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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCSE  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 1:  
CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY AND  
JUDAISM 3120UF0-1**

**SUMMER 2023**

Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at:  
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# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### UNIT 1 OPTION F: CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM

#### General Comments

On the whole the paper proved to be accessible to the majority of candidates. Good knowledge and understanding was demonstrated in the questions asked.

In questions which required A01 skills of knowledge and understanding, the key concepts questions were answered well. In particular 2(a) was answered extremely well.

Some (b) questions proved problematic and candidates lost marks through not reading the question properly. This applied, in particular to 1 (b) and 4(b).

In the higher order question 1 (c), focusing on beliefs about God, was particularly well answered, with many candidates gaining band 4. The higher order questions, where candidates had to answer from the perspective of two religions were not as well answered.

In many cases, it was clear that candidates had not sufficiently prepared for this, and one religious tradition proved to be stronger than the other, usually Catholicism. This was particularly evident in question 3 (c).

The higher order (d) questions, which involve analysis and evaluation, are still proving difficult. Candidates need to focus on the question that is set rather than the question they would have liked to have seen. It continues to be the case that candidates tend to struggle to present valid and meaningful analysis and evaluation when working from a learned formula.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar for the most part was good. It is worth centres continuing to remind pupils to check their spelling punctuation and grammar.

It is evidence that many centres had addressed the issues of handwriting by taking appropriate measures to secure use of lap tops for candidates with poor handwriting.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

**Q.1 (a)** Fairly well answered. Many candidates knew and understood what Catholics mean by 'sacraments' and were able to give examples of sacraments to support their definition.

However, there were a number of vague answers and some confused 'sacrament' with 'sacrifice'.

**(b)** Candidates tended to focus on one charity rather than Catholic groups. This tended to be CAFOD. However, there were some excellent answers which included reference to the SVP, Missie and CARJ. Excellent answers came from candidates who referred to several groups and demonstrated a clear understanding of what is meant by social justice.

- (c) This was very well answered on the whole, with many candidates gaining band 4. The majority of candidates were able to explain beliefs about God and include excellent specific religious terminology and detailed explanations.
- (d) The vast majority of candidates attempted the question. However, there were very few excellent answers. Although it was less noticeable this year, it is still important not to constrain candidates' writing by encouraging them to use learned formulas. On the whole candidates wrote extended answers which also enabled them to gain high scores in spelling punctuation and grammar.

### **Summary of key points**

- It is very pleasing to see that candidates are making every effort to answer all questions and are making conscientious efforts in their extended writing. Centres should be congratulated on this.
- It was very pleasing to see that candidates had learned the key concepts as not only had they been able to score well in the (a) questions, they had utilised the terms elsewhere in the paper.
- Candidates are generally scoring well in spelling, punctuation and grammar because they are extending their writing sufficiently in the (d) questions.
- Candidates need to present balanced answers in those questions that ask for two religions or two items. Endeavour to use specific terminology associated with each religious tradition.
- Ensure that candidates understand the need for referring to two religious traditions in the themes section of the paper.
- Reading the question carefully is important. For example question 1(b) asked for 'groups' and not one specific group.
- It is imperative that non-religious traditions are accurately represented.
- Ensure that for evaluation questions, candidates check that they are addressing the question set when they make judgements.
- Don't constrain candidates' writing by using formulas, enable candidates to respond to the question set using evaluative language.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### UNIT 1 JUDAISM

#### General Comments

There was a range of marks in the Judaism section of the paper. There was some evidence of candidates misreading some of the questions and a lack of religious knowledge in some answers. However, where candidates responded well and achieved the higher bands, there was evidence of excellent knowledge and understanding. There were also some candidates who chose not to attempt some questions on the paper.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

**(a) What do Jews mean by 'kashrut'?**

There were many candidates who did not attempt this question. However, when they did, there were some full marks with candidates using examples of food laws to support their answer.

**(b) Describe how the synagogue might be used by Jews.**

There were a range of marks for this question. Some candidates misread the question and described the internal features of the synagogue without linking them to the actual question. When candidates responded well and scored in higher bands, they were able to describe the different ways the synagogue was used and used religious language appropriately. Some candidates referred to the synagogue being used for prayer and no other use. It is therefore important that candidates include several reasons in their responses.

**(c) Explain why some Jewish men wear a kippah and tallith.**

There were a variety of responses for this question. Many candidates described the kippah and tallith without explaining why they are worn. Some candidates unfortunately were confused about what the kippah and tallith were and as a result their responses were inaccurate and not creditworthy. Where candidates were fully engaged with the demands of the question, there was evidence of religious language being used. These candidates made reference to God, the significance of the tzitzit and respect.

**(d) Jews need a rabbi to help them worship.**

There was a range of responses to this question and unfortunately some candidates did not attempt the question. Where candidates responded to the question, they made reference to the rabbi being a 'link' to God and therefore important in worship. Some candidates wrote about how a rabbi can guide Jews in worship, so they understand what to do. When candidates provided an alternative viewpoint, they made reference to God being omnipresent and therefore a rabbi is not needed.

## **Summary of key points**

It is important that candidates learn the key concepts and religious specific language to support their responses. Candidates must read the questions carefully to ensure they are responding to questions appropriately. It is important that candidates attempt every question on the examination paper.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### UNIT 1 PHILOSOPHY

#### General Comments

#### Questions 3 and 4 - Religious responses to Philosophical Themes

The paper proved to be accessible to candidates and the full range of band descriptors and marks were awarded across the paper. This section of the paper (Q3 and Q4) required candidates to answer some questions from two perspectives or select the religious perspective they wished to write about, namely Christianity and a second religious tradition. At times, there was a noticeable difference in the quality of the responses from different religions when put side by side. Candidates sometimes confused ideas between the two religious traditions or tended to favour one more than the other, where their understanding of the religion and its traditions/beliefs was shown to be stronger. This was more noticeable in (c) responses.

Many candidates appeared confident in their use of key terminology in this section of the paper and were able to offer insight and understanding into the meaning of philosophical terms. It was also pleasing to note across the paper in Q3 and Q4, an increased use of reference to sources of wisdom and authority and in some cases, successful interpretation of their meaning or recognition of diversity of religious views in their interpretation. Candidates were also required in Q3(d) to include reference to non-religious traditions and many successfully did, although at times, it seemed views were underdeveloped or tokenistic rather than candidates having a developed understanding of these worldviews. Some candidates struggled to show specific understanding of the key elements of the demands of each question style; for example, distinguishing between a (b) question where description is required and a (c) question where explanation is required. It was also concerning to see that a number of candidates chose not to attempt some questions or gave very brief and underdeveloped responses.

The provision of 'Summer 2023 advanced information' proved to be very useful to candidates in their revision and preparing for the highest tariff AO2 questions in this section of the paper. These were answered more fully with many candidates giving detailed extended writing responses.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### PART B - Issues of Life and Death

#### Q3. (a) What is meant by 'sanctity of life'?

Most candidates were able to give a clear and accurate definition of the phrase 'sanctity of life' with the best responses stating it was acceptance that life was sacred/special or belief that life was a gift. This was frequently developed through the recognition that this was due to life being created by God with some candidates stating it meant life needed to be protected or relating it to topics such as abortion or euthanasia being wrong. Unsurprisingly, some candidates mixed up the phrases 'sanctity of life' and 'quality of life' and some disappointingly chose not to attempt this question.

**(b) Describe the Big-Bang theory of Creation.**

Candidates appeared to find this question more challenging, reflected in a high number not attempting it, although from those who did attempt it, the full range of responses was seen. Concerningly many gave short and underdeveloped responses beyond recognition of an explosion. There was also some misunderstanding in the cause of the Big-Bang with a variety of responses including mention of planets, comets, atoms, or galaxies colliding to create the universe. The best candidate responses were those that showed clear understanding of what the Big-Bang was, how it came about and then within their response related these beliefs to religious views/interpretations, often including reference to beliefs about how it can be seen by some religious believers to be part of God's plan but by other religious believers to be in conflict with traditional religious views.

**(c) Explain from Christianity and Judaism teachings about the value of human life.**

This question was attempted effectively by many candidates and the full range of responses was awarded with the application of the band descriptors. It was good to see many candidates referring to phrases such as 'sanctity of life' or 'quality of life' and to link their responses to issues of study in this paper such as abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment, although this is not exhaustive, and some candidates referenced issues from the Unit 2 paper or from knowledge outside of both papers which was credited if relevant. Some answers from candidates had more of a descriptive feel to them rather than explanatory but the best responses effectively made use of key religious beliefs held, often showing awareness of the diversity of views within a religion and fully explained the reasoning behind life having value, making good reference to quotes or paraphrasing ideas from sources of wisdom and authority. For some candidates, there was a noticeable difference between the explanations of the two religious traditions studied, with one religious response often being favoured as the stronger out of the two.

**(d) 'Only religious believers have a responsibility to care for the environment.**

It was pleasing to see many candidates attempted this question and a full range of responses were seen, often giving multiple views in this extended writing response. The best candidate responses showed awareness of a range of religious and non-religious views that highlighted beliefs such as stewardship and dominion whilst also showing understanding related to concepts of responsibility for caring for the world due to everyone living in it or caring about future generations. In some candidate responses, reference to non-religious perspectives seemed brief and supporting evidence for these views was lacking. Excellent responses tended to demonstrate application of the skills of analysis and evaluation with clear lines of argument that led to an overall final perspective; these regularly used religious teachings and referenced sources of wisdom and authority appropriately.

## **PART B- Issues of Good and Evil**

### **Q.4 (a) What is meant by 'free will'?**

This question was well answered by many candidates who confidently stated free will was linked to the idea of making your own choices and usually developed with reference to not having anything restricting a person's choices. The best definitions offered by candidates usually linked this to God not determining choices but humans being free agents and some excellent responses even linked this to ideas of Adam and Eve being given free will. A small number of candidates failed to offer any response to this question.

### **(b) Describe the work of prison reformers.**

Some candidates found this question difficult or misunderstood the central focus of the question; instead of focusing on prison reformers, they gave a response solely centred around the work of prison chaplains. The demand of the question was exploring the work of reform within the institution of the prison rather than specifically of the prisoner; however, all responses were credited through the application of the band descriptors. The best answers referred to specific examples of prison reformers such as Elizabeth Fry/John Howard and used examples of the actions that prison reformers took to bring about change in the prisons such as improving prison conditions. Some less creditworthy responses focused on why it was important to give prisoners a chance to change rather than what actions were performed to bring change in prisons.

### **(c) Explain *Christian and Jewish* attitudes towards forgiveness.**

A range of responses was seen to this question; the best referenced religious beliefs, teachings, and sometimes individual stories of forgiveness to answer it successfully. It was encouraging to see references being made to appropriate sources of wisdom and authority and where relevant, candidates explained ideas rather than taking a descriptive stance and simply stating them. Some candidates unfortunately needed to include more explanation in their responses and terms such as 'because' would enable them to do this effectively and show a fuller understanding of the beliefs studied. For some candidates, there was a noticeable difference between the explanations of the two religious traditions studied, with one religious response often being favoured as the stronger out of the two.

### **(d) 'The death penalty is never right'.**

This question was attempted by most candidates and a range of responses were seen which varied from excellent to limited. It is encouraging to see that candidates enthusiastically responded to this statement with a variety of views that encompassed both religious, non-religious and philosophical perspectives and often offered extended answers. Answers that achieved the top bands focused on religious beliefs and justification of their views using teachings and reference to religious sources of authority and wisdom, whilst also showing awareness of arguments that included the aims of punishment and offered insight into the balance of views of the rights of the victim, their family and the prisoner. Credit was given for relevant inclusion of moral arguments or non-religious perspectives. Some candidates were only able to offer one-sided arguments or views that were not developed that were credited within the framework of the band descriptors. A small minority of candidates failed to offer any response to this question.

## Summary of key points

- Candidates should be encouraged to learn all key terms and use them not only when required to give definitions, but also within all responses where terminology can be used to reflect understanding of key ideas.
- Candidates should be reminded to read the words of the question carefully and use the wording of the question in their responses to help direct their answers towards success. They should also make sure that they try not to 'blanket' content and focus on what the question is asking to be able to access the higher bands.
- Candidates need to respond to the specific demands of each style of question; in (b) style questions, candidates are required to give only a **description** whereas in (c) style questions candidates are required to give an **explanation**. Often inclusion of the word 'because' in c style responses will help to develop explanation skills beyond descriptive responses.
- Furthermore in (c) style responses in Q3 and Q4, candidates should be reminded of the need of 'balance' between the two religious traditions they have studied; responses where the demand is to know the content from two religious traditions should do so in equal measure.
- In all d style responses, candidates must remember to include a range of views with appropriate lines of arguments that they should reflect on, to offer a critical evaluative approach to the statement provided. Use of connectives and evaluative language in responses will help to achieve this. For Q3 and Q4, candidates should be reminded to offer *different* views which may, or may not necessarily be, agree and disagree.



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