



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2020

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies A (1RA0)

Paper 3: Area of Study 3 – Philosophy and Ethics

Option 3A – Catholic Christianity

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies A Paper 3: Area of Study 3 – Philosophy and Ethics

Option 3A – Catholic Christianity

The paper contributes to 25% of the overall award. The assessment consists of two questions: candidates must answer all the 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 some questions, marks are available for correct spelling, grammar and punctuation – SPaG.

AO stands for Assessment Objective

1RA0_3A_Q1a

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of God

Bullet point 1.7: Issues raised by the existence of suffering and God as all-loving: the issues it raises for Catholics about the nature of God.

The question asked was:

'Outline three issues raised by suffering for Catholics'.

Candidates are asked to 'Outline' on part (a) questions. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of one mark.

Many candidates had a well-founded understanding of the problems raised by suffering. With many using the omni words in their responses.

1RA0_3A_Q1b

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of God

Bullet point 1.6: Catholic responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments against the cosmological argument as evidence for the existence of God.

The question asked was:

'Explain two ways Catholics respond to arguments against the cosmological argument.'

Candidates are asked to 'explain' on part (b) questions. 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, a quote 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 cosmological argument and those who simply recalled the creation account. Most candidates were able to give reasons of everything needing a course.

1RA0_3A_Q1c

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of God

Bullet point 1.1: What the revelation of Jesus Christ shows about the nature of God for Catholics.

The question asked was:

'Explain two ways the revelation of Jesus shows the nature of God.'

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

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on part (c) questions. 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, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then 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. The candidates do not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word. If a candidate quotes Jesus and it was Paul or vice versa; and the quote is not accredited to them, it is not awarded.

1RA0_3A_Q1d

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on part (d) questions.

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 considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise the arguments to gain the higher grades).

Many candidates do excellent answers giving reasons for and against but not analysing or evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting candidate's progression to the higher levels.

We are now marking using levels and award a best fit according to the level descriptors.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of God.

Bullet point 1.4 Catholic responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments that religious experiences do not provide proof that God exists.

The question asked was:

“Religious experiences are proof of God’s existence.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

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

Please note that, in the bullet points candidates are required to give a non-religious response. Candidates must respond to the question asked.

This question was varied in the responses by candidates; the majority were able to explain reasons for and against miracles and link the non-religious attitudes in support and against the statement. More able candidates were able to relate it to the fact that the Vatican investigates religious experiences before they can be termed a religious experience.

1RA0_3A_Q2a

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

Bullet 2.8: Divergent Christian attitudes to gender differences, including the role of women in the Church, prejudice and discrimination and Catholic responses to them.

The question asked was:

'Outline three beliefs about the role of women in the Christian Church.'

Most candidates were able to state the Catholic view against women in the priesthood. Many used teachings about the role of women in the family and therefore did not answer the question.

1RA0_3A_Q2b

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

Bullet point 2.1 The importance and purpose of marriage for Catholics.

The question asked was:

'Explain two purposes of Catholic marriage.'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on part (b) questions. 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 was generally well answered with one developed teaching or two simple teachings by candidates; the majority were able to explain the purpose of having a family and being permanent.

1RA0_3A_Q2c

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

Bullet point 2.4: Support for the family in the local Catholic parish: how and why the local parish tries to support families.

The question asked was:

'Explain two reasons why the local parish supports the family.'

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

Many candidates had an understanding of the teaching on the importance of the family but did not fully relate this to the question of why. Many gave examples of support but did not explain why.

1RA0_3A_Q2d

The question is: 'evaluate' this statement considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise the arguments to gain the higher grades).

Many candidates do excellent answers giving reasons for and against but not analysing or evaluating them.

Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting student's progression to the higher levels. We are now marking using levels and award a best fit according to the level descriptors.

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

Bullet point 2.2: Catholic teaching about the importance of sexual relationships.

The question asked was:

"Sex outside marriage is wrong."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

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

Please note that in the bullet point candidates are required to give a non-religious response.

Many candidates were able to give reasons for and against pre-marital sex and the commandment on committing adultery. Answers did not have a great deal of depth in them and lacked in evaluation and logical chains of reasoning.

Summary

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

- When answering the part (a) questions use three full sentences.
- The source of wisdom offered to support answers in part (c) questions must be relevant to the question and support the reason given.
- Part (d) questions ask for evaluation, after considering the evidence. The higher grades are achieved if the evidence/reasons given is 'considered' or appraised for its value as an argument as part of deciding the evaluation.
- For part (d) questions, the bullet points indicate the viewpoints that can be awarded in the answer.

