



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback
Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Religious Studies A Level
Paper 4E: Judaism

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Introduction

The general understanding of this paper continues to improve year on year and so it was reassuring to note, that most centres have strengthened the preparation of their candidates to meet the criteria of this specification. The candidates who did well demonstrated a personal engagement with the concepts and were also able to develop their responses well. However, there were some candidates who, although they demonstrated knowledge, did not fully articulate this in order to show understanding.

It was encouraging to see that the majority of candidates attempted all the questions.

There were examples of good quality, competent and outstanding work. Where it was applicable, candidates made good use of the context of the topic under consideration eg in Q3(b) Maimonides and in Q4 Rabbinic Judaism. Work in response to Q02 was good in terms of the range of topics covered. Many candidates were proficient in their use of technical language. This was seen in answers to Q3(a) showing a good analysis and understanding of the text.

There were examples of good practice in creating high quality work in the introductions and conclusions. Some developed effective skills in working on evaluative skills for AO2, often seen in Q4 but also in Q3(b).

The questions on the paper this year were:

Q1: Explore the key ideas of Judah Halevi.

Q2: Assess the view that ethical monotheism is significant for Jews.

Q3(a): Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage as a summary of the fundamental teachings of Judaism.

Q3(b): Analyse the view that Maimonides is considered to be the most important of Jewish scholars.

Q4: Evaluate the significance of Rabbinic Judaism for Jewish belief.

Better responses were able to establish relevance and this in turn enabled examiners to identify why a particular point had been made. Good candidates clearly reflected on issues, rather than merely learning them, thus providing thoughtful insights. In doing so, they were able to offer effective arguments. Successful candidates were consistent throughout the paper in demonstrating sound knowledge and understanding such as

Question 1

Some of the better answers gave a careful and detailed selection of the key ideas such as his role as a prolific poet, his work in the *Kusari* offering a systematic, comprehensive philosophy of the Land of Israel; his influence on Rabbinic Judaism, his position on the role of reason etc.

Weak answers were limited and focused primarily on his role as a poet and his response to the diaspora.

Question 2

This question was clearly well done by the majority of candidates and nearly all comfortably managed to get full marks for AO1 content. AO2 saw some quality 'assessing' a solid recognition of the significance of a range of features such as its Abrahamic emergence, it being a central and foundational belief, God as the source of all morality etc. some good answers demonstrated how ethical monotheism is less significant for some in contemporary Judaism, especially Reform Judaism.

A handful of candidates gave a basic description of ethical monotheism without offering any recognition of the 'assess' part of the question.

Question 3a

The command word 'clarify' (for AO1 only) means 'to identify key ideas and explain key concepts' and this does not necessitate a sentence-by-sentence analysis. There are many methods candidates may use to clarify a passage and examiners will credit any legitimate method. Most candidates offered clarification with appropriately developed detail on key points and ideas identified from the extract such as these Principles of Faith represent a summary of the fundamental teachings of Judaism; theological ideas about the belief in the truth of the entire Torah; belief that God needs no other and is the cause of all existence; that God is eternal and free from all properties of matter etc.

A small minority of candidates only repeated or paraphrased some of the Principles of Faith identified in the extract.

Question 3b

There were many excellent and, indeed, outstanding answers to this question. Good responses gave the context of Maimonides and his writings and supported their material with clear understanding of Maimonides' approach to revelation and the role of reason. Some candidates offered material fully linked to the extract without repeating material from. Many compared Maimonides with Mendelssohn and came to divided opinion on who was 'the most important'; criticisms offered from various Jewish traditions.

Weaker answers consisted of narrative and biographical material on Maimonides at the expense of whether he was 'the most important of Jewish scholars'; answers were almost in isolation with little context; some contained more material on Mendelssohn rather than Maimonides.

Overall, a competently answered question by most candidates.

Question 4

Many good answers offered clear ideas about diverse significances within Rabbinic Judaism; there was a range of material including on the authority of the Torah and mitzvah; renowned rabbis (eg Rashi); the Halakhah, significance of ethical monotheism etc.

Weaker answers gave descriptive accounts of some Rabbinic beliefs such as the codifying of the oral Torah, types of literature associated with Rabbinic Judaism, such as the Midrash, Halakhah etc.