Formal coursework in religious studies is not required for this competition, though students should give evidence of an interest in and openness to the study of religion in all of its forms, ancient and modern.

The exam will be an essay. The student will be given a text (two or three paragraphs) selected from the corpus of world religious literature. The student will be given a topic suggested by the text, asked to formulate a thesis position with respect to that topic and offer evidence - drawn from the supplied text - in support of the position taken. The evaluation of the exam will focus on how well and how directly the student has engaged the text provided.

Time allowed: 2 hrs. Notes allowed for the exam: no

Example of an exam:

Given the story we know of Moses and his origins in the bulrushes cast into the Nile by his mother, what do you make of the following narrative dated about 1,000 prior to Moses (Moses dated 1220 BCE) and associated with Sargon, a famous leader of the earlier Akkadian empire. What does it tell us about how sacred stories work in the history of religion?

**Ancient History Sourcebook: The Legend of Sargon of Akkadê, c. 2300 BCE**

1. Sargon, the mighty king, king of Akkadê am I,
2. My mother was lowly; my father I did not know;
3. The brother of my father dwelt in the mountain.
4. My city is Azupiranu, which is situated on the bank of the Purattu [Euphrates],
5. My lowly mother conceived me, in secret she brought me forth.
6. She placed me in a basket of reeds, she closed my entrance with bitumen,
7. She cast me upon the rivers which did not overflow me.
8. The river carried me, it brought me to Akki, the irrigator.
9. Akki, the irrigator, in the goodness of his heart lifted me out,
10. Akki, the irrigator, as his own son brought me up;
11. Akki, the irrigator, as his gardener appointed me.
12. When I was a gardener the goddess Ishtar loved me,
13. And for four years I ruled the kingdom.
14. The black-headed peoples I ruled, I governed;
15. Mighty mountains with axes of bronze I destroyed (?).

16. I ascended the upper mountains;

17. I burst through the lower mountains.

18. The country of the sea I besieged three times;

19. Dilmun I captured (?)

20. Unto the great Dur-ilu I went up, I . . . . . .


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