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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A (1RA0)
Paper 4: Area of Study 4 – Textual Studies
Option 4A: Mark's Gospel

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies A Paper 4A - Area of Study 4 – textual study of the Gospel of Mark (Paper code: 1RA0/4A)

The paper contributes to 25% of the overall award.

The assessment consists of two questions and candidates must answer all 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.

This area of study is a textual study of Mark's Gospel.

There are two sections:

- Who is Jesus?
- The Nature of Discipleship.

Question 1 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Who is Jesus?

Bullet point. 1.2 The baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:2-11): the events of the baptism; divergent understandings of its significance, including marking the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, what it shows about him, and **its significance for Christians today.** *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was: Outline three ways the baptism of Jesus is significant for Christians.

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) .

On the whole the questions was answered well. Many candidates were able to gain 3 marks. Some candidates who answered the question by giving features or describing of Jesus' Baptism, often did not answer the question set.

Examiner advice: Candidates are advised to read the whole question to ensure they are answering the question set.

Question 1 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Who is Jesus?

Bullet point 1.8 The last days of Jesus' life: reasons for his arrest; the Last Supper (Mark 14:12–31); the prayers in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32–42); the betrayal and arrest (Mark 14:43–52); the trial before the High Priest (Mark 14:53–65); the trial before Pilate (Mark 15:1–15); the Passion (Mark 15:21–39; 16:1–8), what these events show about the purpose of Jesus' life, and how they may differ from other Gospel accounts, what these events show about Jesus; divergent understandings of the significance of these events for different Christians today. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was : Explain two reasons Jesus was arrested.

Many candidates were able to give one or two reasons for Jesus' arrest. A significant number did not develop the reason by using accurate information from Mark's Gospel. The candidates who gained full marks gave the reason followed by an example of where this was seen in the Gospel or extra information related to the reason given:

For example: The teachers of the law thought Jesus was guilty of blasphemy *developed by* as Jesus said to the paralysed ' My Son, your sins are forgiven'.

Some candidates identified how Jesus was arrested by referring to Judas' betrayal and the events in the Garden of Gethsemane rather than giving the reason why this happened.

Common reasons given were: the jealousy of the Jewish authorities, clashes with the authorities, under minding Jewish teachings and Jesus had to be arrested, to die, to make salvation for all possible. All were rewarded positively.

Examiner advice: A way to develop a given reason is give an example from the Gospel where this can be found, through a brief description or quote.

Question 1 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Who is Jesus?

Bullet point 1.5 Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27-33): what this shows about Jesus and his purpose; ideas about the Messianic secret in Mark's Gospel. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was: 'Explain two things Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi shows about Jesus.' In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons/ways/points 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 quotes or examples. The development must relate to the point given and to the question asked. The points then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the point 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 who correctly identified this event as Mark 8:27-33 usually scored well on this question. But some candidates either referred to the Transfiguration or Peter's denial or wrote about what it shows about Peter and not Jesus hence did not do as well.

The common points made was that it showed Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus wanted to keep his identity a secret and Jesus spoke about his suffering and death.

Examiner advice: In a question that is based on a specific event in Mark's Gospel candidates should make sure if referring 'to a source of wisdom' as a development they should also include a further source of wisdom. For example: Jesus spoke of his imminent suffering and death; he said ' the Son of Man must suffer many things' (Mark 8:31), but three days after his death he would rise again (Mark 8:31).

Question 1 (d)

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the (d) items. The candidates are 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, judge the value of, the arguments to reach the higher levels).

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

Many centres had attempted to introduce a writing frame to encourage appraisal, but the candidates did not appear to understand the demands of the skill required.

Some candidates wrote 'this is a strong argument because ...' and repeated the previous point or giving another point, or reason referring to the statement not the argument given.

In other examples, candidates wrote 'this is a weak argument because...!' and gave generic statements such as, 'it's not in the Bible'.

Most answers did not address the reasons for the diversity within the beliefs of Christianity.

In some cases, students focussed on the strength/weakness of an argument but had not demonstrated any understanding of religion and belief.

Examiner advice: centres should refer to training materials online. Candidates should understand how varied interpretations of the meaning of passages from St Mark's Gospel may give rise to diversity within Christian traditions and consider how far Christian and non-religious communities give authority to St Mark's Gospel, especially in relation to other sources of contemporary authority.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Who is Jesus?

Bullet point 1.3 Nature miracles in Mark's Gospel: what they show about Jesus, including the calming of the storm (Mark 4:35–41); the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:32–44) and the walking on the water (Mark 6:45–52) and **divergent understandings of their significance for different Christians today; Christian responses to non-religious arguments (including atheist and Humanist) which maintain that miracles can be scientifically explained and provide no proof of Jesus as divine.** *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was *(d) "The nature miracles are evidence that Jesus is divine."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Mark's Gospel
- refer to non-religious points of view
- reach a justified conclusion

Some candidates referred to the healing miracles or miracles not found in Mark's Gospel and could not receive any credit for this.

In response to this question many candidates gave reasons for and against and developed the point /argument by reference to the three nature miracles given in the specification; but did not evaluate the reasons given.

Candidates tended to argue that the miracles are evidence for Jesus being divine from a religious point of view and are not evidence from a non-religious/ scientific point of view. Some better responses considered the divergent understandings of the nature miracles amongst Christians to help evaluate the statement. By examining why some Christians believe the miracles significance lies in the message they convey not whether they happened or not. Or by examining the significance of the nature miracles within the context of the Gospel as a whole.

When reaching a justified conclusion many candidates do not go beyond saying which side of the argument, they personally agree with and present generic arguments. The better responses attempted to answer the statement by evaluating the statement given in light of the arguments given, maybe partially agreeing/disagreeing.

Question 2 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: The Nature of Discipleship

Bullet point 2.4 The spirit cast out of the boy (Mark 9:14–29): the problems of discipleship as shown in the efforts to cure the boy, and its significance for Christians today (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was ‘Outline **three** features of the account of the spirit cast out of the boy.’

Where the candidates knew about when Jesus cast out the spirit from the boy in Mark 9:14-29, they were able to give three features and often wrote in detail. A number of candidates confused the incident with healing of Legion or Jairus’ daughter.

Examiner advice: Candidates should write three sentences containing one piece of information in each. There is no need for development: it will not receive credit.

Question 2 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: The Nature of Discipleship

Bullet point 2.6 Peter’s denial (Mark 14:66–72): the challenges that the denial brings and what it teaches about the problems of discipleship, **and its significance for Christians today as an example and warning;** Christian responses to non-religious arguments (including atheist and Humanist) which suggest that religious observance, such as discipleship, can be seen to be unnecessary. (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was ‘Explain two ways Peter’s denial is significant for Christians.’

The focus of the question was on the significance for Christians of Peter’s denial; candidates were able to give a wide variety of valid ways including; shows difficulties faced

by disciples, shows Jesus' divinity as he predicted it, shows people can receive forgiveness, shows even Peter made mistakes and people who fail can go to do great things.

An example how an answer can be developed to be awarded 4 marks:

Peter's denial shows the difficulties discipleship can cause (1); as seen when Peter was put in difficult position when recognised as a follower of Jesus (1)

It also shows that if you go wrong, you can still be forgiven (1); as Peter went on to be the first Pope (1.)

Examiner advice: Refer to the specification bullet point and cover all the different parts of it. These bullet points are the basis of question setting.

Question 2 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: The Nature of Discipleship

Bullet point 2.2 Parables: the Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12:1–12): how this story shows the potential cost of discipleship in and **its relationship to Christians today**; the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1–20), how each group shows different types of Christians; the nature of discipleship as shown in each group and in the role of the sower; its significance for Christians today; the importance of these parables with reference to the Kingdom of God and divergent ways in which that is variously understood as realised and in the future. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was: 'Explain two ways the Parable of the Tenants may help a Christian today.'

A significant number of candidates did not attempt this question or referred to the wrong parable or answered about parables in general. Where candidates knew the parable, they were able to apply this to the question and often gained full marks.

An example of how the parable can be used to gain full marks :

The parable teaches Christians about the cost of discipleship (1) as some of the servants the owner, God, sent to the tenants were beaten or killed (*SoWA paraphrase of Mark 12:5*) (1) . This can help Christians today who are facing persecution (1) .

The parable teaches Christians that Jesus is the foundation of Christianity (1); ' the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone' (1) . (SoWA used as a development)

Examiner advice: Centres are advised to refer to the specification for the specific texts in Mark's Gospel a question might be set on.

Question 2 (d)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two. The Nature of Discipleship

Bullet point 2.1 .The call of the first disciples (Mark 1:14–20, 2:13–17): how this shows the nature of discipleship in showing the willingness to immediately follow Jesus regardless of consequence and how this might affect a Christian today; **the sending out of the Twelve (Mark 6:7–13), how this shows the nature of discipleship including the command to take nothing for the journey and the responsibility to preach and serve; divergent ways in which it affects ideas about Christian living today.** (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was: “ The most important thing a Christian can do is to go out into the world and preach.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Mark’s Gospel
- reach a justified conclusion.

The question was asking if going out into the world and preach is the most important thing a Christian can do by referring to Mark’s Gospel.

The better responses unpicked the elements of what Jesus asked the disciples to do and link to this to discipleship today and or compared this to such teachings about service in the Gospel Mark 10:43-45.

Other valid approaches focused on the Jesus’ teachings based on the call of the first disciples and the sending out of the twelve or the call in Mark 8:34, to take up his cross and follow him, and addressed the issue that the need for preaching at the time of Jesus is different in the world today.

The weaker responses focused on generic arguments or just gave knowledge-based answers about the call of the first disciples or referred to examples of modern-day discipleship, without linking the points to the statement or Mark’s Gospel.

Examiner advice:

To further develop candidate’s evaluation skills centres should:

- Explore the divergent ways it affects ideas about Christians living, when it is referred to in the specification.
- Encourage candidates to use their knowledge and understanding from other parts the Gospel studied develop or support their arguments.

