



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies B
Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Religion and Ethics
Option 1A – Catholic Christianity

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies 2025 - Religious Studies B - Beliefs in Action
Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Religion and Ethics
Option 1A – Catholic Christianity

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. Paper 1A allows a study of the beliefs and teachings of Catholic Christianity specifically about Marriage and the Family and Matters of Life and Death. This paper engages the interest of young people, as it addresses some of the issues affecting young people today.

1RB0_1A_Q01a

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Catholic Beliefs. Bullet point 1.7 – Beliefs about salvation and grace

The question asked was 'Outline **three** Catholic teachings about grace'.

In this question any Catholic belief about grace, what it is, how it is given, what it results in was credited.

This question was accessible it allowed candidates to show their understanding of grace and what it is. Most candidates were able to refer to give a definition of grace and how it might be gained. Weaker candidates did not know what grace is.

Examiner Tip: Candidates should read the questions carefully; this will ensure they give the information the mark scheme requires

1RB0_1A_Q01b

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Catholic Beliefs

Bullet point 1.5 – The Incarnation

The question asked was: Explain **two** reasons the Incarnation is important for Catholics.

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

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

Answers to this question were varied, candidates were easily able to access the specialist key term, any reason associated with the Birth of Jesus i.e. The Incarnation was credited.

Common incorrect answers included information about Jesus – his life / death and sacrifice. These answers were not credited unless they were development of a point about the Incarnation.

Examiner Tip: Candidates should know the meaning of all the words used in the specification.

1RB0_1A_Q01c

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Catholic Beliefs

Bullet point 1.1 - The Trinity.

The question asked was: Explain **two** ways the Bible shows God is a Trinity of Persons. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain **two**' on (c) items. Therefore, two ways 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 way given and to the question asked.

If the development is not about the question even if it relates to the even given it will gain no marks. Frequently candidates write 'and this is in the Bible and the Bible is the word of God' or 'this was taught by Jesus, and he is the son of God so should be followed'– this, in most cases, does not answer the question and therefore gets no marks.

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

Examiner Tip: Candidates must learn sources of wisdom and be able to use them accurately and in context.

1RB0_1A_Q01d

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 1.6 – The events in the Paschal Mystery.

The question asked: "The resurrection is the most significant part of the Paschal Mystery." 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.

Answers to this question must refer to Catholic teachings about the resurrection and why it is important as opposed to other parts of the Paschal Mystery.

Common incorrect answers used material from other parts of the life of Jesus or misunderstood what the words resurrection /Paschal Mystery meant.

This question included marks for spelling punctuation and grammar- the quantity of specialist language is included in the levels for this.

Teachers who are not familiar with the d) level mark scheme and its application can access the [training materials](#) on the [Edexcel website](#).

1RB0_1A_Q02a

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family

Bullet point 2.1 – The importance and purpose of marriage for Catholics.

The question asked was: Outline **three** teachings about the importance of marriage in Catholic life.

In this question any Catholic belief about marriage was credited, these can be found in the Bible or in Church teachings. The most likely answers being sacrament, covenant, public witness and procreation.

Common errors included the purpose of the family e.g. raising children, increasing the numbers of people in Church, safe place for children. Some answers given were about equality of men and women, divorce or remarriage, these could not be credited.

Examiner Tip: It does not make any difference whether a candidate uses bullet points or not. However, they must answer in full sentences for the response to be an outline.

1RB0_1A_Q02b

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family

b) items provide marks for four points, 2 for teachings and 2 for the development of each teaching.

Bullet point 2.7 – Catholic teaching about the equality of men and women in the family.

The question is: Explain **two** Catholics teachings about the equality of men and women in the family.

Answers to this question could include any accurate teaching about men and women being equal in the family, this often referred to women being equal but having different roles.

Common errors included reference to equality that is not clearly within the family, equality in the Church and inaccurate information about the superiority of men in general rather than having different roles.

Examiner Tip: It helps to write answers which divide into 2 paragraphs each containing a teaching and a development

1RB0_1A_Q02c

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family

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

c) Questions are point marked

c) Questions provide marks for five points, 2 for each belief and then 2 for the development of each belief and one for an accurate source that relates to the belief given. The source cannot just be added at the end – it must be used as part of the answer.

The question is: Explain **two** Catholic beliefs about the purpose of the family.

Answers needed to focus on the purpose of the family – why family is needed, what the aim of family life is.

Common incorrect answers referred to the purpose of marriage, for example, having children or unity of the couple rather than the family group.

Examiner Tip: Candidates must be prepared for the whole breadth and depth of the specification in order to achieve higher grades. They should be familiar with the words used in the specification.

1RB0_1A_Q02d

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 2.5 – Catholic teaching on family planning.

The question asked was: "Christians should only use natural contraception."
Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Catholic teachings
- refer to different Christian points of view
- 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.

This question had an additional bullet point, 'Different Christian points of view' which must be addressed to get more than Level 2 (Named denominations were not needed, 'some Christians' is all that was needed)

Answers to this question needed to refer to Catholic teachings about natural /artificial contraception and as there is an additional bullet point, they should also refer to another Christian point of view (to get more than level 2).

Common incorrect answers confused the Catholic view on contraception with that of other Christians, a few stated that the only or sole purpose of sex is to have children - if they wrote this then all connected reasoning was ignored.

Examiner Tip: There are many different ways to answer d) items and gain marks, a template will not assure good marks.

1RB0_1A_Q03a

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Catholic Life

Bullet point 3.8 – Catholic mission and evangelism

The question asked was: Outline **three** Catholic teachings about evangelism.

This question worked well, it highlighted whether candidates knew what evangelism was, most candidates were able to respond and give accurate answers.

In this question any Catholic teaching or belief was credited – this included what it is, why it is done and the effects of evangelism.

Common errors included very vague answers which may not have been about evangelism e.g. it is shown in the Bible, descriptions of what evangelism is not.

Examiner Tip: Each reason needs to be given to be in its own standalone sentence, otherwise it is not an outline. Sentences do not need to be more than one line.

1RB0_1A_Q03b

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Catholic Life

Bullet point 3.2 – Liturgical worship within Catholic Christianity

b) questions are point marked.

b) questions provide marks for four points: 2 for teaching and 2 for the development of each teaching.

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.

The question was: Explain two teachings about the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life.

Answers to this question needed to refer to teachings about the Eucharist as the source and summit i.e. the way that Christians are strengthened through grace and the ultimate way Christians in the Church are joined with God.

Common errors that could not be credited included descriptions of the Eucharist and the Last Supper.

Examiner Tip: Writing reasons in separate paragraphs, one for each teaching, is a good idea

1RB0_1A_Q03c

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Catholic Life

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

c) Questions are point marked

c) Questions provide marks for five points, 2 for each feature and then 2 for the development of each feature and one for an accurate source that relates to the feature given. The source cannot just be added at the end – it must be used as part of the answer.

The question asked was: Explain two features of the funeral rite

The answers to this question could refer to any action that takes part in the funeral rite - the word feature refers to what happens in the funeral rite.

Common incorrect answers were often too vague and referred to 'prayers' rather than 'prayers for the deceased' or 'readings' rather than 'reading about eternal life'. Other incorrect answers referred to things that are not part of the Catholic funeral rite such as wearing black clothing, holding a wake or explaining why it happens

Examiner Tip: Sources can be paraphrased; however, they must be recognisable.

1RB0_1A_Q03d

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

AO2 constitutes 50% of the overall marks on this paper.

The question asks candidates to 'Evaluate' this statement considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion – there must 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 restrict the flow of the arguments thus 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 Three: Living the Catholic Life

Bullet point 3.1 – The sacramental nature of reality

The question asks: 'All Christians should accept seven sacraments.'

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

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

Answers to this question should have referred to Catholic teachings about the number of sacraments they celebrated and as there is an additional bullet point, they should also refer to another Christian point of view (to get more than level 2) this is usually the Church of England view that only two needed celebrating.

Common incorrect answers ignored that the question is about number of sacraments that should be accepted and go through the ones they think are needed. Others said that Catholics MUST do **all** seven - this should not be credited

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.

Examiner Tip: Candidates can write on the exam paper and cross out the elements required, this may help them plan and ensure they meet all the requirements of the question.

1RB0_1A_Q04a

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

Bullet point 4.4 – Implications of Catholic teachings about value and sanctity of life for the issue of abortion

The question asked was: Outline three teachings of the Catholic Church about abortion.

In this question Catholic teachings about abortion were required, correct answers included but were not limited to references from the Bible being used, Catechism teachings on the sanctity of life or ideas in line with these

Common errors included descriptions of what abortion is, giving arguments in favour of abortion (except indirect abortion) or vague answers that could be about other issues

Examiner Tip: Some candidates answered using a list which is not an outline and thus only received 1 mark according to the mark scheme.

1RB0_1A_Q04b

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

Bullet point 4.8 – Catholic responses to issues in the natural world

b) questions are point marked.

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.

The question is: Explain two Catholic beliefs about stewardship.

Answers to this question could include any belief about stewardship including what it is, Bible quotes and examples

Common errors that could not be credited included ideas that were not linked to stewardship and those which repeated the same information in different ways.

Examiner Tip: Candidates should ensure they read the secondary command word in each question. In this case it is beliefs.

1RB0_1A_Q04c

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

Bullet point 4.7 - Catholic responses to scientific and non-religious explanations about the origins and value of human life

c) Questions provide marks for five points, 2 for each response and then 2 for the development of each response and one for an accurate source that relates to the response given. The source cannot just be added at the end – it must be used as part of the answer.

The question was: Explain **two** Catholic response to non-religious explanations about the origins of human life.

Answers for this question needed to refer to non-religious reasons for human life the most common non-religious argument for this is evolution but natural selection may also be mentioned.

Common errors included Catholics believe in the Bible literally – this must not be credited. Other incorrect answers included any reference to the Big Bang or the creation of the world/universe – the question is about the origins of human life not the world.

Examiner Tip: Candidates should not write 'a source of wisdom for this is' or worse, SOWA - this means the source is not being used as part of the reasoning in the question and it cannot be credited.

1RB0_1A_Q04d

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

AO2 constitutes 50% of the overall marks on this paper.

The question is '**Evaluate**' this statement **considering the arguments for and against** and reach a **justified conclusion** – there must 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 Four: Matters of Life and Death

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

The question asked: "Euthanasia is never acceptable."
In your response you must:

- refer to Catholic teachings
- refer to relevant ethical arguments
- reach a justified conclusion.

Answers to this question had to refer to Catholic teachings about Euthanasia (they teach it is not acceptable except as passive euthanasia) and as there was an additional bullet point, they also needed to refer to an ethical argument (to get more than level 2) this is usually situation ethics or utilitarianism, but it should be identifiable.

Common incorrect answers argued that Catholics accept euthanasia – they don't. Other incorrect answers used a different Christian perspective or non-religious view – this is not asked for and cannot be credited

d) questions are good discriminators of achievement in RS.

Examiner Tip: Candidates should be encouraged to learn the whole of the specification, so there are no gaps in their knowledge

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
- 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