



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2013

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Syllabus

The syllabus for Religious Education at Leaving Certificate Higher level and Ordinary level, was introduced in September 2003 and was first examined in 2005. The syllabus is available online at www.education.ie. The syllabus content is structured around the following three units of study:

Unit One — Section A: The Search for Meaning and Values. This is a compulsory section.

Unit Two — Section B: Christianity: Origins and Contemporary Expressions; Section C: World Religions; Section D: Moral Decision-Making. Students study any two of the three sections in this unit.

Unit Three — Section E: Religion and Gender; Section F: Issues of Justice and Peace; Section G: Worship, Prayer, and Ritual; Section H: The Bible: Literature and Sacred Text; Section I: Religion: the Irish Experience; Section J: Religion and Science. Students study one of four sections in this unit (as well as one of the two sections designated for coursework).

The syllabus is offered at both Ordinary and Higher levels. Each year two sections from Unit Three of the syllabus are designated for coursework by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

1.2 The Assessment Structure

The assessment of Religious Education in the Leaving Certificate is based on the syllabus assessment framework and the depth of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes outlined in the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of each section in the syllabus (Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus, page 9). Candidates' personal faith commitment and/or affiliation to a particular religious grouping are not subject to assessment for national certification.

At Ordinary level and Higher level the examination consists of two components:

1. A terminal written examination paper for which candidates are awarded a maximum of 320 marks (80%).
2. Coursework for which candidates are awarded a maximum of 80 marks (20%).

Marks for the terminal written examination and the coursework component are combined to give the candidate's final mark which is awarded out of a total of 400 marks.

This report should be read in conjunction with the examination papers and marking schemes which are available at www.examinations.ie and the syllabus is available at www.curriculumonline.ie.

1.2.1 The Terminal Written Examination Papers

At both levels, all sections of the syllabus, apart from the sections designated for coursework in a given year, appear on the examination papers. As outlined in the 2004 sample papers the terminal written examination consist of the following three units:

1. Unit One contains questions designed to assess the aims, objectives and learning outcomes from syllabus Section A. At Ordinary level, candidates are required to answer two of three questions given in this unit, each of which carries a total of 40 marks. At Higher level, candidates are required to answer one of two questions given in this unit, each of which carries a total 80 marks.
2. Unit Two has questions designed to assess the aims, objectives and learning outcomes from syllabus Section B, Section C and Section D. At both Ordinary and Higher levels, candidates are required to answer questions on two of these three sections. The questions in each section of Unit Two carry a total of 80 marks and the entire unit carries a total of 160 marks.
3. Unit Three consists of questions designed to assess the aims, objectives and learning outcomes from four of the sections in Unit Three of the syllabus, excluding the two sections designated for coursework in any given year. Both Ordinary level and Higher level candidates are required to answer questions on one of the four sections in Unit Three, each of which is marked out of a total of 80 marks.

The written examination at Ordinary level has a time allocation of two hours while at Higher level the written examination has an allocation of two and a half hours.

1.2.2 The Coursework Component

Coursework is a mandatory component of the Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus and accounts for 20% of the examination marks. Candidates can engage in coursework in either year one or year two of the Leaving Certificate programme or spread over two years (NCCA Religious Education Guidelines for Teachers, page 6). Each year a list of prescribed titles for coursework in a given Leaving Certificate examination, is issued by the SEC in a circular to the management authorities of second level schools and posted on the SEC's website (www.examinations.ie). A choice of two titles is given for each of the designated sections from Unit Three of the syllabus. Candidates are required to submit coursework on one of the prescribed titles. In November 2011, the SEC issued the prescribed titles for Leaving Certificate Religious Education 2013 (Circular S93/11).

Candidates were required to base their 2013 coursework on one of the following titles taken from either Section E or Section H in Unit Three of the syllabus:

- Title E.1: A profile of the portrayal of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in two of the following gospels: ● The Gospel of Matthew ● The Gospel of Mark ● The Gospel of Luke ● The Gospel of John
- Title E.2: Throughout history religious women have played a leading role as social reformers. An investigation into the evidence for this statement with reference to the life story of one such woman and her influence on the society of her day.
- Title H.1: An analysis of how poetry features in two Psalms from the Bible.
- Title H.2 An examination of how the material in two of the synoptic gospels reflects the interests of the evangelist with whom each is associated.

Titles for coursework are common to both Ordinary and Higher levels.

In the final year of the Leaving Certificate course the SEC provides school authorities with pro-forma booklets for the submission of the coursework component. Each candidate is expected to give a summary of his/her investigation of the title chosen from the prescribed list by addressing a number of points set out in Part A of the coursework booklet. In Part B of the coursework booklet, through the treatment of set questions, each candidate is expected to outline his/her personal reflections on the learning, skills and experience gained through undertaking coursework on the chosen title. Candidates wishing to illustrate their coursework may do so in the blank spaces provided at the foot of each page. All graphics or images used by a candidate must be drawn or scanned directly onto the booklet. Candidates are not permitted to attach material to the coursework booklet. When complete, the coursework booklet is sealed by the candidate in a tamper evident envelope supplied by the SEC and submitted to the school authority for safe keeping on or before a designated date prior to the written examination. A candidate's coursework booklet is marked with his/her written examination at the level at which he/she takes the written examination.

1.3 Participation Trends at Ordinary level and Higher level

The total number of candidates taking Ordinary level and Higher level Leaving Certificate Religious Education 2009 - 2013 is illustrated in Table 1 below:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Number of Leaving Certificate Candidates</i>	<i>% of Candidature taking Religious Education</i>	<i>Number of Ordinary level Religious Education Candidates</i>	<i>Number of Higher level Religious Education Candidates</i>
2009	54,197	1013 (1.87%)	160 (15.79%)	853 (84.21%)
2010	54,480	962 (1.77%)	163 (16.94%)	799 (83.06%)
2011	54,344	1085 (2.00%)	198 (18.25%)	887 (81.75%)
2012	52,592	1186 (2.26%)	204 (17.20%)	982 (82.80%)
2013	52,767	1280 (2.43%)	157 (12.27%)	1,123 (87.73%)

Table 1 Number of Leaving Certificate candidates taking Religious Education 2009 – 2013

The number of candidates taking Religious Education as a Leaving Certificate subject has grown in the last three years, particularly at Higher level. In 2013, 157 candidates sat the examination at Ordinary level which is a 23% decrease on the 2012 figure. At Higher level a total of 1,123 candidates presented for the examination which represents a 14% increase on the 2012 figure.

The gender breakdown of candidates taking Ordinary level and Higher level Leaving Certificate Religious Education 2009-2013 is illustrated in Table 2 and Table 3 below:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Female Candidates</i>	<i>Number of Male Candidates</i>	<i>Total</i>
2009	85 (53%)	75 (47%)	160 (100%)
2010	91 (56%)	72 (44%)	163 (100%)
2011	112 (57%)	86 (43%)	198 (100%)
2012	92 (45%)	112 (55%)	204 (100%)
2013	84 (54%)	73 (46%)	157 (100%)

Table 2 Ordinary level Leaving Certificate Religious Education Gender breakdown 2009 – 2013

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Female Candidates</i>	<i>Number of Male Candidates</i>	<i>Total</i>
2009	449 (53%)	404 (47%)	853 (100%)
2010	420 (53%)	379 (47%)	799 (100%)
2011	485 (55%)	402 (45%)	887 (100%)
2012	516 (53%)	466 (47%)	982 (100%)
2013	568 (51%)	555 (49%)	1123 (100%)

Table 3 Higher level Leaving Certificate Religious Education Gender breakdown 2009 – 2013

2. Performance of Candidates at Ordinary level and Higher level

<i>Year</i>	<i>Grade:</i>	<i>A1</i>	<i>A2</i>	<i>B1</i>	<i>B2</i>	<i>B3</i>	<i>C1</i>	<i>C2</i>	<i>C3</i>	<i>D1</i>	<i>D2</i>	<i>D3</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>NG</i>	<i>Total</i>
2009	<i>No.</i>	38	79	78	90	101	79	93	104	54	49	58	26	3	1	853
	<i>%</i>	4.5	9.3	9.1	10.6	11.8	9.3	10.9	12.2	6.3	5.7	6.8	3	0.4	0.10	100%
2010	<i>No.</i>	48	79	49	85	115	55	86	113	37	46	64	16	6	0	799
	<i>%</i>	6	9.9	6.1	10.6	14.4	6.9	10.8	14.1	4.6	5.8	8	2	0.8	0	100%
2011	<i>No.</i>	33	85	51	93	127	72	99	126	51	58	53	31	6	2	887
	<i>%</i>	3.7	9.6	5.7	10.5	14.3	8.1	11.2	14.2	5.7	6.5	6	3.5	0.7	0.2	100%
2012	<i>No.</i>	49	75	70	111	139	98	107	91	55	51	88	40	8	0	982
	<i>%</i>	5	7.6	7.10	11.3	14.2	10.0	10.9	9.3	5.6	5.2	9	4.1	0.8	0	100%
2013	<i>No.</i>	46	99	92	140	153	110	116	125	67	53	68	40	14	0	1123
	<i>%</i>	4.1	8.8	8.2	12.5	13.6	9.8	10.3	11.1	6	4.7	6.1	3.6	1.2	0	100%

Table 5 The number and percentage of Higher level candidates achieving each grade 2009-2013

The breakdown by gender of the 2013 results at Ordinary level and Higher level Leaving Certificate Religious Education is illustrated in Table 6 and Table 7 below:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>A1</i>	<i>A2</i>	<i>B1</i>	<i>B2</i>	<i>B3</i>	<i>C1</i>	<i>C2</i>	<i>C3</i>	<i>D1</i>	<i>D2</i>	<i>D3</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>NG</i>	<i>Total</i>
Total No.	0	14	0	5	32	5	3	42	4	4	34	11	1	2	157
%	0	8.9	0	3.2	20.4	3.2	1.9	26.8	2.5	2.5	21.7	7.0	0.6	1.3	100%
Female	0	9	0	4	22	4	1	26	3	1	10	3	0	1	84
%	0	10.7	0	4.8	26.2	4.8	1.2	31.0	3.6	1.2	11.9	3.6	0	1.2	100%
Male	0	5	0	1	10	1	2	16	1	3	24	8	1	1	73
%	0	6.8	0	1.4	13.7	1.4	2.7	21.9	1.4	4.1	32.9	11.0	1.4	1.4	100%

Table 6 Summary of outcomes by gender for Ordinary level Leaving Certificate Religious Education 2013

<i>Grade</i>	<i>A1</i>	<i>A2</i>	<i>B1</i>	<i>B2</i>	<i>B3</i>	<i>C1</i>	<i>C2</i>	<i>C3</i>	<i>D1</i>	<i>D2</i>	<i>D3</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>NG</i>	<i>Total</i>
Total No.	46	99	92	140	153	110	116	125	67	53	68	40	14	0	1123
%	4.1	8.8	8.2	12.5	13.6	9.8	10.3	11.1	6	4.7	6.1	3.6	1.2	0	100%
Female	29	56	54	74	87	58	52	54	34	23	27	15	5	0	568
%	5.1	9.9	9.5	13.0	15.3	10.2	9.2	9.5	6.0	4.0	4.8	2.6	0.9	0	100%
Male	17	43	38	66	66	52	64	71	33	30	41	25	9	0	555
%	3.1	7.7	6.8	11.9	11.9	9.4	11.5	12.8	5.9	5.4	7.4	4.5	1.6	0	100%

Table 7 Summary of outcomes by gender for Higher level Leaving Certificate Religious Education 2013

The percentage of candidates who obtained A grades, A+B+C grades, D grades and E+F+NG grades in Ordinary level and Higher level Leaving Certificate Religious Education from 2009 to 2013 is shown in Table 8 and Table 9 below:

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of Candidates</i>	<i>A %</i>	<i>A+B+C %</i>	<i>D %</i>	<i>E+F+NG %</i>
2009	160	8.2	61.4	25.6	13.2
2010	163	7.3	60.1	31.3	8.6
2011	198	7.1	65.6	29.2	5
2012	204	9.80	73.70	17.60	8.90
2013	157	8.9	64.4	26.7	8.9

Table 8 Summary of outcomes by grade for Ordinary level Leaving Certificate Religious Education 2009 – 2013

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of Candidates</i>	<i>A %</i>	<i>A+B+C %</i>	<i>D %</i>	<i>E+F+NG %</i>
2009	853	13.8	77.7	18.8	3.5
2010	799	15.9	78.8	18.4	2.8
2011	887	13.3	77.3	18.2	4.4
2012	982	12.6	75.4	19.8	4.9
2013	1,123	12.9	78.4	16.8	4.8

Table 9 Summary of outcomes by grade for Higher level Leaving Certificate Religious Education 2009 – 2013

While the grades achieved by candidates at Ordinary and Higher levels in 2013 are within range of those achieved in recent years, the changes in the grades are likely to be strongly influenced by the change in cohort size and breakdown.

3. Analysis of Candidate Performance

Analysis was conducted on the relative popularity of questions and performance of Ordinary level and Higher level candidates in each section of the examination papers. Analysis was also conducted on the relative popularity of coursework titles and performance of Ordinary level and Higher level candidates in each part of the coursework booklet. The statistical data in this report relating to the responses of candidates is based on random samples of the total number of candidates at Ordinary level and at Higher level in 2013.

3.1 Ordinary level and Higher level - Written Examination Papers

The relative popularity of questions and performance of candidates is ranked for each section of the Ordinary level and Higher level examination papers in Table 10 and Table 11 below. Firstly, all the sections of the papers are ranked according to candidate performance and secondly according to their popularity among candidates. Under the heading ‘Performance’ the average mark per section of the paper and corresponding rank order is given. Under the heading ‘Popularity’ the percentage response rate per section of the paper and corresponding rank order is given.

<i>Religious Education</i>	<i>Performance</i>		<i>Popularity</i>	
<i>Ordinary level Paper:</i>	<i>Average Mark</i>	<i>Rank Order</i>	<i>Response Rate</i>	<i>Rank Order</i>
Section A	61 (76%)	1	100%	1
Section B	58 (73%)	2	73%	2 (JOINT)
Section C	34 (43%)	8	33%	5
Section D	44 (55%)	6	73%	2 (JOINT)
Section F	37 (46%)	7	10%	8
Section G	46 (58%)	45	35%	34
Section I	47 (59%)	3 (JOINT)	28%	6
Section J	47 (59%)	3 (JOINT)	13%	7

Table 10 Ranking of Ordinary level Religious Education 2013 Examination Paper Sections according to Average Mark and Response Rate

<i>Religious Education</i>	<i>Performance</i>		<i>Popularity</i>	
<i>Higher level Paper</i>	<i>Average Mark</i>	<i>Rank Order</i>	<i>Response Rate</i>	<i>Rank Order</i>
<i>Section A</i>	52 (65%)	3	99%	1
<i>Section B</i>	51 (64%)	4	81%	2
<i>Section C</i>	47 (59%)	6	75%	3
<i>Section D</i>	45 (56%)	8	36%	4
<i>Section F</i>	58 (72%)	1	17%	8
<i>Section G</i>	54 (68%)	2	33%	5
<i>Section I</i>	46 (58%)	7	25%	6
<i>Section J</i>	49 (61%)	5	23%	7

Table 11 Ranking of Higher level Religious Education 2013 Examination Paper Sections according to Average Mark and Response Rate

3.2 Unit One Section A The Search for Meaning and Values (80 marks)

In this unit of both the Ordinary level and Higher level 2013 examination papers candidates were required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of elements of the content from syllabus Section A as well as their ability to analyse, apply, synthesise and evaluate syllabus material.

In Unit One of the Ordinary level paper question A3, with a 78% response rate, was the most popular choice among candidates, followed by question A1 with a 73% response rate. The highest level of performance in Unit One among Ordinary level candidates was in response to question A1, where an average of 90% of the designated mark was achieved. Candidates showed an excellent ability to judge the importance of philosophy for students today referring to how it *‘provides students with a better understanding of life, ... a new perspective on certain aspects of life, ...people are often influenced [by] what they see taking place...and what others expect of them instead of thinking for themselves and questioning society’s way of functioning...’* etc. Similarly, many candidates presented an excellent evaluation of how a philosophical idea of Plato or Socrates might help a person searching for the meaning of life today. Candidates frequently referred to how the ‘Allegory of the Cave’ could help people searching for the meaning of life today in that it is *‘a story about how one person broke free to see what the world is really like...’* emphasising the need to move beyond the illusionary and search for what is real in life. However, 3% of Ordinary level candidates who answered question A1a) did not attempt question A1b) as required.

Question A2 was the least popular question in Unit One. This question was answered by 48% of Ordinary level candidates and an average of 59% of the designated mark was achieved. In response to question A2a) most candidates showed a good understanding of how an interest in the spiritual can be seen in the lives of people in an ancient society frequently referring to Newgrange and how

'...this Neolithic tomb was constructed to worship the sun god ... because each year on the shortest day, the tomb is lit by the sun...' In response to question A2b) some candidates also referred to Newgrange as a place where an ancient society marked a *'the rite of passage... death'*, while other candidates described how *'...tribal societies ... mark the rite of passage into manhood by a hunt etc.'*

Responding to question A3a), most Ordinary level candidates gave a very good analysis of a modern image of God associated with art, film or music, achieving an average of 84% of the designated mark. Candidates frequently referred to Janet McKenzie's painting *'Jesus of the People'* and gave an account of how *'This is an image of Jesus, yet we cannot tell whether the person is a man or woman because the features are both male and female ...this shows equality ... God is seen as a mother as well as a father....'* However, 16% of the Ordinary level candidates who answered question A3a) did not attempt question A3b) as required. Most candidates who responded to question A3b) referred to Christianity describing how *'God was seen as father, while on earth Jesus referred to him as Abba [which] shows a close and personal relationship with him ...'* The comparisons between contemporary and traditional images of God was very well done by most of these candidates and consequently an average of 80% of the marks was achieved for question A3b).

Among Higher level candidates, question A1 was the most popular choice with an 87% response rate and an average of 65% of the designated mark was achieved for this question. In responses to question A1a) candidates displayed a good capacity to evaluate the impact of Socrates' ideas on the development of philosophy referring to how *'Socrates wanted to discover rules and limits that would hold present for everyone ... this was very different to the Sophists ... Socrates' idea about ethics ... new thinking about living in a just society ... developed philosophy.'* While most candidates showed an ability to accurately identify Socrates' ideas as the question required, a closer examination of the impact of these ideas on the development of philosophy was necessary for full marks. In responses to question A1b) most Higher level candidates gave a good assessment of the ways an interest in spirituality can be seen in the lives of people today.

While only 12% of Higher level candidates answered question A2, many of those who did displayed a good ability to evaluate a philosopher's contribution to the development of humanism. An average of 64% of the designated mark was achieved for this question. Examiners reported that while some candidates in response to question A2a) accurately identified a philosopher associated with humanism, they gave little or no information on the contribution the person made to the development of humanism as the question required. Similarly, in answering question A2b) Higher level candidates gave a good evaluation of how agnosticism and reductionism could influence a

person's search for the meaning of life today, however, some candidates had difficulty with referring to both the agnostic and reductionist approach, as the question required.

3.3 Unit Two

(160 marks)

Unit Two of both the Ordinary level and Higher level examination papers offered candidates a range of questions which drew on their knowledge and understanding of the content in syllabus Sections B, C and D, as well as their ability to analyse, apply, synthesise and evaluate this material. While candidates are required in Unit Two to answer questions on two of the three syllabus Sections B, C or D, 18% of Ordinary level candidates answered questions on only one of the syllabus sections required, which had a negative impact on their marks. Questions on Section B and Section D were the most popular choices among Ordinary level candidates. The questions on syllabus Section B were the most popular choice of Higher level candidates.

3.3.1 Unit Two Section B Christianity: Origins and Contemporary Expressions (80 marks)

Ordinary level candidates gave a very good analysis of the approach taken by Jesus to one of the issues listed in question Ba) with '*creating a just and inclusive society*' being the most popular choice of issue. Similarly, in response to question Bb), Ordinary level candidates gave a very good evaluation of how one Christian denomination today tries to carry on the mission of Jesus. In answering question Bc), most Ordinary level candidates gave a very good analysis of how Roman rule affected the everyday life of the people living in Palestine at the time of Jesus describing how '*the roman taxes led to rebellion etc.*'

In response to question Ba), most Higher level candidates gave a good analysis of how an early Christian community addressed a challenge it faced in putting the teaching of Jesus into practice. Candidates referred to how the early Christian in Corinth for example had difficulties in relation to '*...the status of wealth, pagan beliefs and practises..*' While many Higher level candidates had no difficulty identifying a challenge faced by an early Christian community, they regularly failed to trace how the challenge was addressed by an early Christian community, as the question required and this had a negative impact on their marks for the question. Question Bb) elicited a good evaluation of the way that Jesus is remembered in two rites of Christian worship. Candidates frequently described the actions of a Christian community that they had participated in or observed. In reference to the Eucharist and Baptismal rites, candidates showed an appreciation of the different understanding of Eucharist in the Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions. Some Higher level candidates grounded their answers in key theological or liturgical ideas and drew on their study of other syllabus sections such as G 1.3. Among the Higher level candidates who responded to questions on Section B only 22% opted to answer question Bc). However, those who did answer

this question gave a good analysis of how Christian Churches try to promote unity, referring to Vatican II, the World Council of Churches, Christian Unity Week etc. In analysing a difficulty that still exists in the search for Christian unity today, candidates frequently gave descriptive examples of sectarianism or referred to doctrinal, liturgical or organisational differences.

3.3.2 Unit Two Section C World Religions

(80 marks)

Questions on Section C were the least popular among the Ordinary level candidates in Unit Two. In response to question Ca), most Ordinary level candidates displayed a fair understanding of the concept of salvation/liberation in Christianity or Judaism. Some candidates who performed very well in this question referred to how in Christianity *'salvation is understood as a gift from God. The initiative in salvation is with God, who in the person of Jesus saved humanity...'* In answering question Cb), Ordinary level candidates demonstrated a fair knowledge of how a time of religious importance is celebrated in a world religion. However, some of the weaker responses referred to one religious ritual rather than two as required in the question. In answering question Cc), some Ordinary level candidates demonstrated a very good understanding of the features of primal religion referring to how *'Tabu is something which is sacred and filled with mana ... A Shaman is a tribal elder who could communicate with the spirit world like a mediator ...'* However, some candidates did not attempt questions Cb) and Cc) as required, and this had a negative impact on the marks they achieved for Section C.

In answer to question Ca), Higher level candidates frequently compared the understanding of God in Christianity and Islam making reference to Jesus, revelation etc. Most candidates displayed a good understanding of the similarities and differences in the way that the transcendent/God is understood in two of the world religions listed in the question. Examiners reported that in their answers to this question, candidates frequently drew on what they studied in syllabus section A3.1 and A3.2, using to good affect their ability to integrate what they had learned in different sections of the syllabus. Question Cb) was not attempted by 11 % of the Higher level candidates who answered question Ca). The performance of candidates in response to question Cb) was slightly weaker than in response to Ca). In response to question Cb) candidates explained how *'...Mana ...signifies a sacred force that could be imbued in specific people or things. It came from unity with the Gods or ancestor spirits ... Tabu was a practice of preserving that which was sacred and imbued with mana...objects imbued with mana could often only be handled by those viewed spiritually pure ...as such tabu in effect protected the sacred from being mixed with the profane...'* Examiners reported that most candidates gave a good analysis of how the connection between the holy/divine and ordinary aspects of life may be found in two of the features of primal religion.

3.3.3 Unit Two Section D Moral Decision-Making

(80 marks)

Ordinary level candidates showed a good understanding of the moral decision-making process a morally mature person would go through. They were also able to apply their understanding to one of the issues listed in question Da). In response to questions Da) and Db) the most popular choices of Ordinary level candidates were issues to do with 'Relationships and Sexuality' or 'Crime and Punishment'. In response to question Db), most candidates displayed a good understanding of the teachings of a major world religion on an issue. In relation to 'Violence and War' candidates referred to the just war theory and argued that *'a morally mature person would look at the issue of violence and war [asking] 'Is it really necessary?' look for an alternative method of dealing with something before turning to violence ...'* Many candidates did not respond to question Dc) which impacted negatively on their marks for Section D. However, most of those who did respond to question Dc) showed a good ability to recall the name of a moral theorist and a good understanding of his/her theory of moral development.

The level of engagement and general performance of Higher level candidates was similar to Ordinary level candidates in response to questions on Section D. Most Higher level candidates were able to accurately name a moral theorist in response to questions Da) and showed a good understanding of a theory of moral development associated with a moral theorist. The theories of Kohlberg and Piaget were most frequently referred to by candidates. Some candidates used the theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs to show the development of a person's motivation to act in a moral way. Candidates' performance in response to question Db) was slightly weaker than in response to Da). Examiners reported that Higher level candidates choose from the full range of moral theories/philosophies listed in the question Db) and used examples to good effect to illustrate their answer. For example, candidates outlined how *'...Deontological comes from the Greek word Deon meaning a duty or obligation. A person who is influenced by this moral theory will give priority to the laws and duties of a country or their religion if they are religious...'* Some Higher level candidates who displayed a good understanding of a moral theory/philosophy listed in question Db), were challenged by the requirement to apply it to a moral decision-making issue.

3.4 Unit Three

(80 marks)

For both Ordinary level and Higher level candidates the questions in Section G were the most popular choice and those in Section F the least popular choice in Unit Three.

3.4.1 Unit Three Section F Issues of Justice and Peace

(80 marks)

Most Ordinary level candidates gave a good analysis of the causes of structural violence and an average of 60% of the marks was achieved for question Fa). In their answers, candidates referred to

'the greed ... exhibited when power is obtained e.g. kings of medieval times who taxed their people so that they could get more gold... dictatorships who organised show trials to eliminate any opposition ...' Weaker responses described examples of violence but made no reference to the causes of structural violence as the question required. 'THE EIGHTFOLD PATH OF BUDDHISM' and 'THE ZAKAT OF ISLAM' were the most popular choices of Ordinary level candidates in question Fb). Candidates demonstrated a good understanding of how such a religious perspective could encourage believers to work for justice and peace, achieving an average of 65% of the designated mark.

While the questions in Section F were the least popular in Unit Three among Higher level candidates, it was in response to these questions that they had the highest level of performance in this Unit, achieving an average of 72% of the designated mark. In response to question Fa), Higher level candidates displayed a very good understanding of how respect for the environment is encouraged in the religious teaching of a world religion. Christianity and Buddhism were the world religions most frequently referred to by candidates. Candidates who chose Christianity often referred to how stewardship is encouraged by creation stories or theology. Those who chose Buddhism referred to how stewardship is encouraged by the First Precept - abstaining from harming living beings. In response to question Fb), Higher level candidates gave detailed analysis of the way in which the work of a religious group/organisation was focused on the environment. Some answers referred, for example, to religious orders that *'... are trying to lower their carbon footprint and lessen their negative impact on the earth. ...through their environmental healthy lifestyle they hope to encourage and inspire others to do the same.'* Examiners reported that candidates' ability to integrate what they had learned in different syllabus sections was evident in some very good answers to questions Fa) and Fb) where candidates drew particularly on their study of syllabus sections B5.1 and J2.4.

3.4.2 Unit Three Section G Worship, Prayer, and Ritual (80 marks)

In response to question Ga), Ordinary level candidates displayed a good ability to analyse how the characteristics of a prayer space reflect the religious beliefs of a world religion. Most candidates referred to Christianity or Islam, achieving an average of 66% of the designated mark. However, 21% of the candidates who answered question Ga) did not attempt question Gb). Most of those who attempted the question referred to a confirmatory type of ritual and gave a good analysis of how it is celebrated within a religious tradition today, achieving an average of 62% of the designated mark.

Question Ga) on both the Ordinary level and Higher level examination papers required candidates to display knowledge of contexts for prayer. There was a marked difference in the levels of higher

order engagement shown by Higher level and Ordinary level candidates in response to the question on this syllabus topic. Generally, Higher level candidates gave a very good analysis of how a prayer space reflects the religious belief of the members of a world religion, achieving an average of 70% of the marks for question Ga). Ordinary level candidates often struggled with this analysis. Candidates seemed to have no difficulty describing the features of places such as mosques or places of pilgrimage etc. but some had difficulty identifying evidence of religious belief in these features. In response to question Gb), candidates also gave a good analysis of how a Buddhist or Christian meditation technique is used as a form of prayer, achieving an average of 68% of the designated mark. In reference to a Christian meditation technique, candidates frequently demonstrated a good understanding of what is involved in '*Lectio Divina*'. Similarly, candidates who referred to Buddhism often gave a good account of the meditation aspects of '*The Middle Way*'. For example, having given a detailed account of what is involved in a Buddhist meditation technique, candidates went on to explain that '*Buddhism is a mystic faith, meaning it focuses on inward reflection and contemplation to achieve salvation ... The Eight Fold Path advocates a life of right thought and right understanding among its elements which created the idea of meditation being used...*' Examiners reported that Higher level candidates appeared to find the requirement to explain why the technique is used as a form of prayer, the most challenging aspect of the question. Examiners also reported that in answering questions Ga) and Gb) candidates displayed an ability to integrate what they had learned in different syllabus sections, drawing particularly on C1.3 and C2.1.

3.4.3 Unit Three Section I Religion: The Irish Experience (80 marks)

In responding to question Ia), Ordinary level candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the ways in which land ownership and religion were connected in the 17th Century Ireland, achieving an average of 67% of the designated mark. Candidates frequently referred to Columbanus in answering question Ib) and set out accurate information on the role he played in the spread of Irish monasticism and the foundation of monasteries in Europe. The best performance from Ordinary level candidates in Section I was in response to question Ic) where they achieved an average 99% of the designated mark. Candidates demonstrated an excellent understanding of the way in which the Céli Dé attempted to bring about reforms within the 8th Century Irish Christian tradition referring to how '*Cél Dé means 'servant of God' so the monks did their all to show their love for God ... Mael Ruain attempted to strengthen the practice of religion through reform of the liturgy ... penitential system etc.*' The weakest performance in Section I was in response to question Id) where most Ordinary level candidates displayed a poor understanding of how ideas associated with the Enlightenment can be seen in the work of Cardinal Cullen in 19th century Ireland or the Belfast Enlightenment, achieving an average of 28% of the designated mark. Question Ie) was the most popular choice in Section I among Ordinary level candidates. However, candidates achieved an

average of 45% of the designated mark. Many of the weaker responses identified examples of individual Christians working together only and made no reference to how this was related to the work done by Christian Churches to promote ecumenism in Ireland as the question required.

Most Higher level candidates made a good comparison between the pattern of religious practice among young people in Ireland today and that of the population as a whole, achieving an average of 62% of the marks for question Ia). Such candidates supported their answers with reference to the findings of the Irish Census, the ISSP and the EVS etc. Examiners reported that, similar to the response of candidates to other questions, in answering this question candidates drew on their study of other syllabus sections such as A1.1. In responding to question Ib)i, most Higher level candidates displayed fair knowledge of the evidence of Pre-Christian religious beliefs found in Irish myths or sagas, frequently referring to *'The Tuatha Dé Danaan'* and *'The Children of Lir'*. Candidates achieved an average of 48% of the marks for question Ib)i. In some of the weaker responses, candidates gave information on ancient myths from Greece and elsewhere without making any reference to Irish myths or sagas as the question required. Most Higher level candidates who opted for question I b)ii displayed a good ability to trace Irish religious practices back to Pre-Christian times, achieving an average of 61% of the designated mark. Candidates referred to the Pre-Christian origins of local pattern days, climbing Croagh Patrick and the celebration of St. Brigid's Day etc.

3.4.4 Unit Three Section J Religion and Science

(80 marks)

Both Ordinary level and Higher level candidates showed good evidence of evaluation in their answers to questions in Section J.

Ordinary level candidates showed a good understanding of Descartes' idea of the 'cogito' and an ability to judge the effect that it had on the relationship between religion and science. Candidates explained how *'... the cogito states 'I think therefore I am'. This idea meant ... doubting everything he had been brought up with or taught to believe... Science is based on theory and experiments ... which leaves loads of room for doubt ... if everything can be doubted then it is hard to make someone believe ...this put a huge gap between religion and science ...'*

Similarly, in response to question Ja), Higher level candidates showed a good ability to judge the influence of Galileo's work on the religious and scientific thinking of his time and achieved an average of 63% of the designated mark. Candidates referred to Galileo's work regarding the planets, his contribution to the development of the scientific method and his clash with the Church authorities of his time. However, some candidates made no reference to Galileo's impact on the

scientific thinking of his time, as the question required. Candidates who answered question Jb) achieved an average of 63% of the designated mark. Most candidates displayed a good ability to evaluate the insights gained from religion and science in relation to issues to do with origins or questions about life. Higher level candidates who chose ‘the debate about origins’ referred to the the Big Bang Theory, Darwin’s Theory of Evolution etc. while candidates who chose ‘questions about the beginnings of life’ referred to abortion and IVF etc.

3.5 Analysis of Candidate Performance in response to the 2013 Coursework Titles

Each part of the 2013 coursework is ranked in Table 12 and Table 13 below. Responses to Parts A and B of the coursework as well as responses to the prescribed titles are ranked firstly according to candidate performance and secondly according to their popularity among candidates. Under the heading ‘Performance’ the average marks and corresponding rank order is given. Under the heading ‘Popularity’ the response rate and corresponding rank order is given.

<i>Coursework</i>	<i>Performance</i>		<i>Popularity</i>	
	<i>Average Mark</i>	<i>Rank Order</i>	<i>Response Rate</i>	<i>Rank Order</i>
Coursework Part A	34 (86%)	1	100%	
Coursework Part B	33 (81%)	2		
2013 Title E.1	69 (86%)	1	35%	2
2013 Title E.2	67 (84%)	2	63%	1
2013 Title H.1	0 (0%)	4	0%	4
2013 Title H.2	36 (45%)	3	3%	3

Table 12 Ranking of Ordinary level 2013 Coursework according to Average Mark and Response Rate

<i>Coursework</i>	<i>Performance</i>		<i>Popularity</i>	
	<i>Average Mark</i>	<i>Rank Order</i>	<i>Response Rate</i>	<i>Rank Order</i>
Coursework Part A	31 (77%)	1	100%	
Coursework Part B	30 (74%)	2		
2013 Title E.1	64 (80%)	1	19%	2
2013 Title E.2	60 (75%)	4	69%	1
2013 Title H.1	63 (79%)	2	5%	4
2013 Title H.2	62 (77%)	3	7%	3

Table 13 Ranking of Higher level 2013 Coursework according to Average Mark and Response Rate

3.5.1 Section E: Religion and Gender (80 marks)

Most Ordinary level candidates presented an excellent analysis of how Mary, the mother of Jesus, is portrayed in two of the Gospels listed in Title E.1. In completing Part A Ordinary level candidates used an excellent variety of sources, achieving an average of 88% of the designated mark. A

common approach among candidates was to trace what can be seen about Mary in key passages from the chosen Gospel. For example candidates referred to how passages from Luke's Gospel show her to be '*... a woman who has strong belief ... reflective, thoughtful woman ... ordinary parent who is worried about the safety of her child ... a disciple who has accepted her role as the mother of Jesus. She is an ordinary person with an extraordinary role...*' In Part B, Ordinary level candidates showed very good personal engagement with the title, achieving an average of 84% of the designated mark.

Similarly, the performance of Higher level candidates on Title E.1 was better in Part A than in Part B, achieving an average of 83% and 77% of the respective marks. In the treatment of the set points in Part A of the coursework booklet most candidates took a descriptive approach, tracing how Mary is portrayed in key passages in the Gospels. Most Higher level candidates identified a variety of sources of information in Part A and provided evidence of having engaged in extended research, analysis and reflection. However, weaker responses to Part A of the coursework booklet did not set out information on the steps taken in investigating this title and did not provide supporting evidence for the conclusions drawn in the summary of findings, as required. Examiners reported that candidates who paid close attention to answering the questions given in Part B of the coursework booklet gave a very good analysis and critical reflection on why Mary is portrayed differently in the Gospels. Many Higher level candidates drew on the understanding of Mary in the Gospels and linked it to her role in different Christian denominations. However, a common weakness among Higher level candidates was simply repeating in Part B of the booklet the summary of findings from Part A.

Coursework Title E.2 was the most popular choice among both Ordinary level and Higher level candidates. Candidates from both levels presented very good evaluations of the influence of one religious woman on the society of her day. The performance in Part A of both Ordinary level and Higher level candidates was slightly better than in Part B of the coursework booklet. The majority of candidates referred to women who were from the Christian tradition e.g. Nano Nagle, Mary Ward, Catherine McAuley, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Dorothy Day etc.

Ordinary level candidates who presented coursework on Title E.2 achieved an average of 85% of the designated mark for Part A of the booklet. Some candidates omitted to outline the steps taken and the skills used but gave an excellent account of their sources and summary of findings. In completing Part B, most Ordinary level candidates displayed very good personal engagement with the title, achieving an average of 83% of the designated mark. The first three set questions in Part B were particularly well answered. However, the response of some Ordinary level candidates was

lacking in detail and failed to focus on the personal insights gained through doing coursework on Title E.2 as required.

Higher level candidates who chose Title E.2 achieved an average of 76% of the marks designated in Part A of the coursework booklet. Most candidates gave a good account of their sources, the skills they used and the steps involved in their investigation. However, some Higher level candidates found evaluating the chosen religious woman's influence on the society of her day was the most challenging aspect of coursework on Title E.2. Higher level candidates achieved an average of 73% of the marks for Part B of the coursework booklet.

3.5.2 Section H: The Bible: Literature and Sacred Text (80 marks)

Coursework Title H.1 was not chosen by any Ordinary level candidate and it was the least popular choice among Higher level candidates. The Higher level candidates who chose this title gave a very good analysis of how poetry features in two Psalms, referring to the use of reflective language, parallelism, imagery etc. Candidates described how *'psalms can vary in topics and themes ... distinct use of parallelism ...'* Most candidates performed well both in Part A and Part B of the coursework, achieving an average of 79% of the designated mark for each part. In weaker coursework, in Part A, candidates simply identified poetic features in the Psalms but made no attempt to analyse how these qualities can be seen in two Psalms as required in Title H.1. Examiners reported that the weaker coursework on this title regularly omitted answering the questions asked in Part B of the booklet.

In response to coursework Title H.2, Ordinary level candidates performed better in Part A than in Part B of the coursework booklet. The approach taken by some candidates was to focus on how the gospels of Matthew and Luke are *'...influenced by their target audience...'* Most Ordinary level candidates received averages of 50% of the designated marks for Part A and 40% of the designated marks for Part B as they presented a fair evaluation of how the interests of two evangelists influenced the material in their Gospels.

Higher level candidates performed better than Ordinary level candidates in response to coursework based on Title H.2. Most Higher level candidates presented a very good evaluation of how the interests of two evangelists influenced the material in their Gospels. Very good engagement with the title was evident in both Part A and Part B of the coursework booklet with most candidates achieving an average of 78% of the marks for each part. Some candidates began by establishing the biographical details of two evangelists and then examined the broad themes in their Gospels. Others candidates focused on evaluating how the interests of the evangelists could be seen in key

Gospel passages. However, examiners reported that some Higher level candidates focused mainly on the interests of the two evangelists and did not consider how their interests were reflected in the material in the synoptic Gospels as the title required.

4. Conclusions

- The number of candidates taking Religious Education as a Leaving Certificate subject has increased in the last three years particularly at Higher level.
- At Higher level, the majority of candidates demonstrated a very good level of achievement of the requisite knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes in their responses to the examination paper. The majority of candidates at Ordinary level demonstrated a good level of achievement.
- Candidates at both levels, but particularly at Higher level, demonstrated an ability to draw on what they had learned across syllabus areas when responding to questions. This capacity to integrate what had been learned in different sections of the syllabus is welcomed and was particularly evident in the answers of Higher level candidates to questions on Sections B, C, F, G and I.
- Many candidates also demonstrated an ability to draw on a wide variety of learning experiences and approaches. In their answers, candidates drew on their experience of participating in or observing religious rites, meditation, retreats, pilgrimages etc. The use of a descriptive approach, with reference to examples or case studies and active learning methodologies, seemed to be particularly effective for candidates engaging with abstract concepts.
- The most noticeable difference in candidate performance at Ordinary and Higher levels related to their response to questions requiring higher order engagement, with Higher level candidates generally showing superior use of analysis, synthesis and evaluation skills.
- Some candidates did not attempt all the sections or parts of questions that were required in the examination papers. It should be noted that omissions of this kind had a serious impact on the overall grade achieved by some candidates in both the Ordinary and the Higher level examinations. Candidates frequently left unanswered the parts of questions that required the recall of specific information or detailed knowledge of a syllabus topic.
- Candidates who attained less than a Grade D at either the Ordinary or Higher levels generally demonstrated poor knowledge and understanding of the syllabus aims, objectives and learning outcomes that were being assessed in the examinations. Some of the weaker performances were characterised by a lack of engagement with the cognitive demands of questions. For example, in response to questions in the compulsory Section A of the Higher level examination paper, some candidates simply demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of syllabus

topics but failed to demonstrate the higher order skills of evaluation etc. required in the questions.

- Most candidates at both Ordinary and Higher levels performed very well in response to the 2013 Coursework titles. Candidates at both levels generally performed better in Part A than in Part B of the coursework booklet. Most candidates gave a very good summary of their investigation and personal reflection on a prescribed coursework title in the coursework booklet. However, some candidates did not relate their chosen title to the points listed at the start of Part A or the questions listed at the start of Part B of the coursework booklet. Common weaknesses in completing Part A of the coursework booklet included: not setting out information on the steps taken and/or not listing the skills used in investigating the prescribed title. Responses in Part B of the coursework booklet were weakened by candidates simply repeating the summary of findings from Part A and not analysing the personal insights gained or evaluating the most valuable part of doing coursework on the chosen prescribed title. A minority of candidates at both Ordinary and Higher levels did not complete the coursework component and this had a serious impact on the overall grades achieved.

5. Recommendations to Teachers and Students

- Students should be familiar with the layout of the examination papers and with the mark and time allocations. Attention should also be given to reading the questions carefully and writing legible answers.
- Students should be encouraged to attempt all the sections, questions and parts of questions that are required in the examination papers and complete the coursework component. Students need to focus on what is being asked in a question.
- Teachers need to ensure that students are familiar with the ‘Glossary of Key Terms for Use in the Assessment of Leaving Certificate Religious Education’ as outlined in the NCCA Guidelines for Teacher, page 130.
- In order that candidates can engage with the full range of cognitive demands that form the assessment framework within the syllabus, teachers should avail of the opportunities offered by the Leaving Certificate Religious Education course to develop students’ understanding of the concepts and content that are central to the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the syllabus.
- Teachers should provide opportunities for students to develop the skills of critical reflection.
- In completing the Coursework Booklet students should
 - follow the guidelines specified in the document entitled *General Guidelines for Completion of the Coursework Booklet* which is issued to schools annually by the SEC along with the Coursework Booklets
 - focus on their chosen prescribed title in their treatment of each of the points listed at the start of Part A and answer each of the questions listed at the start of Part B
 - avoid repeating the summary of findings (Part A) when completing Part B of coursework booklet.