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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies B

Paper 2 Religion, Peace & Conflict

2F Judaism

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Introduction

Religious Studies B

Paper 2F: Area of study 2

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
- Crime and Punishment
- Living the Jewish Life
- Peace and Conflict

Question 1a:

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Jewish Beliefs bullet point 1.1 The nature of the Almighty: **how the characteristics of the Almighty are shown in the Torah.**

The question asked was: 'Outline **three** characteristics of the Almighty shown in the Torah.'

This question was answered well with many candidates correctly identifying three correct characteristics of the Almighty such as; Law Giver, omnipotent or just.

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 1.3 The nature and purpose of the Messiah: **how messiahship is shown in the scriptures**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** teachings about the Messiah for Jews.'

Most candidates were able to identify two teachings about the Messiah while many did develop the teaching a significant number offered another teaching instead. Some candidates gave clearly Christian teachings about the Messiah; therefore, gaining no marks.

Examiner advice

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two different teachings 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 teaching given and to the question asked.

Question 1c:

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Jewish Beliefs: bullet 1:2 The nature and importance of Shekhinah: **how the divine presence is shown in the Torah.**

The question asked was: ‘Explain **two** ways the divine presence is shown in the Torah.’

While many candidates were able to identify two different ways the divine presence is shown in the Torah a significant number of candidates did not attempt this question. The most common ways given was as a cloud on Mt Sinai, as the burning bush when God spoke to Moses, the tabernacle as the divine dwelling place and God’s presence guiding Moses through the desert.

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 1:5 The covenant at Sinai: **the nature and history of the Covenant at Sinai; the role and significance of Moses in the Covenant at Sinai; divergent understanding of how and why the Decalogue is important for Jews today.**

The question asked was: ‘The covenant between the Almighty and Moses is the most important one for 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 significance of the covenant between the Almighty and Moses and could refer to relevant Jewish teachings. Most compared/contrasted this with the covenant between the Almighty and Abraham, while candidates were able to give reasons why each covenant referred to was important, they lacked analysis for the ‘most’ part of the question so limiting themselves to the lower levels. The better responses developed chains of reasoning using their knowledge and understanding of the different covenants to argue the point being made.

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 statement. A justified conclusion goes beyond saying which view they agree with or 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 higher levels.

Question 2a:

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Crime and Punishment bullet point 2.3 Jewish teachings about good, evil and suffering: **divergent Jewish teachings and responses to why people suffer.**

The question asked was: 'Outline **three** Jewish teachings about why people suffer.'

Many candidates correctly identified three Jewish teaching recognising the divergent teachings and responses within Judaism about why people suffer. The most common answers included: as a test, result of free-will, as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve, as a punishment, as a result of human greed.

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: Crime and Punishment bullet point 2.7 Jewish teaching about the treatment of criminals: **Jewish teachings about the treatment of criminals**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** Jewish beliefs about how criminals should be treated.'

Most candidates were able to give two Jewish beliefs about how criminals should be treated but some developments tended to repeat the belief already given.

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: Crime and Punishment bullet 2.3 Jewish attitudes to the death penalty: **divergent Jewish attitudes and teaching for and against capital punishment.**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** Jewish attitudes to the death penalty.'

Most candidates were able to identify at least one Jewish attitude to the death penalty and recognised the divergent attitudes towards the death penalty within Judaism, referring to arguments for and against. A significant number missed the opportunity to give a source of wisdom relevant to the point made.

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: Crime and Punishment bullet point 2.4 Jewish attitudes towards punishment: **Jewish teachings about punishment; why punishment can be regarded as justice, why punishment might be needed in society.**

The question asked was: "Punishment is the same as justice."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Jewish teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

A significant number of candidates found this question challenging; it appeared that many did not understand the term justice and hence gave long winded explanations about the aims of punishment and did not refer to justice. Many responses made little or no reference to Jewish teachings so limited the mark to the lower levels.

Examiner Advice

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

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: **features and importance of synagogue services for the Jewish community and the individual.**

The question asked was: 'Outline **three** features of synagogue services for the Jewish community.'

Some candidates outlined the features of a synagogue rather than the service, others described prayers in the home.

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 3.5 The importance of rituals for Jews today: **the nature, purpose and importance of mourning rituals of funeral, shiva, avelut and yahrzeit for Jews today.**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** purposes of mourning rituals in Judaism.'

It was clear that some candidates were not familiar with this part of the specification, they either did not know what mourning rituals are, while others could describe what happens but didn't know the term e.g. shiva. While others correctly identified a purpose and used their knowledge to develop the answer e.g. one purpose is to support others after the death of a loved one by sitting Shiva.

Examiner advice

(b) questions required candidates to give only two reasons/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 3.4 The nature and importance of the Shema and the Amidah; when the Shema and Amidah might be used, how and why, including reference to the Mezuzah.

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** ways the Shema is used by Jews.'

Most candidates knew what the Shema is; but some gave reasons why it was important rather than how it is used.

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: "Rosh Hashanah 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 Rosh Hashanah, but some candidates confused it with Yom Kippur or certain elements of it. A significant number of candidates did not go beyond giving arguments why Rosh Hashanah 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. Some candidates did not even write about Rosh Hashanah they just referred to other festivals and, as a result, did not answer the question. The candidates who were awarded the higher levels focussed their response on Rosh Hashanah and made comparisons with other festivals showing logical chains of reasoning. This led them to analyse the statement and provide justified conclusions using their knowledge and understanding.

Examiner Advice

The focus of the candidate response should be the statement given; they should refer back to it in their answer to ensure they are answering the question set.

Question 4a:

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict bullet point 4.2 the role of Jews in peace-making: **the importance of justice, forgiveness and reconciliation**

The question asked was: 'Outline **three** Jewish beliefs about reconciliation.'

Most candidates were able to identify Jewish beliefs about reconciliation.

Examiner advice: It is important that candidates understand terms like reconciliation, justice, forgiveness and peace within the context of Judaism.

Question 4b:

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict bullet point 4.6 Jewish attitudes to Holy War; **Jewish teachings and responses to the nature of Holy War.**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** teachings about Holy War in Judaism.'

A significant number of candidates confused Holy War and the Just War theory and found it hard to develop the teaching they gave. This can be done by referring to a source of wisdom, giving extra information or providing an example.

Examiner advice

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

Question 4c:

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict bullet point 4.2; The role of Jews in peacemaking; **Jewish teachings about peacemaking**

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** Jewish teachings about peacemaking.'

Most candidates were able to identify at least one Jewish teaching about peacemaking. Some candidates wrote about peace in general and not the act of peacemaking.

Examiner Advice

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

Question 4d:

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict bullet point 4.3 Jewish attitudes to conflict: **Jewish teachings and responses to the nature of conflict; Jewish responses to the causes of conflict; non-religious attitudes about the role of religion in the causes of conflict and Jewish responses to them.**

The question asked was: “Everyone should work to end conflict.”

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

Some candidates engaged well with this question and were able to give arguments for and against but a significant number of responses were very general about conflict/war and lacked analysis of whether everyone should work to end conflict.

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.