

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

THE MATRICULATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

SEC

RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

May 2012

EXAMINERS' REPORT

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD

Grades	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	Absent	Total
No of Cands	100	419	707	597	754	339	307	567	177	3987
Option A	100	419	707	481	405	0	0	224	18	2374
Option B	0	0	0	116	349	339	307	343	159	1613
Total %	2.5	10.5	17.7	15.0	18.9	8.5	7.7	14.2	4.4	100.0

General Remarks

The Examination Paper at this level is expected to require a good basic knowledge and ability to think before setting ink to paper. In general, a good number of candidates were well-prepared for the questions set in this session; some candidates, however, lacked the general religious knowledge needed to reach the level required. The knowledge level of candidates as always varies from very high to very low. In most cases, the write-on format of the paper with the questions set together in both languages helped candidates to better understand what was expected in each case. Candidates sitting for Paper 1 (A) did quite well and knew their subject. Some even gave detailed answers when a short simple answer could do. But again candidates sitting for Paper 1 (B) showed very limited knowledge of the subject. Generally speaking, perhaps what is lacking is a profound effort to understand the significance of our faith and living up to it. Otherwise the young would fail to appreciate the treasures of our faith.

Paper I

The questions were basically formulated to test the candidates' familiarity with the Bible, with Christian Doctrine, and with the Liturgy. Certain popular misconceptions still appear in candidates' scripts, as mixing up God with Jesus, and there is always a limited number who never read the questions properly before giving their answers. Although the Religious Knowledge Exam is still quite popular, it seems that a real profound interest in the subject is often lacking.

Section A

This section carried 50 marks for 25 questions. Numbers 1-6 dealt with the basics of religion. Most answers were correct, with some candidates missing the main point of the questions, especially with regards to the Christian belief in the afterlife. Even the horoscope featured in a number of answers.

Questions 7-11 were set to examine the candidates' knowledge of the Word of God. Candidates could have done better if they were more familiar with Bible facts and their message. There was a mix-up by some candidates in distinguishing between 'inspiration' and 'illumination', as well as with God's Covenant with his People in the Old Testament.

Knowledge about the salvation brought about by Our Lord Jesus Christ was expected in Questions 12-16. The Feeding of the 5000, Zacchaeus, the Last Supper, the Disciples of Emmaus, the miraculous catch of fish, all featured prominently in the answers given. In Question 15, too few included Mary's Immaculate Conception as an important part of God's preparation of his chosen Mother-to-be. Many missed Christ's presence in the Church through his salvific presence in the sacraments.

Questions 17-19 dealt with knowledge about the Church. There was a bit of a mix-up with which other two sacraments the Church helps a sick person, besides the Sacrament of the Sick itself. For the Sunday observation, too many mentioned only Sunday Mass, which is only part of our duty to God on the day dedicated to his worship and to family reunion.

Questions 20-25 were meant to ask about the lifestyle and behaviour expected of a committed Christian in his daily life. God being the sole master of all human life, many correctly argued that capital punishment goes against his will. Most confusion came out in distinguishing between divorce and marriage annulment. 'Agape' love was, however, rightly defined as altruistic disinterested love, total self-giving to the other.

Section B

25 marks were allotted to Section B, where candidates were expected to answer in paragraph form to the five questions set. The first question related to the four characteristics of Christ's Church as taught by the Nicene Creed, recited in Holy Mass. Too many candidates missed the point completely. But there were some beautiful expositions in comparing the Old Testament Covenant to the Passion of Our Lord in the second question.

The third question dealt with the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan, which, however, a few mixed up with the story of St Martin meeting Christ in the beggar, or with that of the episode of the Samaritan Woman. The institution of the Eucharist narrative was quite familiar to most, but a good number said nothing about its benefits in the Christian life as distinctly expected in question 4. The fifth question was expected to be straightforward, and many answered well about the care one should give the environment, though some just repeated themselves in different wording.

Section C

Section C too carried 25 marks for answers to questions set to two excerpts from the official teachings of the Catholic Church. Most answers were satisfactorily given. Some missed suffering as a consequence of sin, though this is so obvious from the Fall of Man in the first chapters of the Bible and from the Passion of Our Lord, as well as from daily experience in today's life.

Paper IIA

In general, candidates did well. Though candidates were expected to show clearly to which question they were answering, some preferred to give in one paragraph the answers to the three sections of the question. In Paper 2A, although most of the answers were satisfactory, a good number of candidates failed to support their answers by the Bible quotations expected. In Option B, a number of candidates knew their subject well and would have done better if they opted for Option A. But still, too many candidates in option B were able to give only general answers. Some markers expressed their doubt whether the changes in paper setup introduced lately for Option B did help candidates to express themselves fully as expected.

Question 1 dealt with the value of religion for mankind, with special reference to the greater religions. Candidates' knowledge of the Islamic faith was not always correct, but the teaching and attitude of the Church towards other religions was mostly understood.

Question 2: asked about the relationship between the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, which mostly knew. But the practical part as expected in (b) and (c) was often quite lacking. Some did mention the special call to the religious life or to the priesthood, but ignored the general call to sanctification as exposed so clearly in the Vatican Council documents.

Question 3: regarded the use of the Bible in our family life. Many did refer to the correct interpretation of the Bible where it is to be taken both in the context it was written as well as as an inspired book through which God still speaks to his children. Some, however, seem to take their interpretation only through priests and religion teachers than directly from the Magisterium of the Church, which catechists and priests usually follow. For a few candidates, the Bible is only that Bible Story Book written for children.

Question 4: dealt with Christian marriage and the family. As always, questions on marriage are very popular with candidates, and many show real interest in having the correct notions of marriage. Trial marriages, however, seem to be very popular and to a few quite acceptable, which they are not to any good Christian who follows the teachings of Christ and his Church,

Question 5: about the sacrament of Reconciliation, was also popular with many candidates. The answers were also mostly satisfactory – with certain exceptions which stand out too loudly.

Paper IIB

60% of the total marks were allotted to Paper IIB, from which candidates were expected to answer ten out of fourteen questions. The following are some comments to particular questions.

1. Some find it hard to see the relevance of the Bible to their daily lives.
3. God's part in redeeming human mistakes were often limited to the sacrament of Reconciliation.
5. Candidates sometimes limited themselves to personal talents and abilities. The spiritual side was quite often absent.
6. Lack of knowledge about other historical documents about Christ was evident. The intrinsic value of the Gospels was correctly given as due to their being inspired by the Spirit.
7. Students were often unfamiliar with Jesus' teaching and words.
9. Not all candidates were familiar with all the known effects of Baptism, except perhaps the forgiveness of original sin.
10. The core of the answer to this question was that Our Lady bore the Son of God himself, so she was God's Mother. Other answers were only complimentary to this.
12. This was a difficult but very important notion to be expected of candidates taking this Certificate. The well informed were not lacking, even among Option B candidates, but were not many.
- 13-14. Again, popular questions, very often with good answers.