

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

**THE MATRICULATION EXAMINATION
SEC LEVEL**

**RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE
MAY 2013**

EXAMINERS' REPORT

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

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Part 1: Statistical Information

Table 1: Distribution of the candidates grades for Sec Religious Knowledge May 2013

GRADE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	ABS	TOTAL
PAPER A	90	393	663	431	367			246	21	2211
PAPER B				127	332	330	289	398	111	1587
TOTAL	90	393	663	558	699	330	289	644	132	3798
% OF TOTAL	2.4	10.3	17.5	14.7	18.4	8.7	7.6	17.0	3.5	100.0

General Remarks Paper 1

There was a great difference between Paper A candidates and Paper B candidates. Many candidates do not read the questions properly, giving incorrect answers OR incomplete answers. Unfortunately, there were questions where candidates had to give more than one answer but they answered only a section or part of it. Some candidates lack the very basic religious knowledge. A case in point is the seven sacraments (question 13). It is very disappointing to find that many candidates do not know that there are seven sacraments and do not even distinguish between sacraments and commandments. Candidates are still confusing the term God and Jesus. It was common to find candidates writing that Jesus helped the Jews in their Exodus (question 5) or that Jesus was the author of the Bible (question 23).

In Section B a good number of candidates do not know the similarities that are found between the Paschal Lamb and Jesus. The concept of the Church as the Body of Christ is a very confusing issue. Only a few realised that one had to give a description of St. Paul's teaching about the Church. Most of the candidates cannot even explain the difference between mortal sin and venial sin. The concept that work can strengthen solidarity among workers is very limited. For candidates solidarity only means (i) charity and (ii) ability to work with others.

Paper 1

SECTION A

Question 1 candidates had to give two dogmas of faith or titles attributed to Our Lady. They had to provide two answers from the following four: a) Divine Motherhood, b) Perpetual Virginity, c) Immaculate Conception and d) the Assumption. Some even mentioned devotional titles given to our Lady, like 'Madonna tal-Gilju', 'Madonna ta' Lourdes', etc.

Question 2 The great majority of candidates said that the Bible obliges us to take care of the environment and make it more beautiful. However, few candidates specifically referred to man as God's 'administrator' of creation.

Question 3 This proved to be a difficult question. The candidates' Latin leaves much to be desired.

Question 4 Many candidates said that all religions believe in some sort of divinity/God, believe in the value of prayer, try to grabble and answer fundamental existential questions of human life, and have rules/laws/commandments that guide them to lead a morally good life.

Question 5 candidates had to give the main lesson in the Exodus narrative. They had to answer that God saves or gives freedom to his people. However many candidates didn't answer it correctly since they confused the Exodus narrative with the Genesis.

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Question 6 candidates had to answer how reason can help us to know God. Candidates had to answer that through reason one has to think that whoever created nature/the environment should have been greater than nature itself.

Question 7 This question was very badly answered. The great majority of candidates are not familiar to this quotation.

Question 8 Answers were generally correct although there were some who mentioned other miracles from the Exodus like (i) the pillar of cloud and fire, (ii) the crossing of the Red Sea, (iii) the destruction of Pharaoh and his army, (iv) water from the rock.

Question 9 Answers were generally correct. The most common biblical figures mentioned were Abraham, Moses, David, names of prophets and John the Baptist. There were a couple of candidates who wrote down biblical figures from the New Testament, these being St. Peter and St. Paul amongst others.

Question 10 Unfortunately and surprisingly, many candidates showed that have no idea of what the word 'Incarnation' means. They mentioned Jesus' death, resurrection and transfiguration. Some even mentioned a kind of reincarnation.

Question 11 There were quite a few good answers to this question. However, many answers were answered vaguely and not in a way that shows clarity of the concept. Some said that Jesus started a new religious movement or that He was divine or that He was a great prophet or someone special who could perform miracles.

Question 12 Most candidates referred to the healing of the blind man, or the healing of the ten lepers, the paralytic who was brought down from the roof and the woman who touched the hem of his garment. The narratives were somewhat different from what we find in the Gospels. E.g. Jesus cured the blind man using soil/ sand/ dust and then sent him to the river. Even the ten lepers were sent to the river.

Question 13 Surprised that many candidates do not know which the seven sacraments are. Some of them listed only 4-6 sacraments, others repeated the same sacrament twice (for e.g. the sacrament of reconciliation and the sacrament of penance OR the first holy communion and the Eucharist). The anointing of the sick and the holy orders are the two sacraments which were forgotten or frequently omitted by the students. It was noticed that candidates listed the sacraments in the order of how one receives them and not by rote memory.

Question 14 candidates had to show what it means when we say that the Church of Christ is Holy and Catholic. Holy since it is in union with Jesus Christ and we are called to become saints; Catholic since it is universal and open to all mankind. Most candidates answered it correctly but others had no idea of what these words really mean.

Question 15 candidates had to mention two episodes in which Jesus showed his love towards sinners. The most popular answers were the stories of Zaccheus the tax collector, of Levi/Matthew, of the sinful woman and of the good thief crucified on the cross near Jesus.

Question 16 A good percentage of candidates understand that 'Reconciliation' means to restore one's relationship with God and the community after one would have sinned ('nerġġhu insiru f'bieb m'Alla'). However, many others answered incorrectly. Many of these mentioned something that is usually done during the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation without explaining what 'reconciliation' means: e.g. 'ngħidu d-dnubiet' or 'Alla jaħfrilna jekk nagħmlu indiema').

Question 17 Most candidates referred to Adam and Eve and the traditional apple. Very few could see further than that and spoke of pride/ disobedience. In the second part almost all candidates referred to the punishments and the anger of God. One candidate referred to God as depriving them of their clothes. Only a couple of candidates referred to God's promise of Salvation.

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Question 18 Most of the candidates answered correctly. Once again, there were a lot of candidates stating that when receiving the Eucharist one receives the body of God instead of that of Jesus.

Question 19 The large majority of candidates did not answer satisfactorily the three different parts of this question. They only answered with a general statement, such as '*Jesus is the light*', '*Jesus removes original sin*', etc. Other candidates simply chose to write something about Baptism without making specific reference to the symbols stated in the question.

Question 20 This was a question where candidates had to mention two conditions where the use of weapons in war is tolerated. Candidates had to use their brain to realise that here they had to answer about the topic of self-defence.

Question 21 The question was about the link between Baptism and Confirmation. Nearly all candidates got this question right since the answer was that Confirmation confirms what we receive in Baptism. Some candidates mentioned that in Baptism we receive the Holy Spirit for the first time while in Confirmation we strengthen it. Others answered that in Confirmation we are choosing and confirming what our parents chose for us when we were babies during the sacrament of Baptism.

Question 22 Although some candidates gave the right answer to this question, many answers were out of point. Some did not even understand the question and wrote about why money is important in our lives and why we should work hard to earn it.

Question 23 A good number of candidates understand that God inspired all the authors of the books in the Bible and therefore all throughout Scripture we find God's message of love that is consistent and always present. Few and far in between are the ones that mention the plan of salvation. Overall, most candidates feel that it is considered as one book and the New Testament is a continuation of the Old and all scriptures are gathered as one.

Question 24 In this question, candidates had to answer why man can't do what he likes if he is born free. Candidates had to answer that freedom brings with it dignity; freedom should be used in the right way; or man should do what is morally right. However, some candidates answered that God gave us the commandments and that for this reason man is not free at all.

Question 25 Most candidates answered that the Scripture is free from errors as it was written at the time when Jesus was alive and is based on the story written by the prophets (at the time). Others mention that God has written the Scriptures so it is free from error as God is perfect and does not make mistakes.

SECTION B

Question 1 candidates had to indicate the similarities found between the Paschal Lamb and Jesus. Most Paper B candidates had no idea of the relationship that exists between the Paschal Lamb in the Old Testament and Jesus' role that brought salvation to all human beings. Some even put down silly answers like "il-ħaruf huwa abjad u Ġesu' kien jilbes l-abjad", "il-ħaruf kwiet u kalm u Ġesu' wkoll", etc.

Question 2 Most candidates mentioned the fact that Jesus is the Head of the Church and He is always present in it through the action of the Holy Spirit. Others even mentioned that Jesus built the Church on the Apostles, and also that the members of the Church make part of the same body. However, it was noted that most candidates used expressions learnt by heart without further explaining them or reflecting on their significance.

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Question 3 The answers given by the candidates are an eye opener to all teachers and those involved in Pastoral care of youths. The great majority of candidates have a distorted idea of what is mortal sin and venial sin. Swearing and missing mass on Sundays are considered as venial sins. Venial sins are considered as common every day, normal occurrence. Only murder, stealing and abortion are considered as mortal sins. Mortal sins are referred to as those which require the absolution of the bishop or the Pope to be forgiven. Many said that for mortal sins to be forgiven, one has to admit his crime to the police and may be forgiven after serving a prison sentence. Mortal sins are those from which time has elapsed. (a debarment) All other venial sins are forgiven with blessed water or a simple prayer. Are we losing the sense of sin?

Question 4 Unfortunately, and quite surprisingly, most candidates do not know what 'conscience' is, let alone how to form one's conscience. Most answers were incorrect and only a few were partially correct. Of the latter, the two most common points that were mentioned were prayer and Scripture reading. A handful of candidates even mentioned the importance of spiritual advice/counselling.

Question 5 Answers were generally correct but with a lack of ideas. The most common answer was: "meta l-bniedem jaħdem ikun qed jgħin lil ħaddieħor, jikkomunika ma' ħaddieħor u jagħmel ħbieb." Only a few mentioned the concept of working with others and working for others OR stated that when one works, s/he has to co-operate with others and that work creates communities.

SECTION C

First Text

a. Most candidates said that Heaven is where people who live a good life go after death, while Hell is where bad people dwell. Quite a few candidates described Heaven as 'being in the absolute presence of God'.

b. Many candidates do not understand that Purgatory is a state where souls are purified from sin to get prepared to enter into Heaven. For many candidates Purgatory is some kind of 'waiting area' where they have an opportunity to repent from their sins, and if not, they will go straight to Hell.

c. The large majority of candidates said that those who believe in Jesus can look at their future with hope and fortitude because Jesus promised us Heaven after death, only if we lead a good life based on His teachings.

d. Most candidates said that judgement is happening now because we will be judged on our actions in this world.

e. To the first part of this question many answered by saying that Jesus' teaching and resurrection are guarantees that we can conquer death. Most answered the second part by repeating what they had answered to the previous question.

Second Text

a. Many candidates do not understand the concept and implications of the term 'salt of the earth'. As regards the term 'light of the world' many said that Jesus wanted the Apostles to preach His message to the entire world.

b. The great majority of candidates said that we could be the light of the world today by helping other people and showing solidarity towards the poor and those who are in need. Quite a few mentioned the importance of showing love toward all those who need it and fewer candidates also said that the Christian is obliged to preach and live the Gospel in every environment that he is in, in his everyday life.

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c. Some understood this as a reference to the Eucharist. But the great majority of those who answered said that we should not strive for things and objects and possessions that perish but for those things that will never end and that could pave our way to Heaven.

d. Most candidates mentioned their peers, vices (like binge drinking, smoking, sex, etc) and the media (bad content that is on TV or the internet) as the most common problems that young people find in their Christian life.

e. Many answers to this question were very short and shallow, and lacked thought, reflection and 'imagination'. Most candidates said that during this year they could go for spiritual talks or courses, do some kind of voluntary work and try to get a spark that revitalized their faith in God and participation in Church activities. Most candidates wrote down generic statements without giving concrete and practical examples and initiatives that they could take. There were even some candidates that showed clearly that they do not even know it s the Year of Faith and what that could mean.

PAPER 2A

Question 1:

a. Many candidates mentioned the fact that Scripture is the Word of God because it is written by human authors who were inspired by God through the action of the Holy Spirit. Others did not mention God but said that the Holy Spirit inspired the writing down of the Holy Scripture. There were quite a number who mentioned Revelation and elaborated on how this occurred throughout a long period of history and in it God revealed Himself through different people and historical events in the Judeo-Christian Tradition. A small number of candidates even mentioned and explained how God communicated His message to human beings while at the same time giving them the freedom to use any literary genres which they preferred and which they were accustomed to.

b. Only a relatively small number of candidates said that sin brought about a separation from God, from other humans, from creation and within oneself. Many candidates mentioned pain and suffering as the natural consequences of sin, and some others even said that after sin God decided willingly to send Adam and Eve away from the Garden of Eden.

c. Many candidates answered this question correctly. The most preferred names were those of Abraham, Noah, Moses and David. However, some candidates did not elaborate satisfactorily on the contribution and role of these people in Salvation history. Some others mentioned names of New Testament figures (St.Peter, St.Paul), including that of Jesus Himself.

Question 2

a. The majority of candidates answered that the commandments exist to help us in our life as these are guidelines (similar to a compass or give us direction); rules that show us how to behave in our daily life. Some candidates mentioned and gave a list of the Ten Commandments.

b. Here many candidates answered correctly by giving the two answers: The two great commandments that contain the whole law of God are: a) You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole mind, and with your whole strength; b) You shall love your neighbour as yourself. In poor words we were waiting for answers which showed love for God and love for neighbours. Most important was the fact that candidates had to emphasize the importance of love as the new commandment Jesus left. There were candidates who mistook the two commandments and gave two answers emphasizing love for neighbours leaving out the love for God. Some others mentioned "to love one another as I have loved you" as one of the commandments.

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c. Although many answers were correct, and elaborated on the fact that the commandments increase our freedom in showing us the way how to live a good life in order to reach heaven, many answers were disappointing. This is because many answered by saying that “the commandments diminish freedom because one cannot do whatever he likes in life”. There were candidates who elaborated on this and continued that God do not leave us free and make us do whatever he likes. Others also wrote that it is better not to know that the commandments exist.

Question 3:

a. Many candidates answered correctly to this part of this question. They mentioned the Covenant that God made with His people through Moses on Mount Sinai, and also the fact that an animal was sacrificed and its blood drizzled over the people. Fewer candidates quoted the words stated by God with which He sealed this Covenant: ‘You will be my people and I will be your only God.’

b. Many candidates answered correctly but not satisfactorily to this question. They mentioned the fact that the Jewish people were God’s chosen people while Jesus extended this choice to all human beings through his death which saved all humans from the chains of sin. However, they did not mention and explain further similarities, and did not elaborate on what they said.

c. Many candidates did not give a correct answer to this question. They mentioned specific parts of the Mass but made no mention of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist and what they consist of. Only few candidates answered satisfactorily.

Question 4:

a. Many candidates said that Mary’s success consisted of always doing God’s will in her life, even when she did not understand where God’s plan for her was taking her. They also showed her strong belief in God, her constant attitude of prayer, her humility and simplicity in doing her everyday duties and her heart full of love for everyone who needed her.

b. Most candidates referred to when the archangel Gabriel visited Mary as the messenger of God to tell Mary that she was chosen by God to become the mother of Jesus, the Son of God. Mary willingly accepted. The large majority of candidates quoted Mary’s reply in a precise manner: ‘*Let it happen to me as you said*’. Most went on saying that Mary spent her whole life taking care of Jesus and helping other people even when she needed help herself, as in the case of her relative Elizabeth.

c. Quite a good number of candidates said that a person can attain the highest success in life by being a disciple of Jesus, praying, helping other people like Mary and doing voluntary work.

Question 5:

a. Many answered correctly to this part of the question. They said that before one chooses which career to pursue, s/he must consider what talents s/he has, what qualification s/he achieved, what things s/he loves doing and which things s/he’s not that good at. S/He must also consider the conditions of that work and whether these are compatible with the kind of family life he wants to have. Still, some others also said that a Christian must choose a career which in no way can conflict with one’s faith and the duties related to it.

b. Most mentioned the right for a just wage, the right to work for no more hours than what the law says is permissible, the right to join a trade union, the right not to be discriminated, the right not to be persecuted for one’s faith, the right to express oneself and the right for a healthy and safe environment.

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c. Almost all the candidates who chose this question said that trade unions exist to defend the rights of the workers. Many said that unions have the role of safeguarding the rights of the workers and suggesting all measures possible through which the workers' environment can be improved and their life is enhanced.

PAPER 2B

Question 1 Most candidates started their answer by narrating the Genesis story, even though this was not asked in the question. When they came to the consequences, most candidates restricted their answer to the consequences found in the narrative, that is, hard work, pain in childbirth, expulsion from Eden. A few mentioned the promise of the Messiah. Some referred to the separation between man and God, between man and his fellow men, between man and nature, and the separation within himself. These are well explained in their textbook, but seem to be overlooked.

Question 2 Unfortunately, very few candidates realized that with these words ("So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, man must not separate.") Jesus was referring to the institution of marriage. Many answers were completely out of point.

Question 3 A considerable number of candidates gave quite satisfactory answers and said that God's commandments can make us happier and freer because they act as a roadmap to live a peaceful life as brethren of the same God, respect each other's rights and dignity, and eventually lead us to Heaven.

Question 4 Most candidates referred to the sentiments of "fear", "anger", "pain", "fatigue", "thirst", "hunger" and "sadness". Their explanation was given in a very short sentence. There were very few who gave a good account of the story they referred to.

Question 5 This question was further subdivided into three parts. Many candidates answered only partially as their answer failed to address one or more parts of the question. There were candidates who mentioned the fact that Jesus was poor, others mentioned the antagonism that he found and a considerable number said that despite doing so many good things, he was made to suffer and then crucified and nailed to a cross.

Of those candidates who answered the second part, many said that what made Jesus a great leader was the fact that his message appealed to the many as it was a message of love and freedom.

Of those who answered the third part (approximately half the candidates forgot to answer it) many said that the miracles Jesus performed showed that He was also God, and even His Resurrection.

Question 6 Most candidates do not even have a vague idea of what the term "religious profession" means. There was no candidate who spoke of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Some restricted themselves to celibacy and living in monasteries/convents. Some included priests, bishops, popes, teachers of religion, catechists and lay missionaries.

Question 7 Very few candidates answered this question correctly and mentioned the five things that one has to keep in mind before approaching the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The point that most candidates mentioned was the need for repentance.

Question 8 For most candidates this was a very difficult question. Only some succeeded in elaborating that here we are answering about the two parts of the Holy Mass where we have the Liturgy of the Word of God and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Answers had to be on these lines i.e. it is important to listen to the word of God and his teachings in the first part of the Holy Mass in order to know how we have to live our daily life. Then after hearing His teachings, Christians sit for the eating of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. One has to celebrate mass as one whole liturgy and not just for a part of it.

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Question 9 Many candidates referred to the agony in Gethsemane, the hour of crucifixion, the betrayal of Judas and the denial of Peter. Many candidates said that Jesus could not forgive his enemies without the help of the Father. Some of the answers expressed themselves in very “unorthodox” jargon.

Question 10 Many candidates did not mention three different aims that work has. Or else they mentioned points that are related to one aim of work. Almost all mentioned the importance of work to receive a salary and earn enough for one to make himself and his family a living. There were quite a number of candidates who also mentioned work as an opportunity for one to use fruitfully and develop one’s talents, and also to contribute to society in general.

Question 11 The large majority of candidates mentioned the Christian’s obligation to attend to the Sunday Mass and participate in the Eucharist. They also mentioned that if possible the whole family should participate in Mass. Fewer candidates also said that, if possible, the Christian should not work on Sunday, and dedicate more time to God and his/her family.

Question 12 An easy question that had a straight forward answer. Majority of candidates answered it correctly. Most common figures mentioned were Abraham, Moses, David, Isaac and Jacob from the Old Testament, while Jesus, St Peter, St Paul and Mary from the New Testament.

Question 13 Many candidates only answered partially to this question. Many of them said that God’s final project for us humans was to be happy, lead good lives and/or go to Heaven after our earthly life.

Question 14 Many candidates answered this question by saying that the Christian can help other people who are poor or victims of injustice through financial aid, voluntary work and/or applying one’s God-given talents in favour of just causes.

**Chairperson
Examiners’ Panel 2013**