



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCSE (NEW)
RELIGIOUS STUDIES – CATHOLIC
CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM**

SUMMER 2018

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM

PART A – CORE BELIEFS TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES: CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM

General comments: It appears that the majority of candidates made a fairly good attempt at the paper. From the papers I saw there were a wide range of marks. Knowledge and understanding for the most part proved to be sound. On the whole, key concepts were well answered, although there were some difficulties with 4(a). In particular questions 1 and 2 were well answered. However, due to a greater emphasis on evaluation questions in the new specification, candidates need to work on extending their skills of analysis and evaluation. In the high scoring questions many candidates lost a significant amount of marks. Acronyms and formulas such as FARM or AADDY remain unhelpful in enabling pupils to critically think about the question that is being asked. Candidates who were able to explain, analyse and critically evaluate each point made in the light of the question achieved band 4 more easily.

1. (a) Candidates answered this question really well with many candidates gaining both marks.
- (b) Answered well on the whole, candidates were able to refer to the teachings of Jesus about love as well as Jesus' personal example of love. Candidates were able to reference many of the specific teachings and parables that depicted love.
- (c) Many candidates were able to describe what happens in Mass. It would be beneficial for schools to explore the parts of the Mass in relevant sections and encourage pupils to explain the features rather than describe what happens.
- (d) Most candidates were able to answer the question and writing was both extended and detailed. The main issue with evaluation was the interpretation of the question by the candidate. Most candidates wrote about the need to forgive rather than focusing on whether or not some things are impossible to forgive. Many candidates gave anecdotal rather than evaluative answers.

(SPAG) A significant number of marks is given for SPAG. Candidates would be well advised to double check spelling punctuation and grammar. Many candidates lost marks unnecessarily here. Marks cannot be awarded when a candidate fails to attempt the question so up to 21 marks could be lost needlessly.

CORE BELIEFS TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES: JUDAISM

2. (a) The question on the Shema was answered well. Most candidates that I saw knew what the Shema is and were able to refer to a variety of examples of how it is used.

- (b) Answered well on the whole. Most candidates were able to refer to teachings about the characteristics of God. Many candidates described God as Creator, Judge, omnibenevolent, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent.
- (c) Answered well on the whole. However, there were a significant number of candidates that limited their answers to the preparations for Shabbat. This limited the amount of marks that became available for them. Candidates who answered well demonstrated good knowledge of the key terms associated with Shabbat and used religious language appropriately.
- (d) Many candidates demonstrated really good knowledge and understanding of the food laws but failed to evaluate the difficulty in following them. It is imperative that candidates apply their knowledge and understanding to the demands of the question set in order to achieve a top band. This question calls for **discussion and evaluation** of the statement not just explanation of food laws.

PART B – RELIGIOUS RESPONSES TO PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES: LIFE AND DEATH / GOOD AND EVIL

3. (a) Most candidates knew what was meant by ‘the quality of life’ and were able to give an example to support their answer.
- (b) Most candidates responded from a Catholic viewpoint. However, I witnessed some excellent answers from both religions, with distinctive teachings of Catholicism and Judaism referred to. Many candidates referred to key ideas including, stewardship, dominion, *tikkun olam*, *Bal Taschit*, *Tu B’Shevat* and *gemilut hasadim*. Sources of wisdom and authority were frequently referred to including, the Bible, the Torah, the Pope, Laudato SI. For a minority of candidates, answers were limited to the importance of litter picking.
- (c) Most candidates were able to confidently refer to beliefs about life after death from within the Catholic rather than Jewish tradition. Many candidates were able to refer to Heaven, Hell and Purgatory. Fewer candidates referred to judgement and the soul. Candidates who made a clear distinction between Judaism and Catholicism reached Band 4 more efficiently than those who mixed the religious traditions together.
- (d) Many candidates were able to refer to the compatibility of religion and science **in their discussion of the relevance of creation stories. Very few were able to** relate this back to the question and evaluate the importance of them. The (d) questions demand skills of analysis which incorporate selected and relevant knowledge and understanding. For many candidates the responses were confined to expressions of knowledge and understanding with no pertinent argument. Conclusions made were often a random appendix to the response and not as a result of a coherent synthesis or analysis. They tended to be very simplistic with no supportive evidence or development. e.g. ‘Creation stories are important because I am religious’. Candidates need to answer the question with reference to Humanism and/or Atheism, but there appeared to be no clear teaching on Humanism. Humanism was often confused with atheism and incorporated some random facts about science. Many did not answer the question but limited their response to whether the creation stories exist.

There was little understanding of any philosophical response and few references to the impact of literal and non-literal interpretations of Scripture etc. There was generally a weak use of religious language with very few candidates applying their knowledge and understanding to the question set. Conclusions drawn were often random and did not show a logical sequence. Some candidates appeared to think it was necessary to include a range of religious views so gave a brief summary of Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism in addition to Catholic teaching. These answers were often broad but lacking in depth to provide a coherent argument. The rubric of the question calls for 'more than one point of view' but does not stipulate how many and does not state that these views must come from across religions.

- 4. (a)** Many candidates were able to give an appropriate example of justice rather than a definition of justice. Those who gave both were able to achieve full marks. Teachers would do well to emphasise to pupils that Justice is a key concept.
- (b)** This question was not very well answered on the whole. Candidates did not demonstrate enough knowledge about the work of prison chaplains. There were some very good and detailed answers including religious language e.g. penance, sacrament of reconciliation. Some candidates confused prison chaplains with prison officers. Most assumed that chaplains were Christian.
- (c)** Most candidates knew Catholic attitudes to taking part in conflict but were unsure of the distinctive nature of Jewish attitudes. It would be wise for teachers to help candidates to learn specific key terms related to war regarding Jewish attitudes and to advise their pupils to separate the religions when writing about them. For example, Catholics attitudes to taking part in conflict and then Jewish attitudes to taking part in conflict.....
- (d)** Many candidates failed to answer this question very well. It may have been due to it being the last question on a lengthy paper but many failed to make the necessary connections between faith and practice. Teachers would be well advised to focus on evaluation skills at every opportunity so that candidates can apply their knowledge and understanding to the question set. The same lack of skills was evident as in 3d. Many candidates responded from a Catholic and Humanist viewpoint. Responses were often lacking in analysis with a brief summary of perceived differences between Humanism and Catholicism. Again, Humanism was often misconstrued and presented as science or atheism. The system that candidates used was to give of a paragraph on Catholic viewpoints, one on Jewish viewpoints and one on Humanist but no argument running through. Many candidates answered the question as if they had been asked to discuss how there can be a God if suffering exists. Weak use of religious language and application from the other components.



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