



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies B

Paper 1 Religion & Ethics

1A Catholic Christianity

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Summer 2024

Publications Code 1RB0_1A_2406_ER

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Paper Introduction

This paper contributes to 50% of the overall GCSE award. The paper includes four questions, each covers a section within the specification, candidates are expected to answer all four questions, there is no element of choice on the paper. The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification. Centres are expected to use the Edexcel specification rather than other published resources when planning and teaching the course content. Examination questions are set using the specification.

This paper allows an in-depth study of Catholic Christianity as a lived religion within the United Kingdom, its beliefs and teachings on life specifically it allows a study of Marriage and the Family and Matters of Life and Death. This paper engages the interest of young people, as it addresses many Catholic Christian beliefs and teachings raising some issues affecting young people today.

Question 1

1a - Candidates were assessed on Section One: Catholic Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.2 – Biblical understandings of God as a Trinity of Persons.

This question was accessible it allowed candidates to show their understanding of the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity. Most candidates were able to refer to the Baptism of Jesus and the Nicene Creed. Weaker candidates simply wrote about the Trinity.

The question asked was:

Outline three events in the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The candidates needed to provide events that occurred, not reasons why the doctrine was needed.

1b - Candidates were assessed on Section One: Catholic Beliefs

Bullet point 1.8 – Catholic beliefs about eschatology

The question asked was:

Explain two Catholic teachings about eschatology.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks.

Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom a quotes or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked.

Most candidates knew what was meant by eschatology although some were unfamiliar with the term, even though it is in the specification. Those that recognised the term were able to respond correctly to this question and gain marks.

1c - Candidates were assessed on Section One: Catholic Beliefs

Bullet point 1.3 – Creation.

The question asked was:

Explain two different ways Christians understand the biblical account of Creation.

Candidates are asked to ‘Explain **two**’ on (c) items. Therefore, two events were required, and both were needed to be developed for 4 marks.

Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom (a quote) or an example. The development must relate to the event given and to the question asked.

If the development is not about the question even if it relates to the event given it will gain no marks. Frequently candidates write ‘and this is in the Bible and the Bible is the word of God’ – this usually does not answer the question and therefore gets no marks.

The reasons then should be supported with a ‘reference to a source of wisdom’, this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark as the source.

1d - The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the d items.

The candidates are being assessed on AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.

AO2 constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Christian Beliefs

Bullet point 1.5 – The Incarnation.

The question asked:

“Jesus as the Incarnate Son is the best way to understand Jesus.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Catholic teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Please note that, neither in the bullet point, nor on the question are candidates required to give a non-religious response.

Better candidates referred to the life of Jesus rather than Jesus as the Incarnate Son, and those candidates who misunderstood that this was about ways to understand the divinity of Jesus struggled to gain marks.

This year there was a new mark scheme for d) questions. Teachers who are not familiar with it should access the training materials on the Edexcel website.

Question 2

2a - Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family

Bullet point 2.3 – Catholic teaching about the purpose and importance of the family.

The question asked was:

Outline three Catholic teachings about the purpose of the family.

The Catholic teachings needed to be about the purpose of the family – not the purpose of marriage. Answers referring to the procreative aspect of marriage were not credited.

2b - Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family

Bullet point 2.2 – Catholic teaching about the importance of sexual relationships.

The question asked was:

Explain two Catholic teachings about sexual relationships.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two teachings are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks.

In this question most candidates were able to show knowledge of Catholic teachings about sexual relationships. Some included non-Catholic teachings which could not be credited.

2c - Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family

Bullet point 2.8 – Catholic teachings about gender prejudice and discrimination.

The question asked was:

Explain two different Christian attitudes to the role of women in the Church.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

In this question most candidates were able to show understanding of the different attitudes Christians have to women leading in the Church – they picked up that the question did not limit them to Catholic beliefs and that they had to do different views.

Candidates are asked to ‘Explain two’ on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks. They must also correctly use a source of wisdom in their answer which must be identifiable, relevant and linked to the way given in the answer - this is the 5th mark.

2d - The focus of the marking is AO2 on the d items. As explained in the specification this means:

Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.

AO2 constitutes 50% of the overall mark on the paper.

The question asks candidates to ‘Evaluate’ this statement considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion – there must be some consideration of the validity of the arguments used / appraisal to gain the higher grades. Many candidates produced excellent answers giving reasons for and against but failed to evaluate the credibility of the argument. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting student’s progression to the higher levels.

d) items are marked using levels and awarding is carried out using ‘best fit’ according to the level descriptors.

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family

Bullet point 2.6 – Catholic teaching about divorce, annulment and remarriage.

The question asked was:

“A divorced person should not be allowed to marry in church.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Catholic teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Please note that candidates were not required to give a non-religious response, if they did this part of their answer was ignored.

Candidates who did well recognised that this was about remarriage and were able to expand answers with analysis using biblical and Church teachings.

Question 3

3a - Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Catholic Life.

Bullet point 3.3 – The funeral rite as a liturgical celebration of the Church

The question asked was:

Outline three reasons the Catholic funeral rite is important.

This question worked well, it highlighted whether candidates knew purpose of the funeral rite, the majority of candidates were able to respond and give accurate answers.

3b - Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Catholic Life.

Bullet point 3.1 – The sacramental nature of reality.

The question asked was:

Explain two Catholic teachings about the sacramental nature of reality.

Candidates are asked to ‘Explain two’ on (b) items. Therefore, two teachings are required, and both must be developed to be awarded 4 marks.

Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom (a quote) or an example. The development must link to the reason given and to the question asked.

In this question candidates were asked to show knowledge and understanding the sacramental nature of reality. Students who confused this with individual sacraments did not gain marks. All of the specification should be studied, this bullet point is not just about the seven sacraments.

3c - Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Catholic Life.

Bullet point 3.7 – Catholic Social Teaching.

The question asked was:

Explain two reasons CAFOD works to help others.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority

Candidates are asked to ‘Explain two’ on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. The reasons then should be supported with a ‘reference to a source of wisdom’, this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if the source is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source at the same time.

In this question candidates were able to show knowledge and understanding about why CAFOD does its work. Candidates who only described the work of CAFOD gained no marks.

3d - d) items are marked using levels and awarding is carried out using ‘best fit’ according to the level descriptors.

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Catholic Life.

Bullet point 3.6 – Pilgrimage

The question asked:

“Pilgrimage is essential for all Christians.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Catholic teachings
- refer to different Christian point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

Please note that, neither in the bullet point, nor on the question are candidates required to give a non-religious response. They are asked to consider different Christian points of view (different to Catholic teachings already asked for) if they did not do this, they could not get more than Level 2 (6 marks).

Candidates who did well knew about the purpose of pilgrimage and were able to expand answers with examples. Candidates who did less well did not know about different Christian points of view. Some students erroneously referred to pilgrimage as a sacrament and gained no marks for this information!

If teachers are unaware of the changes to the d levels mark scheme, they should look at the resources available on the Edexcel website.

Question 4

4a - Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of life and Death

Bullet point 4.1 – Catholic teachings about the sanctity of life

The question asked was:

Outline three Catholic teachings about the sanctity of life.

The candidates needed to provide teachings about the sanctity of life which is bullet 4.2 this elicited a wide range of correct responses; it did not need teachings from the Bible or to be quotations although both were acceptable.

4b - Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of life and Death

Bullet point 4.5 – Catholic teachings and beliefs about life after death

The question asked was:

Explain two reasons belief in life after death is significant for Catholics.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two beliefs are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks.

Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom (a quote) or an example. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked.

In this question candidates were able to show knowledge and understanding about why life after death is significant. Some candidates only described life after death and gained no marks.

4c - Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life and Death.

Bullet point 4.7 – Implications of Catholic teachings about the value and sanctity of life for the issue of euthanasia.

The question asked was:

Explain two Catholic beliefs about the use of euthanasia.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two beliefs are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom (a quote/paraphrase) or an example. The development must link to the teaching given and to the question asked.

The beliefs then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the belief given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark as the source.

Most candidates gained 4 marks. They were able to identify Catholic beliefs about euthanasia. A few candidates suggested that Catholic beliefs accept the use of euthanasia this is not accurate and was not credited.

4d – Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life and Death

Bullet point 4.8 – Catholics responses to issues in the natural world.

The question asked:

“All Catholics should support animal rights.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Christian teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Candidates who did well recognised that this was about animals and stewardship and were able to expand answers with evaluation considering dominion and free-will. d) questions are good discriminators of achievement in RS.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Answer a) items in outlines – this means they should write in full sentences
- Provide 3 sentences for a) items, each should be on a separate line
- b) items should have 2 developed reasons (not more than 2)
- Development may be 1) examples 2) quotes 3) extra relevant material
- Development must link to the reason given and the question set
- c) items are similar to b) items but use a source as a fifth element
- A source of wisdom may be a paraphrase but should be identifiable
- The source of wisdom must be linked to the reason given
- d) item responses must show AO2 skills to get high marks
- d) items must show an appraisal of the argument not simply rely of a set format
- Level descriptors must be used to mark d items