



L-Università  
ta' Malta

MATSEC  
Examinations Board



# Examiners' Report

## AM Religious Knowledge

First Session 2022

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## A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The total number of candidates who registered to sit for AM Religious Knowledge was **37**, which is **19** candidates less than in 2021. This shows a decrease in candidate registrations for this subject.

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the First 2022 session of the examination

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	TOTAL
Candidates	3	1	4	2	3	9	15	37
% OF TOTAL	8.1	2.7	10.8	5.4	8.1	24.3	40.5	100

*Table 1: Distribution of grades for AM Religious Knowledge 2022 First Session*

## B. GENERAL REMARKS

The level achieved by the candidates was low. Moreover, approximately 40% of the candidates did not show up for the examination.

## C. COMMENTS ON PAPER I AND PAPER II

### PAPER I

Candidates had to respond to one question from each section and to a third question from any section. The Number of candidates who responded to each question and the average marks obtained per question are shown below. All marks are out of 20 marks.

	No. of Candidates	Average Mark
The Christian Bible		
Ques. 1	10	9.80
Ques. 2	9	4.89
Ques. 3	1	4.00
Ques. 4	6	5.00
The Creed		
Ques. 5	18	6.00
Ques. 6	3	4.33
Ques. 7	7	7.29
Ques. 8	12	6.75

*Table 2: Average Marks obtained per question for paper I*

## SECTION A: THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

### *Question 1*

Discuss the origin, formation and unity of the canon of the Bible, referring to both the Old Testament and New Testament.

This question concerned the formation of the canon of the Bible. The candidates were required to discuss the formation of the canon and its unity, referring both to the Old and the New Testaments. 10 of 22 candidates answered this question. The candidates who answered these questions were in fact the most prepared and were the ones who did fairly well overall in the other questions as well. Those who obtained the best marks were also the candidates who answered this question. These candidates showed a good knowledge on canonicity and the unity of the bible as well as the importance and the relation between the two Testaments.

### *Question 2*

Elaborate on how "God as creator" is presented in the Old Testament, specifically in the historical, prophetic and wisdom writings.

This question required the candidates to elaborate how God as creator is presented in the Old Testament in all the main sections of the Scriptures, namely the historical, prophetic and wisdom books. 9 candidates out of 22 answered this question and unfortunately, they all performed poorly. Many confused the question altogether, lingering on the notion of the Trinity, whereas others only outlined basic concepts from the book of Genesis, almost ignoring the rest of the sections. The answers were generic and poor, rarely presenting content that is relevant to answering the question.

### *Question 3*

The second part of the Gospel of John is called the Book of Glory. By briefly explaining the development of the plot, discuss why this part of the Gospel is called the Book of Glory.

This question required the candidates to focus on the second part of the Gospel according to John focusing on the main reasons why this section is called the Book of Glory and explain the development of the main plot. Only 1 candidate out of 22 chose this question.

### *Question 4*

In the passion narratives narrated in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus is presented in different ways. Discuss.

This question required the candidates to discuss the passion narratives in the synoptic gospels and how Jesus is presented in different ways in each Gospel. 6 candidates out of 22 chose to answer this question. All the candidates performed poorly in their answers. Many gave generic answers and some were out of point. Many failed to mention the salient points and differences within the passion narratives of the synoptics. It was evident that the candidates were not engaged and did not study for this question but were simply recollecting fragments of information from distant memory.

## SECTION B: THE CREED

### *Question 5*

The relationship between Christ and the Church is the same as the relationship between the head and the body; they both need each other. Discuss.

Most candidates answered this question, 18 out of 22. The results were varied, with a few performing quite well, but the majority faring poorly. It must be noted that all candidates except for one, did not mention Saint Paul or 1 Corinthians 12. Again, most candidates gave generic answers and repeated the information of the question over and over. The mission of the Church was seldom mentioned. Most of the candidates focused on the sacraments but did not elaborate more. Most candidates were answering from distant memory, most probably recollecting ideas they formed during their years in catechism.

### *Question 6*

Tradition is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, but it is distinct from Scripture. Discuss.

This question required the candidates to focus on the two sources of revelation in the Church, namely scripture and tradition, and the Holy Spirit, the source of inspiration for both. The candidates were expected to comment on these two modes of transmission of both scripture and tradition throughout the ages, and the role of the Church in evangelisation and the active process of passing on the faith. Only 3 candidates out of 22 answered this question. Two candidates went out of point whereas the other student gave a good but very short answer.

### *Question 7*

"In everyone, there is naturally implanted something from which one can arrive at knowledge of the fact of God's existence" (St Thomas Aquinas). Discuss.

This question required the candidates to discuss the basic notion that humans have a natural inclination and capacity to arrive at the knowledge of the fact of God's existence. The question refers to St. Thomas Aquinas and most candidates did pick this up for they mentioned Aquinas' five ways at explaining and proving the existence of God. It is a pity however that candidates did not mention Paul's letter to the Romans 1. 7 candidates out of 22 answered this question. The candidates on average mentioned Aquinas' five ways, but the way these were applied in their answer shows that it was simple memory work, rather than reasoned arguments. Answers were short and lacked many important points.

### *Question 8*

Justification from sin is obtained by grace through faith. Discuss this in view of the Christian call to holiness.

Candidates were expected to discuss the Christian call to holiness through the context of justification from sin obtained by grace through faith. Candidates were expected to explain what grace and faith are and explain how justification has been merited for us through the passion of Jesus Christ. 12 candidates out of 22 answered this question. Four candidates did quite well, and the rest performed poorly. The candidates that performed well gave good answers focusing on the life of the sacraments, particularly the sacraments of reconciliation, baptism, and the anointing of the sick. The candidates who performed poorly left out important details and did not offer a coherent discussion. Points mentioned were disjointed, again hinting that the candidates were simply recollecting points from distant memory.

**PAPER II**

Note: Candidates had to respond to one question from each section and a third question from either section. The Number of Candidates who responded to each question and the average marks obtained per question are shown below. All marks are out of 20 marks.

	<b>No. of Candidates</b>	<b>Average Mark</b>
Liturgy and Sacraments		
Ques. 1	13	13.30
Ques. 2	3	10.33
Ques. 3	19	13.42
Ques. 4	6	12.83
Christian Morality		
Ques. 5	13	13.38
Ques. 6	0	0
Ques. 7	8	12.00
Ques. 8	4	12.25

*Table 2: Average Marks obtained per question for paper II*

**SECTION A: LITURGY AND SACRAMENTS***Question 1*

Discuss how the liturgical year helps Christians live more fully the salvific mystery of Christ.

Almost all candidates were able to explain clearly the way the liturgical year is structured, emphasising the major events of the liturgical year. All mentioned Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, emphasising that the latter is the major event in salvation history. Almost all candidates gave a detailed account of the celebrations making up the liturgical year, sometimes even going into details such as liturgical colours, vestments and descriptions of the way liturgical moments are celebrated locally.

Only one student mentioned the role of the Holy Spirit in liturgy. Candidates focused on the events, refraining from explaining why one celebrates liturgy. The role of the community and the correlation between liturgy and life experience were never mentioned explicitly. Neither the Sunday Mass nor the celebration of the Eucharist were ever mentioned as a weekly/daily liturgical expression that permits the Christian to relive/make present the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### *Question 2*

“To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations.” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 7). Discuss Christ’s presence in the Church, in the light of the liturgical celebrations themselves.

Although very few candidates attempted Question 2, candidates demonstrated a lack of understanding of terms such as Liturgy, Sacraments and the Church. No one attempted to define any of these three realities, with all candidates mentioning non-liturgical celebrations as examples of liturgy. The Church is still seen as the actual complex where people pray, and the role of the Ecclesial community in making Christ present was entirely discarded. Although some did mention Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist, the Word of God was also almost completely discarded. Candidates focused on recounting the major events in the Liturgical year, failing to understand that the liturgy is not merely re-enacting Christ’s life events but rather the celebration of the mystery of Salvation. The emphasis on the liturgy as a means of experiencing Christ’s presence and a way of making sense of our own life mystery was absent. Furthermore, no one referred to the mass as a celebration of Christ’s passion and resurrection, nor did they explain the structure of the mass or refer to the Sunday Mass as a weekly celebration of Christ’s resurrection.

### *Question 3*

Refer to **THREE** sacraments, and discuss how these sacraments can benefit the life of Christians.

This question was the most attempted. Almost all candidates exhibited knowledge of the sacraments, identifying them and explaining them in detail. Candidates focused on the rites by which these sacraments are administered, explaining what occurs and what is bestowed on the Christian who receives them. References to support their claims were either biblical or excerpts from saints (sometimes without even identifying who these saints are).

The sacraments were in the majority of cases understood within the context of the Mass, never taken in isolation from the Eucharist. Speaking of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist, many emphasised the age when people usually receive this, although none made use of this information to emphasise the role of sacraments in relation to different stages of life. Similarly, few emphasised how these sacraments and the grace bestowed on us through them, help us in our life as Christians. A rigid (sometimes verging on the magical) understanding of the sacraments hindered many from understanding the sacraments as a gratuitous instrument of grace given by God the Father and mediated through the Church by the Holy Spirit, through which Christians are enabled and assisted to imitate Christ in their daily life. The role of the Church and the Christian community to assist and enrich the daily commitment of the Christian to live a ‘Sacramental’ way of life was completely discarded by candidates.

#### *Question 4*

Discuss the theme of conversion with reference to the sacraments of Baptism and Reconciliation.

Candidates exhibited a good understanding of both sacraments. All candidates recognised baptism as the first step towards becoming a Christian and Confession as a means of fixing our mistakes throughout our life journey as Christians. The majority, recounted the rites of Baptism and Confession to explain what both sacraments entail. Some candidates included Biblical references, either by recounting stories of conversion or to emphasise the importance of Baptism.

Conversion was solely understood as the act of becoming a Christian, although many did indirectly imply that conversion is a change of heart that necessitates a decision to be a better version of oneself. The limited understanding of Conversion, might have led candidates to focus on giving an explanation of the sacraments rather than describing how these sacraments are effective means of grace supporting the person in becoming more similar to Christ. Furthermore, the roles of God and the Christian community in fostering conversion was almost completely ignored by candidates.

### **SECTION B: CHRISTIAN MORALITY**

#### *Question 5*

In what way can the Fifth Commandment "Thou shalt not kill" be relevant to a contemporary economy of exclusion and inequality? Discuss, with reference to concrete examples.

In general, candidates did quite well. The majority gave concrete examples of inequalities and injustice whilst successfully correlating them to the fifth commandments. Candidates referred to the decalogue, giving concrete examples of situations of exclusion and inequalities.

Candidates spoke of different issues such as abortion, euthanasia, immigration, femicide and global warming. Few explained clearly the correlation between these examples, the fifth commandment and inequality and exclusion.

Furthermore, references to the Magisterium and the teachings of the Church were minimal. In some cases, argumentation seemed generic, except for the reference to the decalogue. Some candidates need to refine the art of essay writing, avoiding colloquial (sometimes sermon-like) statements.

#### *Question 6*

"Beyond the rights which the person acquires by their own work, there exist rights which do not correspond to any work they perform, but which flow from their essential dignity as a person." (Centesimus Annus, 11). Discuss with particular reference to different papal documents.

No one answered this question.

*Question 7*

Discuss why the Christian family is considered a "Domestic Church."

All Candidates emphasised the important role of the family in society and the Church. All candidates considered the family as an important nucleus, in which one can live the Christian way of life and contribute for a better society. Candidates also made references to the Bible to emphasise these important roles. Almost all candidates mentioned the role of parents to introduce their children to the Ecclesial reality though this was predominantly understood in terms of participation in the liturgy or a parish group, or in terms of the assimilation of Christian values.

Interestingly, the Pauline comparison between the love of the couple and that of Christ towards his Church was never mentioned by any of the candidates. This comparison is necessary to understand the Sacrament of Marriage and the concept of a "domestic church". Experiencing love in the family, modelled on that of Jesus is not only one of the aims of Marriage (largely omitted as an aim of marriage by candidates), but also an opportunity for the members of the family to experience God. In fact, the family as the domestic church was never explicitly referred to as a place where one experiences God.

*Question 8*

Discuss the commitment of the Church in presenting sexuality "as a value and task of the whole person" in the context of the challenges of contemporary society.

Candidates who attempted this question, ended up focusing on challenges related to sexuality. Although candidates were expected to speak of the commitment of the Church in presenting a holistic understanding of sexuality within current societal contexts, candidates ended up confusing sexuality with sex, stopping short from recognising the Church's beautiful understanding of sex and sexuality. Instead, candidates focused on issues such as adultery, prostitution, masturbation, sexual orientation and contraception. In some cases, candidates verged on being judgemental and it is interesting to note that whilst condemning certain practices, candidates did not provide reasons why certain practices could hinder the holistic development of the person.

The commitment of the Church towards presenting sexuality was almost exclusively understood in its' support for sex within marriage. In this regard, emphasis was given to procreation with only one student mentioning sexual intimacy as a means of supporting and improving the couple's relationship. The same student, was the only one who correlated sex to sanctity and recognised sex as a gift.

Considering that candidates were expected to discuss the statement, no student mentioned anything positive with regards to the understanding of sexuality prevalent within contemporary society. No reference was made to the teaching of the Church (particularly the Theology of the Body or *Amoris Laetitia*) in support of the Church's commitment to present sexuality as a value and task of the whole person.

#### **D. CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

The examiners note that many responses failed to correctly present basic concepts and principles. These answers did not contain facts related to the topics being examined. Often there was a radical disconnection between the question and the answer provided, indicating that the requirements of the question were not necessarily accounted for when formulating the answer.

Chairperson

Examination Panel 2022