



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies B

Paper 1 Religion & Ethics

1F Judaism

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Introduction

Religious Studies B

Paper 1F: Area of study 1

The paper contributes to 50% of the overall award. The assessment consists of four questions and candidates must answer all questions. The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification.

This area of study comprises a study in-depth of Judaism as a lived religion in the United Kingdom and throughout the world. There are four sections:

- Jewish Beliefs
- Marriage and the family
- Living the Jewish Life
- Matters of Life and Death

Question 1a:

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Jewish Beliefs bullet point 1.2 **The nature and importance of Shekhinah.**

The question asked was: 'Outline **three** ways Shekhinah is understood by Jews.'

Many took the approach of the ways it is understood by Jews e.g. as the Divine presence or the feminine presence of the Almighty. Others approached the question by giving examples either from the Torah of when the divine presence was experienced e.g. cloud on Mt Sinai or when God's presence is felt by Jews today e.g. through collective worship.

Those candidates who did not know the term, Shekhinah, usually failed to be awarded any marks.

Examiner advice: Candidates need to know and understand the subject specific terms given in the specification.

Question 1b:

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Jewish Beliefs bullet point 1.6 Sanctity of Life: **how the principle of Pikuach Nefesh is used by Jews today.**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** ways the principle of Pikuach Nefesh is used by Jews today.'

Most candidates were able give two examples of when Pikuach Nefesh is applied and developed their answer appropriately. The most common answer given was the breaking of Mitzvot to save a life is permitted e.g. receiving medical treatment on Shabbat, that abortion is allowed if it saves the life of the mother.

Examiner advice

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two different ways 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, quotes or examples. The development must be of the way given and to the question asked.

Question 1c:

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Jewish Beliefs bullet point 1:7 Moral Principles and the Mitzvot: **the nature and importance of the Mitzvot.**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** ways the mitzvot are important in Jewish Life.'

Most candidates were able to identify two different ways the mitzvot are important for Jewish life and develop their answer appropriately. A significant number missed the opportunity to gain full marks by giving a relevant source of wisdom as they had used the source as the development to the point made.

Examiner Advice

The candidate does not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word. The source of wisdom can be given as a recognisable paraphrase.

Question 1d:

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Jewish Beliefs bullet point 1:3 The nature and purpose of the Messiah: **the nature and significance of the Messianic Age and the Jewish responsibility to bring it about; divergent understandings of the Messiah in different forms of Orthodox and Reform Judaism.**

The question asked was: "Believing in the Messianic Age is important for all Jews."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Jewish teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

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

In response to this question many candidates were aware of the divergent understandings of Messiah/Messianic Age between different forms of Judaism; and therefore, started to consider arguments for and against the given statement. Stronger candidates made specific reference to Jewish teachings e.g. Maimonides and used these to help them develop logical chains of reasoning whilst weaker candidates commented more generally.

Examiner Advice

Candidates are reminded they are evaluating the given statement therefore they should use the arguments for and against to help them form a conclusion referencing the given statement. A justified conclusion goes beyond saying which view they agree with or which is the stronger / weaker argument; it needs to be 'justified' through evidence and or reasoning. Formulas and writing frames often restrict the flow of the arguments and hinder the candidate progressing to the high levels.

Question 2a:

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family bullet point 2.2 Jewish teachings about the nature and importance of sexual relationships: **divergent Jewish teachings and attitudes towards same sex relationships.**

The question asked was: 'Outline **three** beliefs about same sex-relationships.'

Many candidates correctly identified three Jewish beliefs recognising the divergent beliefs within Judaism.

Examiner advice: Candidates are advised to write three separate sentences in response to (a) questions, starting a new line for each point made.

Question 2b:

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family bullet point 2.5 Jewish teaching about family planning and the regulation of births: **divergent Jewish teachings and attitudes about family planning.**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** Jewish beliefs about family planning.'

A significant number of candidates did not understand the term family planning and wrote about the importance of the family, marriage or sex before marriage.

Examiner advice

Candidates should be familiar with all the terms and phrases used in the specification, as the specification forms the basis for the setting of questions.

Question 2c:

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the family bullet point 2:8 **Jewish teachings about gender prejudice and discrimination**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** Jewish teachings about gender prejudice and discrimination.'

Most candidates were able to identify at least one teaching usually the Almighty created all people, developed by 'God created man in His image'. Some weaker candidates focused on roles of men and women in the family and did not refer to Jewish teachings about prejudice and discrimination.

Examiner Advice

The bullet points in the specification give sources of wisdom and authority that can be used to answer the questions.

Question 2d:

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Jewish Beliefs bullet point 2.1 The importance and purpose of marriage for Jews: **non-religious attitudes of the importance of marriage in society, including a lack of importance, cohabitation and the Jewish response.**

The question asked was: “Cohabitation is as important as marriage.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Jewish teachings
- Refer to non-religious points of view
- reach a justified conclusion

In response to this question some candidates did not know/understand the term cohabitation therefore found it difficult to go beyond the lower levels; often just giving isolated information about marriage. Many candidates could give develop arguments about the importance of marriage in Judaism and why many Jews would oppose cohabitation but did not use these arguments to evaluate the given statement.

Examiner Advice

In questions that give a third bullet point, in this case ‘refer to non-religious points of view’, candidates cannot go beyond level 2 unless they do so.

Question 3a:

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Jewish Life bullet point 3.1 **The nature and purpose of public acts of worship.**

The question asked was: ‘Outline **three** features of public acts of worship in Judaism.’

Many candidates were able to identify the features of public worship connected with worship in the synagogue and gained three marks. Some candidates described prayers in the home which could not be credited.

Examiner advice: Candidates are advised to read the question carefully to ensure they answer the question asked.

Question 3b:

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Jewish Life bullet point 3.6 The nature, features, history and purpose of celebrating Shabbat: **the features and purpose of the celebration of Shabbat in the home.**

The question asked was: ‘Explain **two** ways Jewish people celebrate Shabbat in the home.’

This question was answered well with candidates identifying two ways Shabbat is celebrated in the home and developing the ways given usually with extra information or an example.

Examiner advice

(b) questions required candidates to give two developed reason/ways - any further reasons or ways cannot be credited; candidates should not waste time in the examination writing more than is required.

Question 3c:

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Jewish Life bullet point 3.8 Features of the synagogue: **the nature and purpose of the different designs of the synagogues in Liberal, Reform and Orthodox Judaism**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** features of a Liberal synagogue.'

Most candidates were able to identify two features of a Liberal synagogue, but some referred to an Orthodox synagogue. A significant number of candidates did not refer to a source of wisdom and authority in their response.

Examiner Advice

Centres struggling to find sources of wisdom and authority should refer to the specification and/or previous mark schemes.

Question 3d:

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Jewish Life bullet point 3.7 Jewish festivals; the nature, history and meaning of specific festivals, including Rosh Hashanah, **Yom Kippur**, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot; **divergent understandings of why festivals are important to different forms of Orthodox and Reform Judaism today.**

The question asked was: "Yom Kippur is the most important Jewish festival."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Jewish teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

Many candidates knew the main features of Yom Kippur, but some candidates confused it with Rosh Hashanah or certain elements of it. A significant number of candidates did not go beyond giving arguments why Yom Kippur is seen as the most important festival, then giving arguments against, usually by referring to another festival, then stating which they think is the most important festival without justifying their conclusion. The candidates who were awarded the high levels focussed their response on Yom Kippur and made comparisons with other festivals showing logical chains of reasoning. Hence leading them to analyse the statement given and leading them to a justified conclusion using their knowledge and understanding.

Examiner Advice

(d) questions require candidates to underpin their arguments with knowledge and understanding outlined in the specification.

Question 4a:

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life and Death bullet point 4.8 Jewish responses to the natural world: **Jewish teachings about environmental care, specifically stewardship and humanity's role as stewards.**

The question asked was: 'Outline **three** beliefs about stewardship in Judaism.'

Most candidates were able to identify Jewish beliefs about stewardship mainly based on the teachings from Genesis but often struggled to give a third belief. Those who gained full marks demonstrated a wider knowledge of Judaism and referred to the belief in Tikkun Olam or the teaching to not destroy trees in war or Psalms.

Examiner advice: Candidates should use Jewish terms and phrases in their answers.

Question 4b:

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life and Death bullet point 4.2 **Jewish teachings about the value of life.**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** Jewish beliefs about the value of life.'

The question was answered well with many candidates receiving 4 marks. The vast majority referred to the Almighty creating life therefore it is sacred, or the importance of life because of the principal of Pikuach Nefesh.

Examiner advice

Candidates can use their knowledge and understanding from other sections of the specification to answer questions.

Question 4c:

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life and Death bullet point 4.1 **Jewish teachings about the origins and value of the universe: scientific explanations for the origins of the universe and the Jewish responses to them.**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** Jewish teachings about the origin of the universe.'

Most candidates were able to identify at least one Jewish teaching about the origin of the universe usually based on Genesis. Some candidates wrote about the origins of human life and not the universe. It is a valid response to say that the creation account is symbolic or metaphorical and that many Jews accept scientific explanation for the origin of the universe.

Examiner Advice

Candidates are advised to learn and know two teachings about the given topics.

Question 4d:

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life and Death bullet point 4.4 Implications of the value and sanctity of life for the issue of abortion: **divergent Jewish teachings about abortion... non- religious arguments surrounding its use.**

The question asked was: “Everyone should accept abortion.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Jewish teachings
- refer to non-religious points of view
- reach a justified conclusion

Candidates engaged well with this question and were able to give arguments for and against using Jewish teachings and most offered a non-religious point of view. Those who were awarded the higher levels analysed the statement by focusing on the term ‘everyone’ in the given, then underpinned the response with understanding of the issue of abortion from different points of view.

Examiner Advice

‘Point(s) of view’ always means arguments for and against the statement.

Summary

- Candidates should write three sentences in 'outline' (a) questions. Each sentence should contain one piece of information. There is no need for development. Incorrect words or sentences should be crossed out.
- The 'explain' questions (b) and (c) require two developed points. For (c) items an additional mark is given for a reference to a source of wisdom, which does not need to be referenced and can be paraphrased.
- Candidates should be directed to the specification and other published resources to learn key terms and sources of wisdom.
- The (d) items are level marked and assess A02 not A01; responses should be underpinned by an understanding of religion and belief as outlined in the specification. Centres are advised to refer to the appropriate training material about ‘d’ items that has been published by Pearson.