bible** and the **Qu'ran**: student doesn't explain sacred texts as sources of authority for the communities, or varieties of interpretative approaches.

- Student mentions prayer, pilgrimage, confession, Pillars of Islam etc. Student does not link these to the question or elaborate on how they affect the community / communities.
-

- Student mentions various divisions within the communities but fails to elaborate on these or give more detail.

- No mention of the role of the Caliph in relation to the role of the Pope, authority and leadership in the community / issue of the Shi'a belief in the divine right to rule and to teach (Muhammad's family).

- No mention of the Umma – worldwide community of Muslims.

- No mention of the mission of both religions / communities.

Despite these criticisms.....

It was felt that there were points worth meriting for the student:



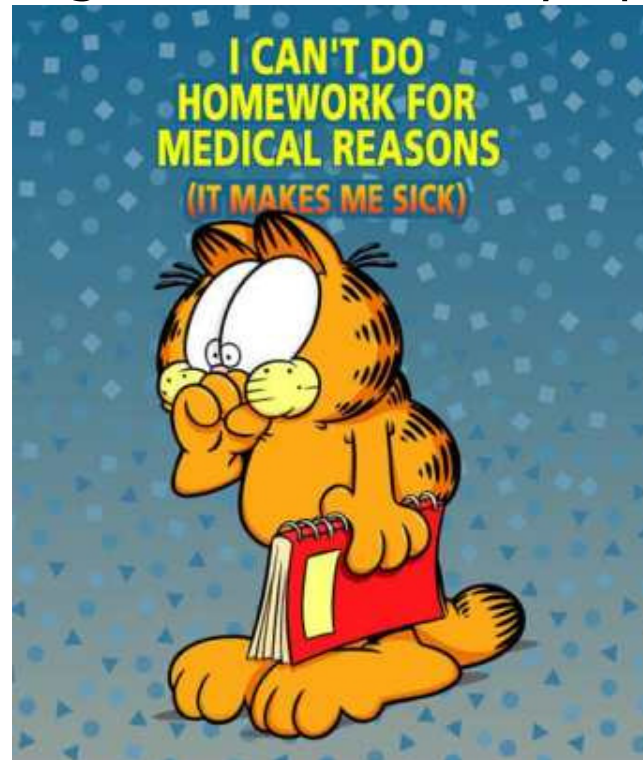
- The student demonstrates some level of understanding of the nature of community in 2 religions.
-

- Student acknowledges prayer, belief in God/Allah, pilgrimage, holy days etc as in some way connected to the life of the community of believers.
- Student has an implicit / general understanding that sacred texts and leadership roles within the communities are connected to authority and leadership within the community structure.
- Quite a few points are included in what is a 'relatively' short answer.
- Student has understood the prompt word 'compare' and has made a good effort to establish links / similarities / differences between points / themes related to community structure in the 2 religions.

- There would appear to be some understanding of the relevant objectives.

-
- Most of the information is accurate.

- The student has made a reasonable attempt to answer the question, even though there are many apparent shortcomings.



Teachers' Advice:

- Detail of answer needs attention – needs more elaboration & explanation.
-
- Avoid vague generalities e.g. 'Jesus and God are one but not everyone believes this...'
 - Keep points relevant to the question asked.
 - Use paragraphs / bullet points to build up an answer around some key points.
 - Check back over the inaccuracies referred to and amend them.
 - Include other relevant information e.g. authority of sacred text and how it is interpreted by the Sunni and Shi'a communities.
 - Keep the answer more focused and coherent – as it stands, it tends to jump rapidly from one general point to the next without giving any serious treatment to anything in particular that is relevant to the question asked.

Homework

I hate homework
Yes I do all kids
do, especially me
Kids have homework
every so give us a
break let teachers do
and let them feel the pain.
AND THAT IS MY PAIN.
homework. Thank you.

