

studyclix.ie
makes exams easier

presents

Religious Studies

How to get an H1 in the Leaving Cert
Religious Studies Exam



by Paul McAndrew

About the Author

Paul currently teaches Religious Studies in the Institute of Education and has 16 years of experience teaching the subject and has worked for the SEC in this subject from 2017-2019. He has published 4 books on the subject which you can purchase from mcandrewbooks.com **These are the most up-to-date and exam-focused books or resources available for Leaving Cert Religion.**

Intro

People tend to see Leaving Cert Religious Studies as an easy subject that you simply have to say a couple of rosaries to achieve a good grade, but this is not the case. It is as easy or difficult as any other course on the Leaving Cert but its main advantage is how interesting it is. You will be hard pushed to find a more diverse or thought-provoking subject!

It will stimulate the mind and alter your opinions on many topics and should be taken by any student who likes to think of themselves as a thinker.

20% of the course is completed as a coursework, which is completed by both higher and ordinary level students. The other 80% is then the written exam. The topic of the coursework is based on four prescribed titles from the Department of Education, of which you pick one to research. If completed properly, it will enable you to go into June's exam with most of that 20% in your pocket.

Contents

Advice for Answering Questions.....	3
How the Exam is Laid Out	5
How to Get Your Timing Right.....	6
How to Maximise your Chances of Doing Well	7
The Coursework	8
Some Final Tips	15



Advice for Answering Questions

- Read the question a couple of times, and make sure that you answer each aspect of it. Leave a line between the first part and second part of the question.
- Be aware of marking criteria. Remember that if there is an “and”, then there are two “MCs”. MCs are **marking criteria** or answers to the question that the examiner expects you to have addressed before they will award you a grade. Use N.E.A.R. to guide you in this process.
- N.E.A.R. These should be evident in the candidate’s answer for each point.
 - **Name** – state what the answer is to the first point require in the question clearly and concisely
 - **Explain** – explain your stated answer clearly and concisely
 - **Applied example** – expand on your explanation by giving an example (real life or imagined) that backs up what you have discussed in the above two points
 - **Refer** - refer to the question being asked, using key words from the question to show that you have answered it fully, while being clear, concise, and relevant.

If there are two points in the question, do this twice, leaving a space between each N.E.A.R.

- Key Words/Phrases/Quotes/Statements: Use key words/phrases/quotes/statements from the question in your answer. This is particularly important in this subject. **Use a highlighter to note the most important things in the question** and refer to these words as much as possible when making a point, this will show that you comprehend what is being asked. You can find these key terms in the teacher’s guideline booklet for Leaving Cert Religion.
- Be clear: Essay-based assessment is about answering the question that is asked in a clear manner. You need to read the question asked 2-3 times, break it down into more manageable



bits and then answer each one in turn.

- Answer the question asked: The cardinal sin in writing LC Religious Education essays is not to answer the question that is being asked, and between 70-80% of the time, this is what happens. Please make sure that you are not in this percentage by answering the question that is being asked in full and making it clear that you understood the question.
- Quality over quantity: I would suggest that a substantial answer is the one that fulfils the marking criteria no matter the length. Quality is always preferable to quantity, but it must also be said that some questions will require substantial answers and understanding of the topic in question. Therefore, a cardinal rule is to **stick to the time frame** for each question and to answer the question as well as you can in the time given.
- Stay on point: The final thing to note is that you will start to lose marks when the answer you are giving stops being relevant to the question asked. So, as you practise answering these questions, it is important to be constantly thinking whether your response is answering the question being asked.



How the Exam is Laid Out

There are 3 sections to the written paper: Unit 1,2, and 3.

- [Unit 1](#) – The Search for Meaning and Values (answer 1 question). There are two options, and you are free to choose which ever question you want to answer. There is generally a philosophy question in this section of the paper, so studying this topic well will most years enable you to know what 40 marks or 10% of your grade will be on.
- [Unit 2](#) – Christianity, World Religions & Moral Decision Making (answer 2 questions) i.e. you need to answer the questions posed on any two of the above topics.
- [Unit 3](#) – you need to answer any one of the questions under this unit, excluding the two sections designated for coursework. So, there are four questions in this section, and you must answer one of them. The topics are:
 - ▶ Religion and Gender
 - ▶ Issues of Justice and Peace
 - ▶ Worship, Prayer & Ritual
 - ▶ The Bible: Literature and Sacred Text
 - ▶ Religion: The Irish Experience
 - ▶ Religion and Science



How to Get Your Timing Right

The written paper is 80% of the marks and is 2.5 hours long. You will need to answer between 7-8 essay-based questions in this time. Check out the table below to see how much time and how much you should write for each type of question.

	<u>How many pages?</u>	<u>How much time?</u>
80-mark Q	2-3	30-36 mins
40-mark Q	1-2	15-18 mins
20-mark Q	Up to 1	7-9 mins

Remember:

- Never go over your time limit! Go to the next question once you see you've run out of time and come back to the incomplete question at the end of the exam if you have time left.
- I would advise trying to practise answering questions in the shortest time suggested above. This will benefit you and give you more time in the real exam if you can get into the habit of answering the questions quickly.

Any H1-aspiring students must be focused on the question being asked, and answering it fully, clearly, and concisely.



How to Maximise your Chances of Doing Well

- Study from the get-go. **Religion is not a subject you can cram for.** It requires a steady level of study so that a broader outlook can be gained on each topic in case a question strays from the norm.
- Study additional information which is not in the notes and **find your own examples.** My books and digital resources like internet clips on the philosophers can be helpful and provide a way you are more likely to remember what is being studied and will be more than able to give your own perspective on the matter, something which is looked for in the Religion exam.
- If you are finding any points difficult to remember, **the use of acronyms or rhymes are quite useful** (e.g.) "S. T. I." - Separation, Transition, Incorporation regarding rites of passage in ancient societies in the Search of Meaning & Values section of the course.
- If you are a visual learner, YouTube videos can be very useful. When studying a question watch a YouTube video or read an article or look up pictures about the topic and this will make the information far easier to remember, because you will associate the information with a certain visual. In this way information will come back to you quickly when answering questions. You can find videos and other helpful learning resources for Religion in the resource box on the Religion subject page on Studyclix!



The Coursework

This section is worth 20% of your overall grade for Leaving Cert Religion and it needs to be taken very seriously! It's broken into 2 parts and each part is worth 10% of your overall grade.

The guidelines state that you must only write 1,500 words maximum for both parts, when in actual fact, the aim is to fill the written area in the booklet. Therefore, word count is flexible, but about 1,300-1,500 will fit in each section of the booklet. Do not write outside of the provided written area, as the booklets are meant to be scanned and the SEC does not guarantee that writing outside the area will be transferred in this process.

Part A

This is a research essay based on the prescribed titles given by the department and should be approx. 1,300-1,500 words long. The titles change each year and are based on 2 of the subjects from Unit 3 of the course.

There are 4 areas of marking criteria to part A:

1. The sources you used
2. The steps that you took & skills used to research your chosen title
3. The findings of your research
4. Did you fully address the title of your chosen coursework and if so, did you answer the question?

There are 6 tasks to do as part of Part A:

- 1st Task - is to choose the question you want to research. Pick the one that you are most interested in and that you have the best connection to.



- 2nd Task – is to define the key terms in your chosen title. What is the command word asking you to do? Be specific, what topics are you expected to research, cover, and know. Look at the syllabus knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes for your chosen question.
- 3rd Task – is to research the title. Look at 15+ sources; sources can be books, interviews, documentaries, websites, journals, newspapers etc.

Create a database with the sources used to research your chosen title and the information that you have taken from these sources. This will help when you come to write your coursework.

- 4th Task – is to write up a summary of your findings which goes into your booklet, titled “Summary of Findings”. The length again is roughly 800-1000 words depending on the size of your handwriting. Set out your title focused findings (2-3), that fully address your chosen title.
- 5th Task – is to write your “Steps taken and skills used”. Use this title, put it at the start of the Part A section of the booklet. The summary of findings should come after it. This section should be 300-400 max, be title focused and full of skills word like ‘analyse’, ‘evaluation’ and ‘research’. A good way to do this is to breakdown your chosen title and give step by step examples of how you went about researching it, using the skills words where relevant.
- 6th Task – is to create a bibliography where all the sources you used or viewed are listed. It should live at the end of the booklet. It should also look similar to an academic bibliography; you can see examples of these online.

Also make sure to have reference some of these sources used throughout your steps and summary of findings section.



Part B

Once you have completed Part A, you need to start writing Part B. It is a personal reflection on the learning, skills & experiences gained through undertaking the writing of Part A. Here are some things to note:

- It should be approx. 1,300 - 1,500 words in length
- You are required to answer 5 questions. . .each answer should be at least 300 words in length and make sure that what you are writing is worthwhile.
- A poorly researched part A equals a poorly written part B.
- You must mention 3-5 skills used, in the same manner as they are mentioned in part A. The marking scheme suggested that a substantial use of skills be evident in your Part B and mentions the following by name: research, analysis, evaluation, critical thinking, communication, reflection judgement.
- When answering each question, make sure that the underlined words/phrases appear in the first line/sentence of that answer. This shows the examiner where you are answering each question, it will make your part B easier to read, and hopefully give you a better grade.
- There are 7 aspects to the marking scheme here, the 5 questions, at least 2 skills words must be mentioned, and you must answer the question in your chosen title again.



The 5 questions

Please answer them in the order they appear below. The question does not need to appear, but it should be obvious to the examiner which question you are answering.

Q1 – Why was the title of interest to you? 300+ words

- The marking scheme is looking for enthusiasm/concern in your answer to this question.
- It is looking for a very worthwhile piece of work, with substantial explanation and very clear personal interest.
- One way to do this is to link your interest in the title to a personal story of how your interest was sparked in the topic.
- Be honest, personal & original.

Q2 – What different perspectives did you encounter in doing coursework on your chosen title? 300+ words

- The marking scheme expects you to show **substantial identification and balancing different perspectives** in your answer to this question.
- It expects you to show an ability to interpret, contrast and evaluate different opinions/approaches to a topic; the ability to develop counterarguments.
- Discuss different perspectives or views encountered, and different opinions on the topic from the different sources you researched (2-3).
- All should be relevant to your chosen title and address the key aspects of your findings.
- You need to answer the question posed in your chosen title again here as you did in your findings in Part A. The perspectives encountered should be a briefer form of your findings in part A.
- Mention skills used.



Q3. What questions arose for you through doing the coursework on this title? 300+ words

- The marking scheme expects you to show a **substantial identification of questions**.
- Discuss 2-3 questions that arose, relevant to your chosen title, while research and writing your coursework.
- Show an ability to question the authority of different sources of information & distinguish between fact and opinion.
- Mention skills used.

Q4. What personal insights have you gained through doing a coursework on this title? 300+ words

- The marking scheme expects you to show a **detailed description with substantial personal engagement**.
- You should also show an ability to reflect on your own learning and the effect of that learning on your ideas, attitudes, and experiences: What did you learn about yourself while doing this coursework? How did the learning to affect your ideas, your attitudes and experience?
- Discuss personal insights of your own character and opinions that you discovered in your findings while researching & writing this coursework.
- Mention skills used.

Q5. What has been the most valuable part of doing coursework on this title? 300+ words

- The marking scheme expects you to show a **substantial assessment of value**.
- Ultimately, what was the most valuable experience or knowledge gained from researching & writing the coursework based on your findings.



- Try not to repeat yourself here and do not mention skills in this answer.
- Give a **positive and negative** assessment of the value of doing this coursework.

When you're done with Part A & B

When you have finished writing Part A & B, you should review the coursework by asking yourself the following questions and include or adapt any information arising to what you have already written:

1. What did I know about the topic at the beginning of this process?
2. Why did I choose this topic?
3. How will I show the steps and skills I used in the process of this coursework?
4. What issues arose in my investigation/research?
5. 2 perspectives I came across? From different sources e.g. one a book and the other a website
6. In my research, did I encounter any bias and assumptions by authors or others?
7. Personal reaction to this bias?
8. My personal reactions to or feeling in relation to personal reflection?
9. How did I verify credibility of my sources?
10. Possible implications of this topic for 21st century Ireland?
11. What kind of conclusions can be drawn from my investigation?
12. Why does it matter?
13. How has the experience challenged my views opinions and beliefs?
14. How well informed am I now?
15. What further questions remain unanswered?
16. Did I show originality & personal engagement in the process of researching and writing this coursework?



General Comments on the Coursework

- With regards to the coursework project, I **cannot stress enough how important it is to start early**. This is essential so that 1. there is time to look over it and correct any mistakes, etc. and 2. you can get back to focusing on the actual written exam.
- It is *vital* that you **choose a coursework title which intrigues you**, otherwise you will most definitely find yourself losing interest halfway through and your project may not be as good as it could have been.
- The **drafts of your coursework should be typed out and not handwritten**, only your final draft which is written into the official booklet needs to be handwritten. In this way you can readjust and correct mistakes without having to rewrite the whole thing out each time.
- I will say it again, get the project done early. Once you have most of the project done or your main draft of the project which has been corrected, **it lessens the pressure** during “project weeks”, that busy period near the end of April in the year you are taking the exam.
- It takes a while to write out the coursework into the official booklet so **don't leave the actual work until the last second**, there are also orals and other projects due around that time so the more you've done in advance, the better.
- **Don't rush the project either**. When you're confident that you've answered your title and questions well and spent enough time on your project, it gives you confidence going into the exam.



Some Final Tips

I think it is so important to stress the fact that **getting an H1 in Religion is not easy** (contrary to what some people believe). In order to break the H1 barrier, it is important to treat it as any other subject. It requires the same amount of time and effort as all subjects. Although everyone learns and studies differently, there are certain guidelines which worked well in the past.

- **Listen well in class and participate.** Topics become memorable when you take a genuine interest in them and listen in class. Being open to different views from classmates and forming your own view on topics makes it easier to give a well-rounded answer in an exam.
- **Know the paper.** I really recommend **knowing the layout and history of the paper from year to year.** Both Studyclix and examinations.ie have an extensive examination material archive on their sites where you can access all exam papers from 2005 onwards. Also, look at the marking schemes for each exam to give you a feel for what the examiner is looking for.
- **Do a test each week!** Although a test every week in religion seems daunting at first, it can be really helpful in the long run. Study for about an hour or more for each test and write out notes for each test. By the end of the year, you will have a folder full of written out notes for each section and topic. You can **use the Exam Builder here on Studyclix** to test yourself!
- Since there is a lot to know for Religion, I advise you **record yourself or someone else reading the notes.** Therefore, if you get tired of reading or saying the notes out loud, you can listen to them instead. This is helpful for any subject that requires a lot of memorisation.
- Lastly, I'd just suggest **being calm going into all the exams!** Take deep breaths and read the questions carefully. When answering a question, make sure you address all parts of the question and state clearly in the introduction/conclusion to each paragraph which part of the question you are answering. There's a temptation to write down everything you know if you are well prepared, so make sure that when you're answering you only write what is relevant!





Finally, I would like to wish you the best of luck with the project and the exam! You will be fine. 😊

