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Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A (3RA0)
Paper 01: Study of Catholic Christianity

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies

Religious Studies A

Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Study of Catholic Christianity (Short Course)

The paper contributes to 50% of the overall qualification. The assessment consists of two questions: candidates must answer both sets of questions. The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification. Centres are to use this, rather than other published resources when planning the course content.

In questions 1(d), marks are available for correct spelling, grammar and punctuation – SPaG.

3RA0_01_Q1a

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings. Specification bullet point 1.8. Catholic beliefs about eschatology.

The question asked was:

‘Outline three Catholic beliefs about life after death.’

Candidates are asked to ‘Outline’ on (a) items. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of one mark.

Generic advice for centres to what constitutes a list.

An example:

Outline 3 characteristics of God:

- **God is creator** (1 mark)
- **God is creator**, judge and lawgiver (1 mark for list or sentence)
- **God is creator**, busy and distant. (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)
- Busy, distant and **God is creator**, (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)
- Creator, judge, lawgiver (1 mark for list)
- Creator, busy, distant (0 marks) (all three elements need to be correct for 1 mark)
- Creator, judge, distant (0 marks)

This question was very well answered, with most candidates being able to give three Catholic beliefs about life after death. However, ‘coming back to life’ was not credited because it could mean so many things.

3RA0_01_Q1b

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings.

Specification bullet point 1.3: Creation: the nature and significance of the biblical account of Creation, including Genesis 1–3; and how it may be understood in divergent ways in Christianity, including reference to literal and metaphorical interpretations.

The question asked was:

'Explain **two** ways the Creation account can be understood.'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 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 reason given and to the question asked.

This question differentiated between candidates who had knowledge of the interpretations and understandings of the biblical creation account in modern world, and those who knew the story. Marks were awarded for candidates who chose an alternative understanding that could come from the creation account.

3RA0_01_Q1c

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings. Bullet point 1.7, The significance of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

The question asked was:

'Explain two reasons why the resurrection of Jesus is important.'

Many candidates had a well-founded understanding of the importance of the Resurrection and made good links and development to showing God's omnipotence and proving life after death.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 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 reason given and for the question asked. The reasons should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom': this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development it does not gain a second mark for the source.

Generic advice for centres to what constitutes a source of wisdom:

- The candidates do not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word.
- If examiners are unsure they will use a search engine. Enter the gist of the paraphrase and 'Bible' or 'Christian teaching'.
- If the candidate states that it is in John 1:18 and then states another verse from John – then this can be awarded. We are not holding candidate to 'verses' but it must be the correct book.
- If the candidate gives the paraphrase and then puts (John 1:18) in brackets the paraphrase can have the mark and the bracketed reference is ignored.
- If a candidate quotes Jesus and it was Paul or vice versa; and the quote is not accredited to them, it is not awarded.

3RA0_01_Q1d

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. This constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

The question is '**Evaluate**': this statement requires **considering the arguments for and against** and reach a **justified conclusion**. There must be some consideration of the arguments: appraise the arguments to reach the higher levels in the mark scheme. Many candidates provided excellent answers giving reasons for and against, but not analysing or evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments and thereby students' progression to the higher levels.

This type of question is marked from a levels-based mark scheme: marks are awarded according to levels descriptors.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings. Bullet point 1.4: the nature and significance of the nature of humanity being created in the image of God, including reference to Genesis 1–3 and divergent understandings of humanity's relationship with Creation (dominion and stewardship); the implications of these beliefs for Catholics today.

The question asked was:

"Catholics must care for the world."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- 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.

Many candidates had very clear ideas as to why Catholics should care for the world, often argued eloquently, although they did not appraise in their answers. Problems arose where candidates focussed on caring for other, such as feeding the hungry, rather than the world.

3RA0_01_Q2a

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices. Bullet point 2.6 Pilgrimage: the nature, history and purpose of Catholic pilgrimage.

This question was very well-answered, with most candidates being able to give three purposes of pilgrimage.

The question asked was:

'Outline **three** purposes of a pilgrimage.'

Candidates were not given credit for the places to where pilgrimage takes place. For example, 'going to Lourdes' was not credited, unless the purpose, when pilgrims arrive there, was outlined.

3RA0_01_Q2b

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices. Bullet point 2.8 Catholic mission and evangelism.

The question asked was:

'Explain two ways Catholics can evangelise'.

Many candidates had a general understanding of how they could evangelise either locally or globally, with limited development. A significant number persisted in detailing the sacraments.

3RA0_01_Q2c

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices. Bullet point 2.7, Catholic Social Teaching: the work of CAFOD, what it does and why.

The question asked was:

'Explain **two** reasons why CAFOD carries out its work.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

Some candidates were not prepared for this question and confused 'what' with 'why'.

3RA0_01_Q2d

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices: Bullet point: 2.1, The sacramental nature of reality: the meaning and effects of each of the seven Sacraments, divergent Christian attitudes to sacraments, including reference to Orthodox and Protestant Christianity.

The question asked was:

"The sacraments are the best way to feel close to God."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

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

Most candidates responded well to the question and were able to explain how the sacraments bring people close to God and how some other Christians do not place emphasis on the sacraments. Many candidates re-wrote this question to consider why people should receive the sacraments. Less-able candidates answered a 'for and against': the sacraments versus praying/pilgrimage. Many candidates argued that the sacraments are not very important because Mass is more important.

In addition, many candidates provided excellent answers giving reasons for and against, but then did not analyse or evaluate them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments and thereby limited candidates' progression to the higher levels.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Do not attach extra sheets to your examination paper; write within the booklet pages using the blank spaces
- When answering the (a) items use three full sentences
- The source of wisdom offered to support answers in (c) items must be relevant to the question and support the reason given
- The (d) item asks for evaluation, after considering the evidence. The higher grades are achieved if the evidence/reasons given is 'considered' or appraised for its value
- On (d) items the bullet points indicate the viewpoints that can be awarded in the answer, so candidates may respond to all aspects of the question
- Candidates should read the questions carefully, to ensure that the answer relates to the question asked