

# Grade 9 Test 2011 Report

## Introduction

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Catholic schools throughout South Africa were invited to take part in the National Religious Education Test for Grade 9. 23 schools applied and 22 returned test papers to the National Office for marking. We thank these schools for their participation, and those who returned feedback to us.

The test aims to encourage a better quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education in schools, to signal the importance of assessment in Religious Education, and to give participating schools an indication of their learners' state of religious knowledge. To this end, the questions were based on lessons from a selection of curriculum processes in the CORD Lesson Handbook for Grade 9.

For practical purposes, the test format was limited to multiple choice questions, which is, of course, only one possible assessment strategy.

## Feedback Analysis

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### COMMUNICATION

The information provided to schools was adequate and the instructions were clear. However schools felt they needed the information earlier in order to prepare their learners more effectively. There were two aspects to this.

- Information on the date and scope of the test should reach schools at the earliest opportunity in the year so that preparation can be better planned and paced.
- Learners need more time to practice with the sample questions provided.

### PRESENTATION

The use of computer friendly answer sheets was appreciated and the layout of the test was manageable, but the use of a school number as well as an EMIS number was a little confusing. There were some queries relating to the use of a multiple-choice format which was difficult for some when framed in the negative. While acknowledging the practical difficulty of marking thousands of scripts, there was a suggestion to consider other formats, such as a multiple-choice test based on a chosen text. The question was also raised as to whether such a test could accommodate the personal experiential dimension of religion.

### QUESTIONS

There was quite a strong voice reminding the test planners that Catholic schools have an ever diminishing percentage of Catholic learners. The test was seen as a good one for Catholic learners but it did not sufficiently take into consideration learners of other faith communities. There was a particular difficulty for schools that took students in Grade 8 from neighbouring public schools. A few suggested a wider biblical basis for the test to accommodate the traditions of a greater number of learners.

On the other hand, questions relating to other faiths were appreciated since they allowed learners who were not Catholic to identify more readily with the test.

The test was generally seen as comprehensive and well-balanced in the way that it covered all the specified areas, though some felt that the scope was too broad and therefore impossible to cover in the limited time available for RE. In addition, there were sometimes no permanent RE teachers at the school.

The questions themselves were seen as fair for those who were adequately prepared and they were asked at various levels of complexity. However, many schools experienced the terminology and vocabulary as too advanced for their learners.

Some commented on particular questions as follows:

- Difficult terminology (Q17, Q49)
- Uncertainty about the source of the question (Q38)
- Unspecified concerns (Q16, Q32, Q38)
- Questions having more than one correct answer (not specified)

### GENERAL

An overall impression received from the feedback was that the test had been a positive experience – some learners were said to have enjoyed the test – and that it should continue. There was strength in the fact that the test is an external one.

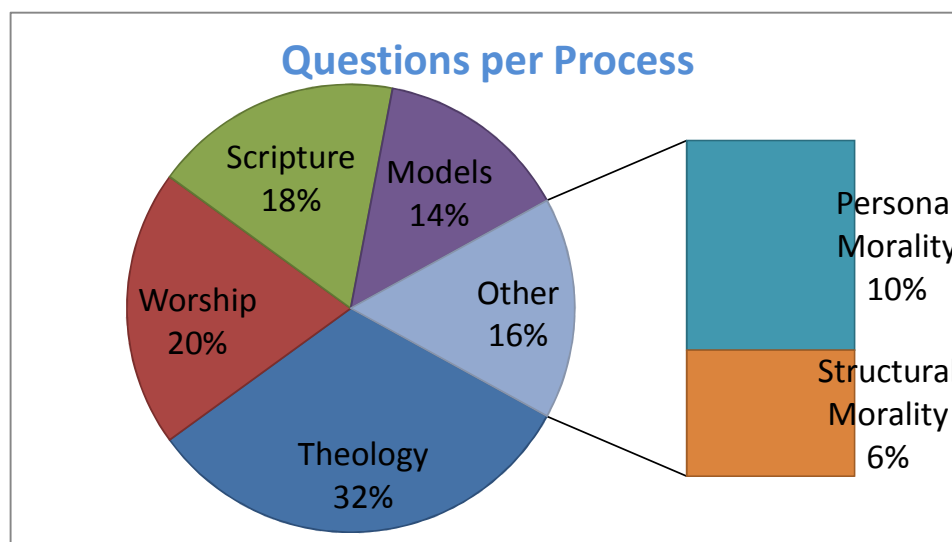
Some teachers felt that they had insufficient background themselves in order to prepare learners and a suggestion was made for a textbook for teachers covering the processes

## Question Analysis

### CURRICULUM PROCESSES

The table and chart below shows the distribution of questions among the curriculum processes identified for the test.

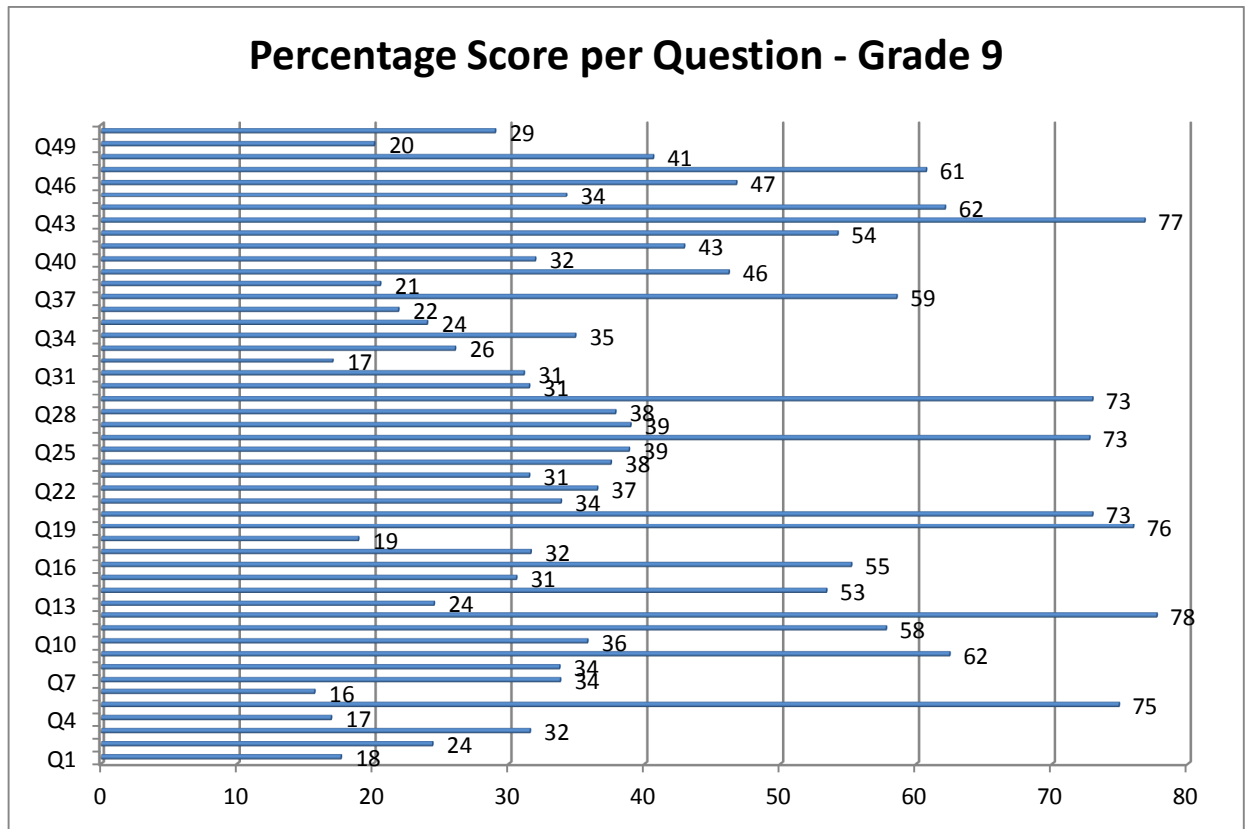
QUESTIONS	CORD CURRICULUM MATERIALS
1-16	Theological Education
13-26	Worship (Sacramental/Liturgical Education)
27-35	Scriptural Education
36-42	Education by Models
43-47	Personal Moral Education
48-50	Education in Structural Morality



Given the multiple-choice nature of the test, it was more difficult to formulate appropriate questions in the two areas of morality, hence their relatively low weighting.

**STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

1797 students from 22 schools participated in the test. The national average was 20.57 marks out of 50, or 41.14%. The chart below gives national percentage achievement per question.



In terms of curriculum process there was no noticeable trend:

- The best answered questions - 5 (75%), 12 (78%), 19 (76%), 20 (73%), 26 (73%), 29 (73%), and 43 (77%) are spread through the processes. (See the table on Page 2 above)
- The same holds for the weakest responses - 1 (18%), 4 (17%), 6 (16%), 18 (19%), and 32 (17%)

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Wednesday, December 07, 2011