

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

**SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
SEC**

**RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE
MAY 2014**

EXAMINERS' REPORT

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

**SEC Religious Knowledge
May 2014 Session
Examiners' Report**

Part 1: STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the May 2014 session of the examination.

GRADE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	ABS	TOTAL
PAPER A	89	375	646	438	373	-	-	349	28	2298
PAPER B	-	-	-	121	336	313	276	356	118	1520
TOTAL	89	375	646	559	709	313	276	705	146	3818
% OF TOTAL	2.3	9.8	16.9	14.6	18.6	8.2	7.2	18.5	3.8	100

Part 2: Comments regarding candidate's performance

GENERAL COMMENTS

2.1 General Remarks on Paper 1

The questions were formulated to test the student's familiarity with the Bible, and Christian Doctrine and the Liturgy. The Paper contained factual, short and rather direct questions on basic elements.

A good number of candidates do not read the questions properly and giving wrong answers i.e. an answer that has nothing to do with the question asked. Apart from this, the level of input in this examination is getting lower. Although a good amount of candidates sit for this examination, the level of interest in Religious Knowledge, generally speaking, is very low. It is evident that candidates are not studying. Worse still, they lack basic and fundamental Religious Knowledge. Even common sense is becoming uncommon.

Both the candidates who sat for Paper 2A and those who sat for 2B showed lack of ability in going beyond the retrieval of knowledge and just answering questions by reproducing information that they would have read, heard during lessons and/or studied by heart. They did not show a satisfactory level of deep learning and application of what they had learnt to concrete everyday life situations. They lack the skills of evaluating and analyzing the information they would have heard and read. At times they couldn't even understand the question and as a consequence they give answers that are out of point.

These observations may also reflect an inadequate and ineffective methodology which is still being employed by some teachers in the teaching of religion. It seems that our candidates are not always taught how to think deeply and critically, analyze and evaluate the significance and implications of the doctrines and propositions of faith that they are presented with. As a consequence many candidates do not show the enthusiasm and effort to go beyond the knowledge of faith, which many times they feel obliged to reproduce without being convinced of its value, validity and relevance in their lives.

2.2 Paper 1

SECTION A

Question 1

Many good answers but most of them just mentioned that we should respect other religions. Some wrote that we should tolerate them, others that we should understand that they are all the same and some even said that we should avoid them because they are all false religions.

Question 2

Even this basic question seemed to be difficult for some students. They answered Genesis or the New Testament as being the last book of the Bible.

Question 3

There were quite a considerable number of correct or partially correct answers. Only a few candidates gave four different things that we should consider to understand God's message in the Bible. Some wrote four things but repeated the same point in different words. There were many wrong answers because of a lack of understanding of the question. Some of the answers pointed to attitudes that the Catholic must have while reading the Bible, such as the need for prayer and the importance of finding a time and a space to read parts of the Bible in one's everyday life.

Question 4

Many candidates mentioned the psalms, poetry, hymns and parables. Others just mentioned one of the books of the Bible.

Question 5

The large majority of answers to this question were partially correct because they mentioned the fact that God shows us the way and the path in our journey of faith, and He gives us a direction in our life. However, many failed to say that the Bible has God's message through which we come to know His will and live it in our life.

Question 6

Although the majority of candidates answered this question correctly (i.e. man or human beings), others gave God, Jesus or another saint as an answer

Question 7.

For the first part of the question many candidates answered this question wrongly. The three most commonly mentioned names were those of Adam and Abraham and Moses. Some even mentioned Jesus or Saint Paul. There were, however, quite a few correct answers. In the second part of the questions most of the answers were incorrect as they did not follow from the previous question. Even most of the few candidates who answered correctly, narrated a part of the story of Exodus or of the journey of the Jews in the desert.

Question 8

Many candidates mentioned historical facts from the Exodus story rather than what one learns about God from the event. Others repeated the same learning point twice.

Question 9

Many candidates misunderstood this question and said that Mary was prepared to give birth to Jesus by what the angel Gabriel told her when he appeared to her. There were some who gave the birth of Mary without sin, as an answer. There were also quite a few candidates who wrote 'the Immaculate Conception' but gave this term/dogma the wrong definition. Few candidates answered satisfactorily.

Question 10

Most candidates answered correctly to this question by mentioning a human emotion experienced by Jesus such as joy, anger, sadness and regret. Most mentioned the same few episodes such as the anger Jesus felt at the people selling things near the Temple, of the sadness Jesus experienced when he heard of the death of his best friend Lazarus.

Question 11

Many candidates answered this question correctly. In fact many knew that the wheat are the good people (those who accept the word of God) while the darnel are the bad people (those who do not follow the word of God).

Question 12

Many candidates did not understand the concept of the Church as being the 'Body of Christ'. While there were candidates who got the answer correct others gave answers having to do with the church as being the building or how we celebrate the Eucharist within the church.

Question 13

a) An incredible assortment of answers from the good to the ridiculous. One or two even said that the Ecumenical Movement has to do with the country's economy! Others just said that it is a group that works for unity without explaining any further.

b) For some candidates Collegiality is just a group of people. Some did not mention the fact that it is a group of persons consisting of bishops and priests.

c) Infallibility for many candidates was when people do not take mistakes. However many lacked the concept that this is a virtue given by the Holy Spirit to the Church to make decisions without mistakes. Candidates also lacked to mention the infallibility of the Church's teaching.

d). Total confusion. Holy Orders and Religious Professions mixed up so many of the answers were of the type "when one becomes a priest, bishop or nun." There were quite a few who said that the Holy Orders are orders ("ordnijet") that are given by the Pope or the Archbishop which you have to obey.

Question 14

a) The majority of candidates gave the correct answer for this question. In fact many mentioned Reconciliation, Penance and Forgiveness.

b. Most of those who mentioned Reconciliation in the previous answer did know the meaning of the term, and specifically said that it consists of a renewal of one's relationship with God.

Question 15

Most of the answers were correct with many of them stating that in order to admit that you were wrong you have to humble yourself.

Question 16

For this question many got the answer wrong. The impression the markers got was that the candidates didn't even know about the difference between the Old and the New Testament. When asked to mention an account from the Old Testament that Jesus was commemorating during the Last Supper many mentioned "the Last Supper itself" or "when Jesus gave us his body and blood" or "when Jesus was going to die on the cross". Very few gave the correct answer i.e. The Exodus or when Moses delivered the Jews from slavery.

Question 17

Rather than explaining why the Word of God is essential for the Catholic before s/he approaches the Eucharist, most candidates just described the two main liturgies that take place during the Eucharistic celebration: the liturgy of the Word and of the Eucharist. Most did not say how the Word of God enlightens and empowers and strengthens Christian life. However, quite a few candidates said that through it we come to know what God wants of us in our everyday life. Some of them even mentioned the need to put into practice what we listen to.

Question 18

Most answers to this question were satisfactory. They mentioned the fact that God really appreciates every voluntary action that we perform, that is done with love and a sense of generosity. Some said that such actions put us closer to Heaven, but more importantly, make us feel a true sense of joy in our heart, that comes from the Lord.

Question 19

Although most candidates did not give an incorrect answer to this question, their answers were not complete, and did not show real understanding of the term 'Temple of the Holy Spirit'. Most of them just said that we become Temples of the Spirit in Baptism, and a few specified that in Baptism we receive the Spirit as a gift, which comes again more powerfully in us in the sacrament of Confirmation.

Question 20

Again we had a variety of plausible answers. Many tackled it from what they learn during PSD lessons. Others added a spiritual dimension, such as knowing that there is a caring Father at the helm of every situation or imitating Christ as the One who achieved real success in life. Both lines of thought were adequately developed.

Question 21

Most candidates just wrote on one line that Jesus performed miracles. They also wrote down other generalized statements like 'Jesus loved people' or 'Jesus went to eat at the house of whoever invited him over'. Most candidates did not specify examples of healing and resurrection miracles.

Question 22

The large majority of candidates got the answer to this question wrong because they wrote that the Church's document 'Gaudium et Spes' speaks mainly about work and work-related issues. There were a few who said that it is about the Church, and even fewer who specifically wrote that it reflects on the Church in the modern world.

Question 23

Many candidates knew why the Church considers work as partaking in the work of God as Creator. They answered that man through his knowledge and hard work continues to develop the creation that God left in our hands.

Question 24

Many candidates got at least two from three answers right for this question. They had to mention three reasons why Christian marriage is more than a natural contract between human beings. The most common answers were unity, fidelity, indissolubility and the presence of God in marriage. Some candidates mentioned eros, philia and agape as an answer

Question 25

Most candidates gave a partially correct answer to this question. They wrote that parents are obliged to take care of their children and educate them. But fewer candidates specified that this education should also have a spiritual and religious dimension to it, and thus families must nurture the Christian faith in their children, and be a small domestic church.

SECTION B

Question 1

Most candidates know what abortion is. They also know, especially those who sat for Paper 2A, that it is always a morally wrongful action, as life is the most precious gift from God to every human being. The large majority of candidates disapprove of abortion and wrote that it is always evil, in every circumstance, even when the pregnancy is a result of rape. They acknowledge that the new embryo is a human life that is innocent and should not pay the high price of having life taken away for an action that she was not responsible for. There were only a few answers that expressed a personal opinion that was contrary to what the Catholic Church teaches. These opinions justified abortion in cases of rape or possible diseases, or even serious difficulties on the mother's part to raise her child.

Question 2

Also here many candidates got the answer right and mentioned different reasons why the worker should take priority over work. Many mentioned the fact that man has his dignity since he was created on God's image. This brings about different rights such as good working conditions, salary, environment, etc.

Question 3

This question was answered correctly by the majority of students. In fact many narrated the events that happened during the Last Supper. However there were other candidates who didn't know exactly the words Jesus used to institute the sacrament of the Eucharist. In fact many left out the words "Aghmlu dan b'tifkira tieghi". About this topic the most common event that seems to have impressed the candidates was the betrayal of Judas since nearly all of them mentioned him in their answer. Something that impressed was that other candidates instead of writing the words of Jesus when instituting the Eucharist in two separate sentences (i.e. "Dan hu gismi li jinghata ghalikhom" and "Dan hu demmi li jixxerred ghalikhom tal-patt il-gdid li jibqa' ghal dejjem") in a way they integrated the two sentences into one (i.e. kulu u ixorbu ghax dawn huma gismi u demmi).

Question 4

Many candidates knew that Jesus was the member of the Holy Trinity being referred to in the part of the Nicene Creed quoted in this question. There was also quite a number who answered incorrectly by saying it refers to God the Father or the Holy Spirit. Moreover, not many candidates reflected at length about the meaning and implications of the Incarnation of Jesus in this world, that He was really man and really God.

Question 5

Considering that the textbook covers this topic extensively, we expected much better answers. We expected that the candidates should have a much more clear idea of Inspiration. We expected that the candidates know that the holy authors are not just the evangelists and that the Bible is not just the Story of Jesus. We can expect that they do not have a very clear idea of the formation of the bible since that subject was almost eliminated in the second edition of their textbook. But we cannot accept such answers as those who wrote that the Bible was delivered to us by St Paul after being shipwrecked here or by Mons Saydon who took 30 years to write it down.

SECTION C

First Text

- a. Almost all candidates answered correctly. They knew that the work of the publicans was to collect taxes.
- b. Most answers were correct. They specifically mentioned the fact that Levi accepted Jesus' call to follow him, and he did so immediately and without any hesitation.
- c. Many candidates said that Jesus respected and loved everybody. Others specifies that Jesus loved sinners the most, especially when these genuinely wanted to change their life for the better.
- d. Many students, in their answer to this question, repeated points they had mentioned in the previous answer. They mentioned the universality of Jesus' love and his respect and solidarity and compassion towards all human beings, irrespective of their previous life experiences.
- e. Quite a few candidates said that to become a disciple of Jesus one needs to accept His call and have faith and complete trust in him. However, many others did not mention these important points. Some said that one needs to love Jesus. Others wrote that one needs to pray, live according to God's commandments, or else perform good deeds.

Second Text

- a) Many candidates succeeded in giving some correct answers. The most common answers were that Confirmation strengthens all that was achieved in the sacrament of Baptism and that the Holy Spirit enters in us stronger than in Baptism.
- b) Here many candidates answered that after receiving the sacrament of Confirmation they become soldiers of Christ, adult Christians or mature Christians. Now they can help others and show true Christianity through their deeds by helping others.
- c) Many candidates succeeded in giving the correct answer i.e. the imposition of hands and the holy oil. However many candidates were misled and as an answer they wrote the symbols of Baptism instead (i.e. water, the candle and white dress). It was obvious that the latter got the answer wrong.
- d) The majority of candidates didn't know the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit that are wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord. Some candidates succeeded to write at least 3 gifts. However, others used incorrect words such as love, kindness, strength or even handsome.

2.3 PAPER 2A

Question 1:

- a) candidates were very superficial in answering question number 1. Many just narrated the story of Adam and Eve in a very childish way. Others even mentioned the apple that in fact does not exist in the Bible. When the candidates were asked for the religious truths in the creation narrative some of them didn't even answered the question.
- b) candidates knew and mentioned the fact that before committing sin there was unity between God, nature and man. Others just mentioned that man didn't bother being naked in front of the other. Others said that man was created on God's image and had the privilege to live in a garden with plenty of food.
- c) After committing sin man brought division with God, nature, others and himself. Many candidates succeeded in answering that as a consequence of this, man had to suffer pain and that God had to plan our salvation that was brought through Jesus Christ. Some candidates just narrated the fact that Adam and Eve took an apple from a prohibited tree and realised that they were naked. It seems that the snake impressed the candidates very much since every one mentioned him as the source from which all sin was brought about.

Question 2

a) A lot of confusion here. Some mentioned just the Gospels, or the New Testament or even The Bible. Others mentioned the non Christian documents without referring to the Christian ones. Only a few mentioned them all and were able to describe briefly what they contain about the historical Jesus.

b) There were many good but incomplete answers. Most of the candidates wrote about the human emotions of Jesus but did not mention anything else that made him truly human, notably his birth and death on the cross and all his other physical needs.

c) Jesus showed that he was God amongst us through his miracles, through his declaration of being the son of God and through his resurrection. Many candidates mentioned the miracles and even narrated some of them. However, the majority of candidates failed to mention the strongest signal where Jesus showed that he was truly the son of God i.e. his resurrection from the death. There were some candidates who also mention the prayer of the "Holy Father" or when Jesus called God as being his father. Some others mentioned the fact that he forgave people from their sins.

Question 3:

a) Most candidates could explain the Pauline doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. Many gave examples used by St Paul such as the parts of the body need one another and they are all in unison with the head. But when it came to say what is meant by "One Church", many left it out altogether, others said that we are united together as one body without any divisions, others said that the divisions in the Church are addressed by the Ecumenical Movement. Very few spoke of one common faith and one common visible Head of the Church.

b) Many did not even know what the word Catholic stands for. Some said that it's called Catholic because it is made up of Catholic people, or other similar answers. When it came to the parable of the mustard seed, many mixed it up with the parable of the sower, saying that members of the church are spread in different places. Many explained it by saying that the Church is open for everyone, saints and sinners alike.

c) When explaining the mark of Holiness, most candidates said that the church consists of some saints that have died and some that are still alive. They explained it by referring to the parable of the wheat and the darnel. Very few spoke of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church or the sacraments as the means of sanctification with the Church, or the action of Christ in the Church. Most candidates could explain the apostolic mark of the Church and referred to its origin and of the episcopate as the successors of the apostolic college.

Question 4:

a) The Bible teaches a number of lessons about the dignity of the human person. Unfortunately, most candidates limited themselves to just one of the following: man is created by God, man is created to God's image and likeness, man is the master of creation, we are children of God / brothers of Jesus, God gave us a commandment that forbids the killing of human life, God as the master of human life, Jesus became man, Jesus respected the sick and the poor, etc. A very popular episode in which the candidates saw the respect for human dignity was the episode of the Adulteress from John's Gospel. After referring to just one of these, candidates indulged in a number of valid arguments about human life that were not relevant to the question, namely, what do we learn from the Bible. One common argument dealt with man's freedom although this was not linked with any Biblical text. Some candidates concentrated on the word dignity and developed their answer on human rights, workers' rights, decency in dress etc. A few candidates developed the idea that in the person of Jesus we can find the fullness of human dignity.

b) The same comment applies here. Candidates can explain the Christian attitude towards the environment but very few can relate this to any Biblical narrative or passage. Most candidates spoke of the environment as God's creation. Some argued that in all creation there is the image and likeness of God. A few spoke of St Francis as if he were a Biblical figure. It was impressive that one candidate argued that Jesus used the love for nature, namely the love of the shepherd for his flock, as a vivid example of God's love for man, especially for sinners. It's encouraging to find such answers when correcting the exam scripts. Unfortunately, these candidates are quite rare.

c) Here the candidates mentioned all sorts of ways regarding the environment, including bird shooting & trapping, recycling, animal care, clean sources of energy, use of public transport to decrease pollution, etc. It is clear that this environmental awareness is strongly present among the young generation.

Question 5

a) Many candidates correctly answered that the characteristics of love in marriage are unity, indissolubility and fidelity and they discussed in detail how Christian married couples can live these characteristics in their daily life. There were quite a few who spoke of fruitful love as a characteristic of Christian Marriage and spoke of procreation and education of children. Others spoke of respect as the key characteristic of Christian marriage. There were quite a few who confused the characteristics of marriage with the three Greek words that describe love, Eros, Filia and Agape. In their discussion, some candidates did manage to hint at valid characteristics but many just explained the Greek concept of the words.

b) The answers to this part of the question left much to be desired. Most candidates have shown that they have not the foggiest idea of the concept of holiness. Very few saw any relation with God. At the most, they spoke of abiding by the commandments. Very few spoke of imitation of Christ or of adopting his values. In most instances, holiness for married people consists only of mutual love and the education of the children. No mention of prayer at home. A few spoke of attending the Sunday Mass together. Holiness for the unmarried consists primarily of voluntary work and service for one's neighbour. Again no relation to God or the imitation of Christ. For those in religious life it is simply a matter of preaching the Word of God. A few spoke of the vows of religious people without giving the significance of these vows. Very few saw in these vows a way of consecration of one's life to God.

c) Most candidates referred to the Annunciation narrative when Mary declares that she is ready to abide by the Lord's plan for her. Most candidates stopped at that. A few spoke of her service to her neighbour Elizabeth. A few spoke of her steadfast love for Christ under the cross. Some spoke of the action of the Holy Spirit. There were many candidates who spoke of the four dogmas of the Church regarding Mary. This was not required by the question

2.4 PAPER 2B

Question 1

There were candidates who answered correctly this question. However, there were some candidates who referred to the Orthodox and Protestant Church as non-Christian Religions. Instead of going straight to the point by answering about what happens to man after death many candidates chose to give many of the traditions of Islam, Judaism and Hinduism, omitting the proper answer. There were candidates who confused religions mentioning re-incarnation in Judaism and Nirvana in Hinduism.

Question 2

First of all it must be noted that the large majority of candidates do not read the text that is given to them, but go directly to the question, as was the case with this one. Also, many of them did not understand the question. They answered by just saying that Jesus taught us about the importance of love. Others went further and gave examples of loving deeds performed by Jesus. A few others gave a fuller answer by saying that God himself through Jesus told us that when we love others through tangible acts, we love Him. And He himself died for us because of his love for each human being.

Question 3

Most candidates answered this question correctly by writing briefly the story of Adam and Eve and the tree of life/knowledge, which most candidates still think and believe was an apple tree. Some candidates described the first sin as an act of negative pride ('suppervja') and/or a human desire to achieve divine status and be independent of God.

Question 4

Many candidates showed that they didn't study the chapter from the textbook. Many answered by saying what they personally think about the subject. Candidates gave answers such as "Alla huwa dak li jahqarna imma xorta ghandna inhobbuh", "Alla huwa dak li tana l-kmandamenti", "Alla huwa dak li halaqna", "Alla huwa dak li ghandna nitolbuh", "Alla huwa dak li gie biex isalvana billi jmut ghalina", etc. Some candidates do not even make a difference between "God" and "Jesus".

Question 5

Most candidates were able to answer the first part of the question and gave 3 beautiful qualities: however, they failed to show how these qualities manifested themselves in the Lord Jesus.

Question 6.

A considerable number of candidates mentioned the four characteristics of the Church that Jesus founded, namely that it is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. However, a significant number of these did not know the meaning of one or more of these four characteristics, especially the meaning of 'Catholic' and the meaning of 'One'. There were also a good amount of answers that were out of point or even left unanswered.

Question 7

Although the majority answered correctly, there were a few candidates who mistook the sacrament of Confession with other sacraments such as the Eucharist or Confirmation.

Question 8

Many answers failed to demonstrate a clear understanding of the connection and continuation between Mass and one's everyday life. They said that Mass is a Christian's moral obligation to celebrate, some mentioned and even explained briefly the different parts of the Mass, and some said that when we go to Mass we can live a better life but did not say why and how.

Question 9

Many candidates answered this question in a very general sense. They wrote about the possible benefits of politics to society in general but failed to give practical examples of how the Christian can contribute to political activity. It must be observed that many candidates understand the latter concept ('political activity') only in relation to partisan politics. However, few candidates mentioned good examples such as one's lack of fear to voice his opinions for the common good and against injustices, and one's courage to vote against unjust and immoral laws. Others even mentioned concrete actions that one can do to better his environment, such as keeping the environment clean.

Question 10

Very few candidates could express themselves and say that conscience is God's voice within us. None of the candidates could explain how a good conscience is formed. Most did not even attempt to answer that part of the question. The others said that they build their conscience by following the example of their parents. No reference to God's word, or the commandments, no reference to Christ or His Church. This should be an eye opener.

Question 11

Many good answers. Most of the candidates know what abortion and euthanasia are and what the Church says about these serious offences to God. There were a few who wrote that abortion is "killing the baby before it is born whereas euthanasia is the killing of the baby as soon as it is born."

Question 12

Here again very few candidates introduced religious concepts from the Bible in their answer. No one mentioned God in the creation narrative who is represented as a worker or Jesus and his work. Candidates just mentioned the meanings of what are rights and duties. Then they mentioned some rights such as the right for work, for a good wage, for a good healthy

environment, for education, etc. No one even mentioned an encyclical. Many didn't write about the objectives that should be pursued by work and went completely out of point.

Question 13

Candidates had to mention the characteristics of Christian Marriage which are unity, fidelity and indissolubility. Many candidates based their answers on Eros, Philia and Agape. The candidates had to choose two characteristics, explain them and mention how these can be lived in their everyday life. There were many candidates who chose just Eros and Philia.

Question 14

Many candidates provided childish answers. Some mentioned Heaven to be a large garden, others described hell as being a place where there is a lot of fire and Satan with his fork. For many purgatory is a place where one goes to be redeemed from sin and afterwards God has to decide if you go to Heaven or hell which obviously is not the case.

**Chairperson,
Examiners' Panel 2014**