

# EXAMINERS' REPORT

## SEC RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

MAIN SESSION 2018



**L-Università  
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**MATSEC  
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## Part 1: Statistical Information

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the First Session of the examination for 2018.

GRADE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	ABS	TOTAL
<b>PAPER A</b>	75	259	578	351	314	-	-	362	32	1971
<b>PAPER B</b>	-	-	-	124	230	138	138	178	77	885
<b>TOTAL</b>	75	259	578	475	544	138	138	540	109	2856
<b>% OF TOTAL</b>	2.6	9.1	20.2	16.6	19.0	4.8	4.8	18.9	3.8	100.0

## Part 2: Comments Regarding Candidates' Performance

### Paper 1 Section A

#### General Remarks

The questions were formulated to test the candidate's familiarity with the Bible, Christian Doctrine and the Liturgy. The Paper contained factual, short and rather direct questions on basic elements. Set questions tested the four main strands of Religious Knowledge, *i.e.* the Religious Language, the Spiritual Dimension, the Word of God and the Personal Catholic Worldview.

Both Paper A and B offered candidates the opportunity to assess themselves in the thematic study of Religion and their responses in the light of faith to fundamental questions of life. A number of candidates sitting for Paper 2B left quite a number of questions unanswered, while almost all candidates opting for Paper 2A answered all set questions with a few exceptions on Marian dogmas.

Section B proved to be very demanding for candidates sitting for Paper 2B. Instead of answering in paragraph form, the majority only wrote a few words or sentences.

**Question 1**

Most candidates answered correctly. Amongst the few incorrect answers, there were the Pentateuch and the Old Testament.

**Question 2**

Most candidates mentioned respect for other religions, while there were a few who said that other religions should be treated like ours. Some explained that while all religions had a right to be respected, we as Christians believe that the fullness of revelation is only found in Christianity.

**Question 3**

Some candidates gave a variety of good answers. Others misinterpreted 'attitude' with 'how to read the Bible', as they wrote about understanding the content in the light of the time and place each book was written.

**Question 4**

Very few candidates answered this question correctly. Many emphasized what the Genesis says, others what Science teaches, others claimed that the Bible and Science can never meet. Only a few mentioned that both Science and the Genesis have God as their Creator.

**Question 5**

A few candidates were unable to give a clear answer to this question. It was not always clear that it was the rift between man and God that led to other rifts. Many mentioned Adam and Eve (some even explained how Adam and Eve sinned) and others mentioned the Original Sin. There were very few who mentioned the sin of those who built the Tower of Babel.

**Question 6**

Many candidates answered the first part correctly. However, a significant number had some idea that a religious saga is written in the form of a story, but not all candidates had the right idea of what was the intention of the sacred writer to make use of such a literary genre..

**Question 7**

This question was well answered. Many candidates mentioned that both parts must be faithful towards each other and trust in each other.

**Question 8**

This question proved difficult to candidates sitting for Paper B. Even in the scripts of those taking Paper A, some wrong answers that featured quite frequently included the Koran, the Torah or Papal Encyclicals.

**Question 9**

Only a few candidates were clear about Jesus showing his power to forgive sins through his divine being as the Son of God. However, most declared it in different words. Others only stated that Jesus forgives all sins.

**Question 10**

Most candidates were aware that the apostles continued working for salvation through their proclamation of the word of God. Many also included social work with the sick and the poor, baptism, forgiveness, or healing as a special mission of the apostles. The most common incorrect answer was building churches where Christians may pray.

**Question 11**

The answers included all ordained ministers, ranging from the Pope to priests.

**Question 12**

Most answers were correct. A recurring incorrect answer was Easter.

**Question 13**

Zaccheus and the adulteress woman featured in most answers. The good thief, Levi, and Mary Magdalene were also mentioned.

**Question 14**

Most candidates gave correct answers, both in Maltese and in English. Some coined new names which are not found in the course content, such as the 'Sacrament of Mercy'.

**Question 15**

This was an open-ended question and most candidates gave various correct answers. The need to show respect, to be united, to help each other, to communicate with and understanding each other were answers which featured a great deal.

**Question 16**

The two prevailing ideas were the right to vote and the right for freedom of expression. Most candidates spoke of a right rather than a role. Voting responsibly hardly featured in the answers.

**Question 17**

Most candidates know what a Baptistery is; however there is a confusion regarding Catechumens where answers varied from burial places, to catechists. Many described Paleo-Christian Baptisteries.

**Question 18**

Many answers showed no knowledge of what a dogma is, let alone the Marian dogmas. Correct answers mentioned the dogmas of the Virginity of Our Lady, the Assumption, and the Divine Motherhood and these were well explained. With regards to the Immaculate Conception, many wrote 'born' instead of 'conceived'. This was a recurring mistake.

**Question 19**

This question was well answered. The majority mentioned the elderly or those who are dying. The idea of extreme unction prevailed.

**Question 20**

Well answered though many answers included a duty to look after yourself because you only live once, without mentioning that the author of life is God alone and that it is a gift from him to us.

**Question 21**

Very well answered.

**Question 22**

Many referred simply to love between married couples as agape. They left God completely out of the picture. Selfless love was hardly mentioned. Others confused it with 'Filia'.

Many responses referred to 'agape' only in the context of the love between married couples and made no mention of God. Few answers made reference to selfless love and other answers confused agape with 'philia'.

### **Question 23**

(a) Generally correct answers. Others ranged from the Pope, the Holy Spirit, to the witnesses and the parents of the spouses.

(b) Many associated the shadows with the negative situations in marriage and the light with the positive situations, without explaining what these may be.

### **Question 24**

Many candidates went straight to the point and wrote being in Heaven! A few also wrote imitating Christ. Others mentioned martyrdom, or the fact that one becomes a priest or a Pope!

### **Question 25**

Very few gave the correct answer. Most candidates spoke of some depressing situation or associated it with suffering, but very few mentioned Hell.

## **Section B**

### **General Remarks**

Candidates had to assimilate their general religious knowledge and translate it into meaningful knowledge which makes sense for our everyday living. Although all questions were easy and straightforward, this proved to be the most demanding section of the whole paper.

Overall, Paper A candidates answered most questions correctly and in more detail. Paper B candidates generally answered in brief, without giving too much detail to explain their given answer.

### **Question 1**

Many referred to the Church as a building where we gather on Sundays. Very few referred to the People of God in the Old Testament. For many candidates, the Church is the New People of God because it is continuously renewed through baptism and new generations of Christians. Some mentioned that it is open to everyone and not just one nation., Only a few candidates referred to the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles or explained what the New People of God truly is, by mentioning the Old People of God as having a special place in the History of Salvation.

### **Question 2**

This is one of the questions where most candidates fared well in. Many explained that the Christian feels the need to confess so that his sins are forgiven and to feel befriended to God again. The importance of the Sacrament of Confession is that it takes away all the sins of the Christian. With regards to what a Christian should confess, there were many who said that he needs to confess all the bad things he had committed. Only a few said that they need to confess mortal sins or that one's conscience was also mentioned as that which indicates to the Christian what he/she committed.

### **Question 3**

This question proved problematic to many candidates. Most of them are not aware of the biblical connection between the blood shed by Jesus on the Cross and the blood shed by Moses on the altar and on the Israelites to proclaim the Sinai Covenant. Many only gave the narrative of Jesus on the Cross.

Some candidates succeeded in explaining how the blood of Jesus replaced the blood of the Sinai Covenant. There were students who mixed up the Sinai Mount with the Golgotha, the place where Jesus died for our sins. Many mentioned how the blood of the sacrificial lamb was then replaced by the blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of all sins.

#### **Question 4**

Many mentioned that animals should be respected, well cared for and not killed unnecessarily. Only a handful quoted or referred to some of the Church's documents or alluded to the teachings of St. Francis.

However, mistakenly there were many who said that these creatures are created in God's image and likeness like us humans, they have a soul, and they should be respected like human beings. Some even went as far as speaking of an afterlife for these creatures, which after all do not commit sins.

#### **Question 5**

There were some candidates who explained this question by mentioning various encyclicals regarding work, whereby it is stated that the worker should always be given priority over work. Many explained that the worker is a human being who needs to be treated as such. Most candidates made reference to workers' rights at the place of work.

### **Section C**

#### **General Remarks**

Most questions were correct and to the point. This section proved to be accessible for both Paper A and Paper B candidates. Most answers could be found in the text.

#### **First Text**

- a) Most candidates answered correctly.
- b) Most candidates answered correctly. It was very easy for the candidates to get an answer from the passage, since the biblical author gave a detailed account where Jesus is telling us not to requite but to forgive. Answer was given in text.
- c) Most of the candidates answered correctly by saying that we would be imitating Christ or that it is far more difficult to love an enemy than a friend.
- d) Most of the candidates answered correctly. There were some candidates who mistakenly stated that the Commandment of love that Jesus established was "to love others as you love yourself."
- e) Most candidates answered correctly, mentioning that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. Forgiving Judas and Pontius Pilate occurred quite often too. The parable of the Prodigal Son also featured in some answers.

#### **Second Text**

- a) Most of the candidates answered correctly. Answer was within text.
- b) Most of the candidates answered correctly. There were quite a few who stated that the Eucharist started to be celebrated on a Sunday because of the great outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and failed to mention the day when Jesus rose from the dead. Others stated that on Sunday, God rested. Answer was given in the text!
- c) Most of the candidates answered correctly.
- d) Most candidates answered this question incorrectly. Answer was given in the text. Candidates preferred to give an account of what is the Church without making reference to the mystical living Body of Christ in this world.
- e) A majority of candidates were not able to mention which are the two main parts of mass. They failed to do so and instead indicated various parts found in the two liturgies, mainly the biblical readings and the time when we receive the Eucharist.
- f) Most of the candidates answered correctly.
- g) Most of the candidates answered correctly.

- h) Many were the students who mentioned that the Christian has to attend/participate in the Sunday Mass, listen to the Word of God during Mass, receive Holy Communion, and receive the Sacrament of Penance. Many students also mentioned that the Christian needs to spend time with the family, proclaim the Word of God, be in peace with Christ and with others, do charitable deeds, rest and not work.

## **Paper 2A**

### **General Remarks**

Many candidates answered in detail. The paper covered five of the main areas of the syllabus, giving an opportunity to all candidates to show their analytical, reflective and knowledgeable skills in the subject. Some candidates need to improve their essay writing skills. Most often, candidates failed to engage effectively with the subject matter at hand and offered a superficial analysis of the subject matter.. Candidates often generalised based on their own personal experience and presented their own interpretation without any reflection on Christian Doctrine.

Basic presentation skills and the rudiments of essay structure and the logical development of an argument were lacking in many answers., In some instances it was difficult to decipher which question (or which part of a particular question) the candidate was answering.

### **Question 1**

- a. i) Most candidates explained the meaning of the parable of the Fall of Man found in the third chapter of the book of Genesis. Some candidates explained the symbols used by the sacred author, but very few candidates were able to give the whole narrative in detail. Some candidates still confuse basic information , and stated that Jesus created the Garden of Eden, or that Adam and Eve were asked not to eat from the apple tree.
- ii) Most candidates answered correctly and pointed out the four consequences that Adam and Eve brought upon humanity through their act of disobedience towards God. However, quite a good number of candidates only made a list of these consequences but failed to give an explanation of each.
- b. This question encouraged candidates to think beyond recollection and to analyse how in different situations, original sin is the root through which the world's evil continued to grow and spread. Unfortunately, many responses lacked analytical and reflective content. Answers were generic without an in-depth critical argument to highlight episodes from the Old and the New Testament, or even today, that show how man is still unfaithful to God. Most stated that now sin is repeating itself when man kills his neighbour or during wars, when he/she takes drugs, whenever he/she is selfish and whenever he/she goes against the will of God as expressed in the Ten Commandments.
- c. Many candidates mentioned , how the Christian needs to confess his/her sins and make good use of the Sacrament of Penance by thinking seriously about the sins they would have committed and then deciding not to sin again to free themselves from the trap of sin. The good use of the Sacrament of the Eucharist is also an excellent way of how the Christian can free himself from sin.

**Question 2**

- a. i) Most candidates made a list of four miracles performed by Jesus, or mentioned three miracles and his resurrection. Very few were able to list the four ways with which Jesus showed his divinity. Jesus showed that he was God amongst us through his miracles, through his declaration of being the Son of God, through forgiveness of sins, and through his resurrection. Many candidates only mentioned the miracles and even narrated some of them. The majority of candidates failed to mention when Jesus called God, 'Abba' meaning Father.  
ii) The consequences of the divinity of Jesus were missing in most responses. Other responses stated that the difference lies in the fact that God became man and this is a matter of faith.
- b. Most candidates wrote about the sentiments of Jesus but did not mention anything else that made him truly human. Most failed to highlight the other five human qualities.
- c. i) Though a good number of candidates gave valid reasons why the Christian should listen and adhere to the words of Jesus, they lacked in explaining what difference does his word bring about in their lives. The most common answers were 'we should listen and adhere to the words of Jesus to secure a place in heaven' and 'his teachings help us to live a better life'.  
ii) Many candidates answered this question correctly by explaining how Jesus is the model for the Christian, and what the Christian should do in order to imitate him, such as forgiving others, helping, understanding, being faithful, believing and praying.

**Question 3**

- a. Very few candidates gave a good explanation of the four characteristics of the Church. In attempting to explain 'One Church', many candidates made reference to one Jesus and one Body. Very few referred to one common faith, one baptism, one shepherd and one common visible Head of the Church. With regards to 'Catholic Church', many candidates did not even know what the word Catholic stands for. Some stated that it is Catholic because it is made up of Catholic people without mentioning the parable of the mustard seed or the fact that the Church is universal. When explaining 'Holiness', most candidates said that the Church consists of some saints. Very few spoke of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, or the sacraments administered by the Church as a means of sanctification. Most candidates explained well the 'Apostolic' mark of the Church and referred to its origin, and to the episcopate as the successors of the apostolic college.
- b. i) Very few gave a valid narration of the parable of the wheat and weeds. There were some who mistakenly tried to give a narration of the parable of the sower who scattered his seeds along the way.  
ii) On the whole, the meaning of the parable was given in a correct way. Some students answered the first part of the question very concisely and amalgamated with it the message of the parable itself. Those who failed to narrate the parable, failed to extract the message Jesus wanted to convey.  
iii) Most candidates were able to mention one of the other three parables used by Jesus to describe His Church. The most common one is the parable of the fishing net.
- c. i) Candidates had no idea what charisms are. They focused on how the Holy Spirit can be of assistance to one's life. Some of the tasks mentioned were 'the Holy Spirit helps me to make the right choices', 'in Confirmation, I received the Holy Spirit', and 'the Holy Spirit guides us to understand the word of God'.

ii) It seems that candidates find it difficult to discuss statements and to elaborate on certain aspects covered in the syllabus. One of the regular weaknesses is that they tend to generalise. In this instance, once again, candidates failed to mention that it was Christ who wanted his Church and as St Paul's claimed, the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, where Jesus is the Head and we form part of this body, they cannot be separate but united.

#### **Question 4**

- a. Many candidates who answered this question expressed various concepts and ideas, amongst which they stated that the Christian can attain the Kingdom of God by being baptised, by living his/her faith, by not sinning, by forgiving others, by following Jesus' footsteps, by observing the Ten Commandments and also by receiving the Seven Sacraments.
- b. Not all candidates who answered this question mentioned the four dignities we acquire through the Sacrament of Baptism. Some made a list of the symbols used during baptism without any reference that in the Sacrament of Baptism, we become 'children of God', 'siblings to Jesus', 'heirs of God', and 'temple of the Holy Spirit'.
- c.
  - i) It seems clear to many candidates that through the Sacrament of Confirmation, Baptism is strengthened. We receive the Holy Spirit with all His gifts and fruit. Many are aware that the Sacrament of Confirmation helps us to accomplish our call as Christians and to become mature Christians.
  - ii) Many mentioned some of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. Very few candidates know the effects that the Sacrament of Confirmation leaves on those who receive it.

#### **Question 5**

- a. Most candidates gave four valid examples on how the Christian can live this love. Various interesting practical examples have been mentioned by the candidates. They were very schematic in their answers. Some of them included acts of charity, the keeping of Christ as one's model, the living of the Christian marriage and the living of celibacy in the light of the Gospel. Others chose to give examples from the love hymn written by St.Paul. On another note, candidates forgot to comment on the words of St.Paul.
- b. Many candidates explained well what the spouses mean when reading from the rite of marriage during the Sacrament of Marriage. They made reference to the three characteristics found in Catholic Marriage; indissolubility, fidelity and unity. Many responses failed to show what unity means. The concept of unity was unclear in others, as they stated that it means 'loving each other until death do them apart'. Others preferred to give examples from daily life situations of married couples to enhance their explanation.
- c.
  - i) The majority of candidates answered positively, although there were quite a few who stated that the main responsibility of parents towards their children is the financial state and assistance given in their upbringing.
  - ii) Students who answered this question expressed their belief that nobody has the right on the life of an unborn child, no matter whether it is disabled or not. Life is a gift from God and nobody has the right to end it.

## **Paper 2B**

### ***General Remarks***

There has been some improvement over the years but the level presented by the majority of candidates in Paper 2B is still generally lower than that which is expected of candidates sitting for a MATSEC level examination. While a relatively good level of performance was noted among certain candidates, the level of performance overall still left much to be desired. Many candidates tended to answer questions in a very simplistic manner. The most popular questions attempted by candidates were the questions requiring answers of a practical nature. Some answers were generic. There was no evidence of active engagement and critical dialogue with the subject.

There were a number of candidates who did not answer ten questions and others answered too briefly.

### ***Question 1***

The reasons given were almost all valid. The vast majority included peer pressure, lack of parents, friends, laziness, work and studies. Also lack of interest in Religion and prayer featured sometimes.

### ***Question 2***

More than half of the candidates were not able to give a proper explanation of who the biblical authors are or how they were inspired. For most of the candidates, the Bible is the work of the Evangelists. Very few were quick to assert that God is the primary author and the human hagiographers as secondary authors. It was rather striking to see such a poor response about biblical inspiration.

### ***Question 3***

Most candidates answered this question correctly by briefly writing the parable of Adam and Eve and the tree of life and knowledge. Most candidates still made reference to an apple tree! Others stated that Jesus prohibited them from eating from the tree. Only a few gave a detailed account of this narrative.

### ***Question 4***

A considerable number of candidates gave satisfactory answers. In their own way, most narrated the Exodus story correctly. Many candidates explained how God used to take care of his chosen people. Many mentioned the crossing of the Red Sea, God's providence of food for the People, the guidance of God through a cloud during the day and a column of fire during the night, and above all, the fact that God had made a covenant with his chosen People, that is, He will be their God and they will be his People.

### ***Question 5***

Most candidates gave a good narrative of two miracles which show that Jesus had the power over death. The most two common narratives were the miracle where Jesus raised Lazarus from the death, and his own resurrection from death.

### ***Question 6***

The candidates who answered this question did not explain in the right detail what the three missions of the Church really are. They knew most about the first one, being the teaching mission.

### ***Question 7***

This was one of the popular questions answered by candidates. The detail given varied a lot. Most candidates answered this question correctly.

**Question 8**

Many candidates failed to explain the attitude they have to adopt when going to mass. Candidates lacked knowledge and their answers were unsatisfactory. Most of them preferred to make a list of commonly discussed attitudes among the young generation, especially the ones stating that 'going to mass is a waste of time' or 'the Church is a boring place'; ending up their statements that one needs to be patient and do what is required from him/her as a Christian.

**Question 9**

Most of the answers were too generic with little emphasis on the Church's teachings. They rather preferred to write something from their experience in giving their share for a better world.

**Question 10**

Very few candidates mentioned the list of the effects that the Sacrament of Confirmation leaves on those who receive it. Some went totally out of point and wrote about the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Others confused it with the Sacrament of Reconciliation and thus they said that our sins are washed away and we are pure again. Others rightly expressed the fact that during the administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, the candidate will be receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Question 11**

This was well answered. The majority wrote that life is a gift of God. Very few referred to the fifth Commandment. Euthanasia, abortion and suicide were in most cases condemned. Most candidates know what these actions are, and what the Church teaches about these serious offences to God. There were a few who erroneously 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**

Many candidates answered correctly and excerpted various right conclusions of what George's father advice could have been. They spoke of job satisfaction, salary, or work experience. In the second part, many candidates spoke of rights rather than duties.

**Question 13**

Many candidates answered correctly. They answered very well about the three characteristics of Christian marriage.

**Question 14**

Most candidates did not understand the question. They explained the biblical quote verbatim and failed to give the interpretation by the biblical authors and the Church's doctrine, that is, Jesus was referring to the Last Judgement and that we will be judged on the good acts we do in this life.

Chairperson  
Examiners' Panel 2018