1. Statistics

Table 1: MATSEC Advanced Level Religion, May 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Absent</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. General Remarks

2.1 For the 2010 May session, 161 candidates registered for Religious Knowledge at Advanced level. 26 candidates (16.1% of all candidates) did not turn up for the exam.

2.2 Most of the candidates lack serious preparation. They exhibited confused ideas, incorrect and superficial knowledge of the subject matter and inaccurate Church teachings. Some answers sounded more like a sermon rather than a critical essay that is expected in such an examination. Other answers were out of point. Candidates are to make sure that they read and understand well the questions before attempting to answer them. Only a few performed exceptionally well.

2.3 It needs to be strongly emphasized that the candidates be prepared to demonstrate familiarity with Biblical and Magisterial teachings. Lack of reference to such teachings leads to poor quality essays and as a result low marks.

2.4 Almost all candidates preferred to answer in Maltese. 7 candidates wrote all answers in English.

2.5 Candidates should also be aware that horrible grammatical and spelling mistakes as well as unreadable handwriting result in unclear answers, which inevitable causes a loss of marks because ideas are not communicated correctly.

3. Remarks on Paper I

3.1 Question 1a was the least popular question in this paper. Only a very few candidates managed to address the issues involved in the formation of the canonical books of the Bible. The vast majority answered Question 1b that dealt with the way the Old Testament compares God’s activity toward his people with that of an ideal father. Many candidates wrote good essays.

3.2 Two-thirds of the candidates answered Question 2a regarding the Holy Spirit as Life-giver. The majority of the candidates wrote satisfactory essays and exhibited a grasp of the divinity and role of the Holy Spirit. Question 2b was about the Incarnation. Some candidates wrote good essays whereas others did not give enough attention to the language of nature and person.

3.3 Less than half of the candidates preferred Question 3a that was about St. Luke’s use of the gospel according to St. Mark for the compilation of his gospel narrative. Question 3b was about the theme of salvation in St. Luke. The majority of the candidates showed a good grasp of the issues involved in both questions.

4. Remarks on Paper II

4.1 Two-thirds of the candidates chose Question 1a regarding the Church as being a priestly, prophetic and regal people. However most candidates preferred to explain the four marks of the
Church and thus went completely out of point. Question 1b was about the communion of saints. It is rather odd that many candidates wrote on holiness and ignored the spiritual and holy interrelation between the three states of the Church: in heaven, in purgatory and on earth.

4.2 Question 2a was the least popular question of this paper. Most candidates failed to point out the relationship between the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests and the common priesthood of all the faithful. The vast majority of candidates answered Question 2b regarding Christ’s teachings on marriage and the challenges and responsibilities of married couples. Many candidates showed a good general knowledge on the latter issue; however, they failed to show the same familiarity with the teachings of Christ and of the Church on marriage. Some answers were completely devoid of any Biblical or Magisterial reference.

4.3 Only one-third of the candidates opted for Question 3a regarding Constantine’s conversion. Many of the candidates wrote satisfactory essays. Most of the candidates who answered Question 3b showed a clear idea about Luther’s personal spiritual crisis mostly due to the moral laxity of the Church’s hierarchy. However, they failed to give proper weight to the Counter-Reformation through the Council of Trent. Some either did not mention this council or discussed the Counter-Reformation in very generic terms.

5. Remarks on Paper III

5.1 One fourth of the candidates answered Question 1a regarding the dignity, rights and duties of human beings. The majority of the candidates had a general idea of the topic; however they did not have a good grasp of the subject. There were some who did not seem to know the origins of human rights. While most of the candidates who answered Question 1b exhibited a good general understanding of the sacrament of reconciliation, a good number of them failed to address the issue that one must be willing to forgive in order to be forgiven. Some candidates paraphrased the parable of the prodigal son or outlined the things needed for a good confession.

5.2 More than half of the candidates opted for Question 2a on abortion. The majority of these answers were very rudimentary, pertaining to general knowledge. While some candidates argued that the Church’s message is indeed negative, they did not see a clear link between abortion and the dignity of the unborn. Only some candidates answered Question 2b well. A number of candidates wrote out of point essays or answered the question in a hazy way. Most did not know what the Christian vision of sexuality or married love is, opting instead to list a number of things which go against marriage.

5.3 The essays in answer to both questions clearly show that candidates are weakest in Catholic Social Teaching. One easily gets the impression that, with the exception of a handful, none of the candidates have read Solicitudo Rei Socialis, which is required reading on the syllabus. The majority of the candidates answered Question 3a. Their essays were very general with respect to the first part of the question and for the most part did not address the second part on human development. Only a small number of candidates did well. The candidates who answered Question 3b did better, seemingly being familiar with solidarity. Yet, their essays were more of a general knowledge level than that of an advanced level as expected.

The Chairperson
Board of Examiners
November 2010