



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2020

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A (1RA0)
Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Study of Religion
Option 1A – Catholic Christianity

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies A Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Study of Religion
Option 1A – Catholic Christianity.

The paper contributes to 50% of the overall award. The assessment consists of four 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.

1RA0_1A_Q01a

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

Bullet point 1.3: The significance of the Creation account for Catholics in understanding the nature and characteristics of God.

The question asked was:

‘Outline three characteristics of God shown in the Creation account.’

In (a) items A01 is assessed and can be awarded to a maximum of 3 marks; one mark for each correct point identified.

A small number of candidates wrote about Jesus, most were able to use omnipotent.

Candidates are advised to:

- write three separate sentences
- use a technique such as starting a new line for each point, to outline three teachings/ways/reasons/beliefs

1RA0_1A_Q01b

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

Bullet point 1.1 The Trinity how this is reflected in worship Catholic worship.

The question asked was:

‘Explain two ways the Trinity is reflected in Catholic worship.’

A01 is assessed in this question and can be awarded a maximum of 4 marks.

Many responses made reference to what the Trinity is and when it was present at the Baptism of Jesus, not how it was shown in worship. Those responses that scored the higher marks were able to relate to making the sign of the cross.

1RA0_1A_Q01c

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Catholic beliefs

Bullet point 1:4: The nature and significance of the nature of humanity being created in the image of God.

The question asked was:

‘Explain two reasons why being created in the image of God is important to Catholics.’

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

A01 is assessed in this question and can be awarded a maximum of 5 marks.

Candidates are required to give two reasons; both need to be developed for 4 marks and one of the reasons also needs to be supported with a ‘reference to a source of wisdom’. If the ‘reference to a source of wisdom’ is credited as a development, it cannot gain a further mark; a mark is given when the source is in addition to the reason and development.

Candidates tended to focus on ex nihilo and how this shapes humans. Some linked the creation to humans having dominion and stewardship.

A significant number of candidates added a source of wisdom and authority; however, many of these did not match the reason or development given and simply served as an add-on.

Examiner Tip

- The source must be relevant and used as part of your reasoning.

1RA0_1A_Q01d

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the (d) items. 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 requires considering the arguments for and against and reaching a justified conclusion. There must be some consideration of the arguments: appraise the arguments to reach the higher levels in the mark scheme.

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

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings
Bullet point 1.7: The significance of resurrection of Jesus.

The question asked was:

"The resurrection of Jesus is the most significant event in Christianity."

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 in the question, are candidates required to give a non-religious response or divergent Christian views.

The question asks if the resurrection of Jesus is the 'most significant' event. Some responses gave a 'for and against' Easter. Most compared Easter against the events of Christmas. There were some responses that included the crucifixion as part of the resurrection.

Examiner Tip

- Remember to provide a comprehensive appraisal of all the evidence given.
- Read the question carefully to ensure you are answering the question set.
- Do not argue that the statement is true or false: say why the reasons given 'for' are the best and can be disputed by the alternative opinion.

1RA0_1A_Q02a

Candidates were assessed on Section two: Practices

Bullet point 2.5: The role and importance of forms of popular piety.

The question asked was:

'Outline three forms of popular piety.'

This question was very well-answered, with most candidates being able to give at least two if not three examples.

Candidates were not given credit for listing ways to pray or prayers.

Examiner Tip

- Write three separate sentences, to outline three ways/reasons/effects.
- An 'outline' must be more than one word or item of knowledge.

1RA0_1A_Q02b

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point 2.1: The sacramental nature of reality: Catholic teachings about how the whole of creation manifests the presence of God; the meaning and effects of each of the seven sacraments.

The question asked was:

'Explain two reasons why Catholics receive the sacrament of reconciliation.'

Candidates are asked to "Explain two" on (b) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, and quotes or examples. The development must be for the reason given and to the question asked.

Most responses linked to freedom from sin and entry into heaven. Some responses lacked development.

Examiner Tip

- Reference to a teaching or scripture is a good way to develop a reason.
- Develop reasons, for extra marks.
- Write answers that divide into two paragraphs, each containing a reason and a development.

1RA0_1A_Q02c

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point 2.7: Catholic Social Teaching: The inclusion of the poor in society.

The question asked was:

'Explain two reasons why Catholics seek inclusion of the poor in society.'

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 are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks. Candidates must also use a source of wisdom correctly in their answer, which must be identifiable, relevant and linked to the way given in the answer.

Some candidates simply used love they neighbour and explained the context of the quote. Some linked helping others to judgment. Reference to specific Catholic Social teaching was limited.

Examiner Tip

- Be prepared for the whole breadth and depth of the specification, in order to achieve higher grades.

1RA0_1A_Q02d

The question is 'evaluate': this statement requires considering the arguments for and against and reaching a justified conclusion. There must be some consideration of the arguments: appraise the arguments to reach the higher levels in the mark scheme. This type of question is marked from a levels-based mark scheme: marks are awarded according to levels descriptors.

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.

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point: 2.2 Liturgical worship within Catholic Christianity: the nature and significance of the Mass for Catholics.

The question asked was:

"Mass is the most important form of worship."

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.

There are no SPaG marks for Question 2d.

Many candidates re-wrote this question to ask why a Catholic needs to go to Mass. Many candidates linked the importance to the Last Supper, with contrasting reasons being that God is everywhere not just at Mass. Many candidates failed to support this with evidence or reasons from different Christian viewpoints.

1RA0_1A_Q03a

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Sources of Wisdom and Authority

Bullet point 3.5: The Church as the Body of Christ.

The question asked was:

'Outline three beliefs about the Church as the Body of Christ.'

Many candidates did not answer this question well, they had limited understanding of the Body of Christ.

1RA0_1A_Q03b

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Sources of Wisdom and Authority

Bullet point 3.8: Sources of personal and ethical decision making; virtue and the primacy of conscience.

The question asked was:

'Explain two reasons why some Christians follow their conscience.'

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 for the question asked.

There was evidence that candidates had a good awareness of why some Christians follow their conscience and related it to modern examples. Some weaker responses were able to identify that the conscience is from God and therefore received marks accordingly.

1RA0_1A_Q03c

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Sources of Wisdom and Authority

Bullet point 3.2: Interpretation of the Bible: Catholic interpretation of the Bible and understanding of the meaning of inspiration; divergent interpretations of the authority of the Bible within Christianity: the literal Word of God, the revealed Word of God and as source of guidance and teaching.

The question asked was:

'Explain two ways the Bible can be interpreted.'

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 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.

This question was answered well by candidates: the majority gave a liberal and literal view of the Bible. Some candidates had knowledge of a relevant source of authority.

1RA0_1A_Q03d

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Sources of Wisdom and Authority

Bullet point 3.7: Mary as a model of the Church: the significance of Mary as a model of the Church – joined with Christ in the work of salvation, as a model of discipleship and as a model of faith and charity.

The question asked was:

“Mary is best understood as a model of faith.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Catholic teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

The question did not require another Christian teaching or non-religious views.

This question was simplistically answered well by candidates, who responded either by giving a number of basic reasons to support the statement, which often linked to acceptance of Mary to be the mother of Jesus and her example of faith. Many responses detailed how Mary was not held in regard by other Christians what was not required for the answer.

1RA0_1A_Q04a

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Forms of Expression and Ways of Life

Bullet point 4:8 The nature and use of traditional and contemporary styles of music in worship: the divergent ways in which it may be used in church (including the Mass) and other settings.

The question asked was:

‘Outline three ways music is used in worship.’

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

Most candidates were able to outline three ways.

1RA0_1A_Q04b

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Forms of Expression and Ways of Life

Bullet point 4:7 The meaning and significance of drama: mystery plays, passion plays.

The question asked was:

‘Explain two reasons why passion plays are important.’

Most candidates knew that passion plays were used to show the last moments of Jesus’ life. Those candidates working at a higher level could develop their importance.

1RA0_1A_Q04c

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Forms of Expression and Ways of Life

Bullet point 4:5: The meaning and significance of sculpture and statues with reference to Catechism of the Catholic Church 2501: the way these are used to express belief by the artist and those who observe the art, the way these are used to express belief.

Candidates are asked to 'explain' 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 question asked was:

'Explain two ways sculptures and statues are used in a Catholic church.'

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

The vast majority of answers to this question were good. Most candidates were able to answer by giving an example and using development to explain the use of sculptures and statues, with some using examples to support the reasons. Lower-achieving candidates included fewer developed reasons and detailed how statues should not be used.

1RA0_1A_Q04d

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Forms of Expression and Ways of Life

Bullet point 4:4: The meaning and significance of paintings, fresco and drawings within Catholicism with reference to two specific pieces and Catechism of the Catholic Church 2502–2503: the divergent ways these are used to express belief by the artist and those who observe the art, and the divergent ways in which paintings, frescos and drawings may be used in church and other settings.

The question asked was:

"Paintings help people understand their faith."

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.

This is a question which required candidates to evaluate the use of paintings. The vast majority of candidates were able to answer well. However, some gave arguments for and against paintings in general, limiting the marks they could be given.

Candidates should be encouraged to read questions carefully to understand what they need to include in their response and ensure all elements of the question are answered.

Summary

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

- Answer (a) items in outlines, for example full sentences
- Provide three sentences for (a) items, each on a separate line
- (b) items should have two developed reasons and not more than two
- Development may be (1) examples, (2) quotes, (3) extra relevant material.
Development must link to the reason given and still answer the question set
- (c) items are similar to (b) items but should also use a source as a fifth element. The source of wisdom may be a paraphrase but should be identifiable. The source of wisdom must be linked to the reason given
- On (d) items the bullet points indicate the viewpoints that can be awarded in the answer
- (d) items 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
- (d) items must show an appraisal of the argument and not simply rely on a set format
- (d) item responses must show AO2 skills to receive high marks
- Candidates should read the questions carefully, and answer the question asked, fully

