



L-Università
ta' Malta

MATSEC
Examinations Board



Examiners' Report

IM Religious Knowledge

First Session 2021

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A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The total number of candidates who registered to sit for the Main/First Session of the Intermediate Examination in Religious Knowledge held in July 2021 was one hundred and fifty-two (152). The number of absentees was 14.5%.

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the Main 2021 session of the examination.

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	abs	TOTAL
NUMBER	10	14	43	29	17	17	22	152
% OF TOTAL	6.6	9.2	28.3	19.1	11.2	11.2	14.5	100

Table 1: Distribution of grades for IM Religious Knowledge 2021 First Session

B. COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

The Intermediate Examination of Religious Knowledge consisted of a three-hour paper. Following a decision by the MATSEC Examination Board for 2021 with regards to mitigating factors in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the exam paper featured changes to both Section A and B.

Section A consisted of fifteen (15) short questions, out of which candidates were asked to answer ten (10). The questions in this section carried four (4) marks each, for a total of 40% of the entire weight of the marks.

Section B featured six (6) questions, out of which candidates were asked to answer three (3). This section carried 60% of the total marks, with each question carrying twenty (20) marks.

SECTION A

This section consisted of fifteen (15) short questions, out of which candidates were asked to answer ten (10). Each question carried four (4) marks. One hundred and thirty-two (132) candidates answered this section. The highest and the lowest obtained were 39 and 11. The overall performance of the candidates was good. The following is an analysis of how the candidates answered each question in this section.

Question 1

This question tested the candidates' knowledge on God's plan for humanity. Most candidates answered that God's plan for humanity is related to God's act of creation and salvation/redemption, and to His desire that human beings seek true fulfilment through good deeds willed by God. A few candidates also mentioned God's plan for every human being.

Question 2

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about the title 'Messiah'. Many candidates opted for this question, but a significant number of them answered incorrectly as they did not know the true meaning and etymology of the title 'Messiah'. Some candidates mentioned that Jesus was divine, or that he could perform miracles due to His divinity, or that he was the Saviour of the world. But very few said that the title means that Jesus was the Anointed One by God through His Spirit.

Question 3

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about the Canon of Scripture. The large majority of candidates who opted for this question either answered correctly or partially so. Almost all of the candidates knew that the Canon of Scripture refers to the divinely inspired books of the Bible that is divided in two main sections, namely the Old and New Testaments. Many candidates also wrote the correct number of books in each testament.

Question 4

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about the original sin. Most candidates answered this question correctly or partially so. Many mentioned Adam and Eve's act of disobedience towards God in the Garden of Eden. Fewer candidates mentioned the fact that this act of disobedience was also one of extreme pride ('supervja') resulting from man's desire to become like God, as well as from the temptation of the serpent that represents the devil. It was also noted that quite a few candidates wrote about the effects and consequences of sin, rather than explaining sin.

Question 5

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about the name of God revealed in the Old Testament. Most of the candidates who opted for this question did not give a correct or a precise answer. But a number of candidates alluded to the fact that God is Creator, Saviour and Almighty, as well as Protector.

Question 6

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about the immaculate conception of Mary. Many candidates answered this question but most of them provided an incorrect answer. The answers provided indicated that Mary was born but not conceived without original sin. Some answers also confused Mary's immaculate conception with other dogmas of the Church.

Question 7

The question tested the candidates' knowledge on the Holy Spirit. Most candidates answered this question partially correct. Most answers said that the Holy Spirit is one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Only a few candidates referred to the role/s of the Holy Spirit in animating the Church through His power, and very few alluded to the role of the Holy Spirit in Pentecost.

Question 8

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about the omnipotence of God. Most of the candidates stated the God's omnipotence is associated with His Creation of the universe and human beings, and with His omnipresence in the universe. Some candidates mentioned the fact that God sent Jesus Christ to this world to save it from sin.

Question 9

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about the missionary dimension of the Church. For most of the candidates, the missionary calling and identity of the Church is associated with going on missions to different countries. Some candidates mentioned the individual and personal vocations, which they received from God.

Question 10

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about Pentecost. The large majority of candidates mentioned, and even described the details of Pentecost. Many candidates, specifically mentioned the Holy Spirit's role in descending upon Christ's apostles and disciples to fill them with courage, so they can preach the Gospel and convert people to Christ. However, a few candidates confused this important event with either Easter or the Ascension of Jesus.

Question 11

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about sacred spaces within a Church building. Most candidates did mention at least two or three important spaces in Church, while a number of candidates were able to mention four. The altar, the ambo, the tabernacle, the baptismal font and the confessional were the most mentioned.

Question 12

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about meditation. Many candidates opting for this question provided unsatisfactory or incorrect answers as they understood meditation solely as a practice of the mind intended to provide relaxation and be in touch with oneself without commenting on the Christian / Catholic religious significance of the term.

Question 13

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about the importance of work. Many candidates only mentioned, and some just briefly commented, on the social and psychological functions of work, without mentioning their moral and religious significance. Most candidates mentioned the most obvious function of work as the means through which one can live well and comfortably, and contribute to their family's well-being. Some mentioned that it is a right, but few candidates referred to it as a duty and a contribution to society. Very few candidates wrote that through work one can develop their God-given gifts.

Question 14

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about the universal call to prayer. Most candidates answered this question incorrectly as they understood the universal call to prayer as those moments/situations when the Pope or Bishop or any other religious authority calls people from all over the world to gather in prayer for a specific cause.

Question 15

The question tested the candidates' knowledge about the word 'Amen'. Most candidates did associate the word 'Amen' with faith and trust in God. A few candidates also mentioned the importance of the congruence and coherence between Christian praxis in everyday life and what Christians claim and profess to believe.

SECTION B

This section presented six (6) questions, of which the candidates had to answer three (3) in detail. Each question carried twenty (20) marks. The following is an analysis of how the candidates answered each question in this section.

Question 1

This question tested the candidates' knowledge about Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God with direct reference to his parables and his miracles. Fifty-four (54) candidates answered this question. For (a) the majority of the candidates identified the parables correctly but few knew how to draw the connection between the parable and the Kingdom of God. A good number of candidates left the explanation out, and fewer still did not know the difference between the parables and real-life episodes from Jesus's life. For (b) candidates were more on point when they wrote about Jesus's miracles but some lost points because they quoted the same miracles when the question asked for two different types of miracles.

Question 2

This question tested the candidates' knowledge about the Fourth Commandment and about the importance of the family in society. One hundred twenty-nine (129) candidates answered this question. Almost all the candidates answered this question and most of them did comparatively well; very few candidates obtained a low mark. In fact, this was the question in which they got the most marks, compared to the other questions. However, part (c) of the question, concerning the importance of the family within society, was not completely understood by a good number of candidates.

Question 3

This question tested the candidates' knowledge about the Eucharist as the source and the pinnacle of the life of the Church. Forty-five (45) candidates answered this question. Very few candidates answered correctly. The overall performance of the candidates was average. A good number of candidates struggled to explain the three dimensions of the Eucharist outlined in the first part, and others failed to identify the principal prayers of the four main moments of Mass.

Question 4

This question tested the candidates' knowledge about the Sacraments of Holy Orders and Matrimony and the priesthood in the Old Testament. Forty-five (45) candidates answered this question. The majority of candidates performed poorly in this question. Very few answered correctly that the priests in the Old Testament came from the tribe of Levi. A number of candidates also confused the different degrees of Holy Orders, while a number of answers were out of point. With regards to the question on matrimony, the majority answered the question correctly only in part. Only a few mentioned that marriage mirrors the bond between Jesus Christ and his Church.

Question 5

This question tested the candidates' knowledge about the prayer of Our Father, specifically the petitions "give us this day our daily bread" and "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us". Ninety-five (95) candidates answered this question. Overall, most candidates did well in this question which shows a good level of preparation on this topic. Many knew how to interpret the petitions although only a few could do so in depth. There were many who either referred to God's providence and the link to the Eucharist but only a few mentioned both. Regarding the prayer on sins and forgiveness the majority answered correctly, however, only a few candidates mentioned that Jesus Christ's death brought us salvation from our sins.

Question 6

This question tested the candidates' knowledge about consecrated life, the different roles one finds in the Church, and the titles given to the Pope. Eighteen (18) candidates answered this question. This was the least popular choice among the candidates, and quite a number of candidates struggled with their answers.

C. OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS

Once again, the percentages concerning this year's distribution of grades show that a considerable number of candidates were well prepared for the exam and showed evidence of high performance. The examiners note with great satisfaction that many candidates wrote at length and some even provided detailed and elaborate answers. Others were more concise and less elaborate but still provided satisfactory answers. Those candidates who achieved high marks in their answers also showed a good command of the language of their choice. The candidates also knew how to structure their answers and showed that they understood the questions correctly. Over all, candidates seem to have invested a good amount of time in studying.

Having said this, there is still room for improvement. Some candidates seem to study from the textbook or the notes provided to them by their lecturers, without delving deeper into the subject. In fact, some answers were quite similar to the textbook, failing to express a certain level of reflection and depth. The examiners fear that the highly important skills of analysis and evaluation are not being emphasised enough. While the overall level of the answer was good, there were also many candidates who showed very poor command of the language of choice and difficulty in expressing themselves in writing.

The examiners also observed how some candidates answered the sub-sections of the questions of Section B in the form of one long essay, rather than shorter paragraphs corresponding to each part. However, most of the time, the delineation between the different sub-questions was clearly shown. The examiners also remind the candidates to mark their script clearly by stating which part of the question is being answered.

Chairperson
Examination Panel 2021