

GCSE (9-1)

Support booklet

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

J625

For first teaching in 2016

An overview of assessment changes and candidate style answers

Version 1

Introduction

Full GCSE

We always want to reward our students for what they know and allow them to show their full skill and potential, after listening to feedback from teachers, students and examiners we are removing our blended Assessment Objective (AO) 6 mark questions.

They are being replaced with 6 mark AO1 questions on the Beliefs and teachings and Practices paper and 6 mark AO2 questions on the Religion, philosophy and ethics in the modern world from a religious perspective paper.

This will give clarity to what is required by these questions to both students and teachers.

Short course GCSE

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What has changed?

Following feedback from teachers and examiners, we are replacing the 6-mark combined assessment objective questions in GCSE Religious Studies J625. These changes will make our assessment more straightforward for students, teachers and examiners. We have also made a minor change to a level of response descriptor in the mark scheme. These changes will be introduced for the 2020 exam series.

- For Components 01–05 (Beliefs and teachings and Practices) the 6-mark question which was previously assessed using a combination of AO1 and AO2, is being replaced by a 6-mark question which will be assessed using **AO1 only**.
- For Components 06–10 (the religion, philosophy and ethics papers) there are two 6-mark questions. One will continue to be assessed using AO1, and the other which previously used a combination of AO1 and AO2, will now be assessed using **AO2 only**.
- In our levels of response descriptors we have changed 'adequate but underdeveloped' to 'satisfactory'.
- We **haven't** changed 15 mark questions which are assessed using a combination of AO1 and AO2, or made any changes to the specification content.

How are we supporting you?

We have updated the sample assessment materials to reflect these changes for 'Christianity Beliefs and teachings and Practices', 'Religion, philosophy and ethics in the modern world from a **Christian** perspective', so you can see what our new question papers and mark schemes will look like. These can be found under the assessment tab on the GCSE Religious Studies qualification pages. We will update the sample assessment materials for the remaining components ready for teaching in September 2019.

In September we are hosting a webinar which will add further clarification to this update, and answer any questions which this might raise. Look out for more information on how to book your space on this in the next few weeks.

In September we will also provide a candidate exemplar resource, which will provide more details about these changes to help your students become familiar with the knowledge and skills needed in our qualification.

If you would like further information please contact the Religious Studies Subject Advisor on 01223 553998 or email religious.studies@ocr.org.uk.

Commentaries and responses

J625/01

1d. Outline why Easter is important to Christians. (6)

Response

Easter is important to Christians because it's when they remember that Jesus came alive again after he had been killed on the cross. People found his tomb empty and saw him alive. Some Christians believe it is the most important day for Christians because it shows Jesus overcame death. This shows he was God because he is omnipotent and can do anything. Christians believe they will also rise from the dead like Jesus and live forever. This is stated in their creeds. The Easter is also important because it helps Christians to deal with the thought of death. Some Christians think Jesus' death is more important because he saved the world from sin. Easter is also important because it is a joyful time for Christians and they have special services. Easter eggs and Easter cards are also important at this time.

Commentary

This response is assessed using the levels of response for AO1 - which require candidates to:

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief including

- beliefs, practices and sources of authority
- influence on individuals, communities and societies
- similarities and differences within and/or between religions and their beliefs.

A response does not need to meet the requirements of all the bullet points in a level descriptor to be judged to have achieved that level. The mark within the level is awarded according to the extent to which the response matches the bullet points which have been addressed.

The command word 'Outline' for this question is intended to direct candidates to offer a concise response.

This response can be judged as a satisfactory response, meeting the most of requirements of Level 2.

There is a satisfactory demonstration of knowledge and understanding. The response sets the scene with the reference to the crucifixion and then concentrates briefly on the events of Easter Day, which is correct, rather than for example, the events of Good Friday. It refers to how the day is significant because of the empty tomb being discovered and people seeing Jesus alive.

The response shows satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the breadth of the issue by referring several reasons as to why Easter is important and to key Christian beliefs about resurrection and the power of God: that Jesus overcame death; that this exhibits the power of God; that Jesus was God and that Jesus resurrection will make resurrection possible for all Christians. The technical term omnipotence is used correctly.

The reference to the creeds, which is vague, can be credited as a reference to an appropriate Source of Wisdom and Authority.

There is a reference to a different view that some Christians think Jesus death is more important. This aspect of the response is weak rather than satisfactory.

The response states the importance of Easter as a joyful day and that there are special services. These points are not developed and along with the statement that Easter eggs and cards are important, which is also not developed, demonstrate weak knowledge and understanding of the influence on individuals, communities and societies.

So the response contains a mixture of achievement at Level 1 and 2 but the knowledge and understanding of the significance of Easter for Christians along with a reference to a source of wisdom and authority are sufficient to allow the response to be judged as Level 2 / 4 Marks even though the final statements are vague and under developed.

To achieve Level 3, the response would need to offer more detail about the events of Easter day. For example, the discovery of the empty tomb by the women (not people) and that Jesus spoke to them. The belief that Jesus' resurrection means Christians will be raised as well could be supported with a reference to a source of wisdom and authority such as Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15. The gist of Paul's message would be acceptable as biblical references are not expected or required. The final section would need to be developed to show how Easter is important in Christian church celebrations, for example how the church may be decorated with flowers and the restrained and solemn atmosphere of Lent is dispelled. The response could also be expanded to show the effect of this festival on individuals, communities and societies. This could be done by a brief explanation of the significance of Easter eggs as symbol of new life and Easter events as opportunities for Christians and non Christians to share the joy of the Easter message.

AO1 – Level 2 – 4 marks out of 6

J625/02

1d. Describe the importance of Salah as direct communication with Allah. (6)

Response

Salah means daily prayer, five times a day. Muslims make their intention to pray to Allah alone, so Salah is just about you and God. There is nobody in between to say your prayers for you: Muslims don't pray to Muhammad or use any statues or idols in their prayers. These are not allowed because they take the mind away from Allah.

Muhammad used to pray five times a day and so Muslims follow his example. He taught Muslims to believe in only one God and to do the right things, according to the Qur'an. Therefore, when Muslims pray, they think about what Allah says in the Qur'an. They listen to words of the Qur'an in prayer and then do what Allah says in their lives afterwards. It's a way of Allah communicating to them in prayer.

Commentary

This response makes a satisfactory demonstration of knowledge and understanding according to the demands of the question. The meaning of Salah in terms of the five daily prayers, a Pillar of Islam, is demonstrated. Some understanding of influence on this upon individual Muslims in their daily lives is given.

Mention is made of the intention to pray. More details of the stages of prayer might be added, in order to demonstrate good knowledge, and add to depth to the answer. For example, the action of standing and bowing placing hands on the knees, putting aside all of concerns besides Allah.

Understanding is shown in the reference to Muslims praying only to God without any intercessors. The action of prostrating, placing the forehead on the ground in deference to Allah, could be added to show knowledge of further actions during prayer and show understanding that this is a deep moment in which a Muslim feels fully focused on Allah. This could be expanded upon to show understanding that the communication is like a master-servant relationship: Muslims are required to obey and find peace through serving their Lord.

Reference is made in general terms to sources of wisdom and authority: to Muhammad's example in praying five times a day and reading out words from the Qur'an. To develop this and show good knowledge, specific references to communication in Salah could be added, such as from the Qur'an 2:186, which is referenced in the specification. Another possible reference is to the Qur'an 50:16, which suggests that Allah is closer to a believer's heart than their jugular vein.

Adding information of personal du'a requests, made at the end of Salah, when a Muslim cups their hands and asks Allah's mercy and any particular requests that they have, would add significantly to addressing the 'communication' aspect of the question. Nevertheless, this is a good answer which, marked according to the best fit levels of response criteria, fulfils satisfactory knowledge and understanding, given the demands of the examination and the expectations reasonable from an average 16-year-old candidate.

The question does not demand a consideration of differences between Muslims, because all would recognise the importance of communication with Allah. Different aspects of this, if raised, could be credited, such as slight differences between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims in prayer, but these are not necessary in order to gain full marks in responding to this particular question.

AO1 – Level 2 - 4 marks out of 6

J625/03

1d. Outline the importance of the covenant to the Jews (6)**Response**

The covenant made with Abraham symbolised the start of the Jewish people and their relationship with God. The covenant was then developed when Moses received the law on Mount Sinai. The covenant shows how God is involved in human life and that he cares continuously. Abraham went to great lengths for God so it reminds all Jews of how they should keep to the agreement he made. The Torah is now the basis of the covenant. It is a crucial part to Jewish faith, as Jews believe that true freedom only comes with the law. As such, the covenant with Moses gives structure to Jews' lives, as it includes the mitzvot. All Jews were present at the time so it symbolises togetherness, another key aspect to Jewish life.

Commentary

This response was classed as 'satisfactory' and was awarded a Level 2 (4 marks). The candidate shows an understanding of the concept of 'covenant'. They have shown a slightly superficial knowledge of the covenants with Abraham and Moses, without going into much detail about what each agreement contains. There is no reference to the Promised Land, numerous descendants and the son promised to Abraham. Likewise, examples of the mitzvot might have added depth to the response and demonstrated the impact that the covenant has on different communities. The candidate recognises the binding nature of the agreement and there is an awareness of sources of wisdom and authority. Breadth of knowledge and understanding is reflected by the observation that the entire Jewish nation was present at Sinai.

AO1 – Level 2 – 4 marks out of 6

J625/04

1d. Outline why the story of the defeat of Mara is important for Buddhists. (6)

Response

The defeat of Mara might be important to Buddhists because they might be suffering because they get angry when they don't get what they want. They might remember that it is craving for things leads to suffering but that it is possible to overcome this suffering. They might remember the story of the Buddha who ignored Mara, his armies and his daughters because these would only lead him to suffering. The Buddha meditated and by focusing his mind he managed to defeat these thoughts that would cause suffering. A Buddhist might try to meditate like the Buddha so that they can overcome being angry and become peaceful like the Buddha.

Commentary

This is a satisfactory response and would get a Level 2 (4/6 marks). This is because the candidate has shown that they understand the story of the defeat of Mara and how a Buddhist might use this story in their own lives to help them overcome suffering. However, the candidate has not given more than one different point of view, for example they could have talked about how a Buddhist might see this story as symbolic story about using meditation to help develop and control the mind so that one does not have negative thoughts that might lead to unhelpful actions. The candidate has also not linked this story to any sources of wisdom or authority for example, they could have said that this story is found in the Pali Canon or quoted from the story itself.

AO1 – Level 2 – 4 marks out of 6

J625/05

1d. Describe different Hindu views about the connection between karma and rebirth. (6)

Response

Hindus believe that they are all born with atman (a soul) and that this doesn't die when their body does but instead moves on into a different body. This happens over and over again, and the point of Hinduism is to stop that cycle and become liberated in moksha. It is difficult to become liberated because of karma. Karma means that every action has a consequence and that consequence happens in their future lives. How you react to the things that happen to you creates karma too so it's potentially an endless cycle because you can make future lives better by doing good things and accepting your karma, but you can't get rid of it entirely however good you are. Having really good karma means you will still be reborn, you'll just have a nice life. A lot of Hindu teachings are about how you do get rid of it, or make it let go of your atman, so that you can go to moksha.

Commentary

This response would gain a Level 2 (4 marks out of the available 6). While the candidate demonstrates clear knowledge and understanding of what karma is and the role it plays in determining rebirth there is a lack of depth in that account. The capacity of karma to be positive or negative is implied rather than explicitly engaged with. In addition, the response does not really address the requirement to describe different views; there is a potential lead in to such a discussion in the final sentence, but this requires further development before it can be considered a full response to the question.

Overall the response is satisfactory in the knowledge and understanding of Hindu concepts which it demonstrates but the breadth and/or depth required for the top level is not present.

AO1 – Level 2 – 4 marks out of 6

J625/06

3c. Explain why Christians differ in their support for social justice. (6)**Response**

Social justice means no one in society is treated differently because of their race or colour or if they are rich or poor. Things in society should be fair.

Christians rely on the Bible and their church leaders to tell them how to behave but these views are not always very clear about what should be done. It depends how Christians interpret the Bible. This explains why Christians differ in their support.

For example, some Christians think supporting social justice is too political and Christians should avoid that. Christianity is above party politics. This is because Jesus told people to preach the gospel; he didn't say they should become politicians. Evangelism is more important than making society fairer. St Paul didn't try to change the Roman world he lived in.

Other Christians think social justice is very important and will support it strongly. This is because all people are children of God. Jesus helped all kinds of people and stood up for outcasts like the people who had leprosy, they think Christians have to do the same. Martin Luther King is an example when he led marches to get black Americans the same rights as whites. There is even a story Jesus told about how you can't get to heaven unless you help people.

Some Christians think it is right to use physical force to make life more equal and fairer for people. This happened in South America.

Commentary

This is a satisfactory attempt to respond to the topic.

There is an appropriate, if not perfect, definition of social justice. One of the underlying reasons for Christians differing in their views, because of differing interpretations of texts (Bible), is explained. The topic in the question is analysed through satisfactory explanations of the rationale of the views of differing groups of Christians. However, the view of Christians who support the use of physical force in the final paragraph is not explained or analysed.

There is a good selection of appropriate sources of wisdom and authority with reference to Jesus' command to preach the gospel, his actions in helping outcasts and the parable of the sheep and the goats (implied). The reference to Paul is appropriate if it is taken to refer to his view that Government is established by God and should not be challenged. Although the detail of these sources of wisdom and authority offered and the explanation of their significance in support the view of Christian groups about social justice is satisfactory overall.

The response contains satisfactory religious knowledge and it is explained briefly and made relevant, demonstrating satisfactory analysis.

The response does not mention any denominations by name but the views of different Christian groups are clearly identified, explained and the underlying reason for the view is analysed in a limited way.

This response meets all of the criteria / bullet points for a satisfactory response (Level 2) and should be awarded 4 marks. Positive awarding means that the lack of explanation for Christians who would be prepared to use violence to support social justice is ignored.

This response is obviously just one possible way of responding to the question. This response could have been improved if it:

- offered more detail about the sources of wisdom and authority and possibly a reference to the teaching in the book of Amos or for example to the words of Martin L King or Desmond Tutu or reference to the UDHR.
- explained the rationale behind the views of Christians who are prepared to use violence
- offered up to date examples of Christians working for social justice and their reasons for doing so.

AO2 – Level 2 – 4 marks out of 6

J625/07

2c. Compare different Muslim beliefs about Allah's relationship with humanity. (6)

Response

Allah cannot have any relationship with humanity because Muslims cannot see Allah. It also says in the Qur'an firmly that Jesus was not the Son of God because Allah does not have any offspring. Muslims cannot see Allah but they think of Him as All-Powerful and know that Allah is out there and can do anything.

Another Muslim belief about Allah's relationship with humanity is that He made us. Muslims know that Allah created the whole universe and everything in it in 6 days, according to the Qur'an. If He wants, He can make an earthquake happen. Therefore, Muslims have fear and respect for Allah and want to impress Him so that they can get to heaven when they die.

Commentary

There are aspects of this response which might not necessarily be expected, or approach the question from a different way, particularly the reference to Jesus not being a Son of God. Nevertheless, this has been made relevant to the terms of the question about 'relationship' and so is creditworthy.

Sources of Wisdom and Authority have only been referred to generally with the reference to the Qur'an's teachings about Jesus and about creation. The reference to Allah being able to make an earthquake happen may be an implicit reference to the Qur'an, as this is mentioned, however it is unclear whether this is so here. No direct quotation is given. Whilst it is not essential to give one, more could have been said about what the Qur'an states and Muhammad said about humanity's relationship with Allah. The Qur'an 96:1-8, referenced in the specification, is relevant here, as it mentions Allah's position as creator and the importance of humankind giving submission to Him – not thinking they can do everything by themselves.

The religious knowledge shown here shows some breadth but could be developed in more depth. The significance of the topic on how Muslims live their lives today is mentioned in the last sentence but could be further expanded upon.

The command word used in the question is to compare. This response finds two different perspectives on Muslims and their relationship with Allah: not as family but as a powerful creator. Nevertheless, comparison is only implicit, not developed. Therefore, the best fit level of response is that the answer just moves into level 2.

To improve this answer, clearer definition of different views and comparison of them should be made. Muslims believe Allah is creator and controls their lives, in the belief in predestination. Another perspective is that Allah grants Muslims free will to act on which they are judged in the Afterlife. Whilst these are not the only different perspectives which could be credited, they make a good comparison.

With regards to AO2, it is important to make analysis and evaluation, showing the significance of this topic in the beliefs and practice of Muslims. Description and knowledge are not what is being assessed. So, although this response does demonstrate some knowledge of the position of Jesus and of creation, it needs to go further in analysing and adding to it to show how Muslim beliefs about Allah's relationship with humanity have significance.

AO2 - Level 2 – 3 marks out of 6

J625/08

1c. Explain Jewish attitudes towards the different purposes of the family. (6)

Response

Family is important in Judaism for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the Jews are considered to be God's 'chosen people' so they can be described as a family rather than a religion or race. Many Jews will recognise this special connection by having a mezuzah on their doorpost, a symbol of God's presence in their house. They will also celebrate, as a family, a number of festivals across the Jewish year which remember the difficulties faced by their ancestors. At these times, certain members of the family will play a key role; for example, on Shabbat the mother will light two candles at sunset and say prayers to welcome the Sabbath bride. This is because it is generally seen as the woman's responsibility to run a home that is calm and spiritual for her family. Some Progressive Jews may not have such clear differences in gender roles. The family is also seen as an environment where Jewish children can learn important traditions and practices. This includes going to the synagogue and eating kosher food.

Commentary

This response was classed as 'good' and was awarded a Level 3 (5/6 marks). The candidate has some good knowledge of the religion, starting with the recognition that the entire Jewish people might be seen as a family. They make informed observations about the role that festivals play. There is some acknowledgement of differences between different Jewish denominations and this is accurate, although brief. The candidate has made the connection between the home and the family and the way that many traditions are perpetuated within that context. Relevant examples are provided. They have also recognized that the home is a religious building. They might have discussed the role that rites of passage play in the Jewish tradition and been clearer about Jewish identity being passed through the mother. Some reference might have been made to the Shema.

AO2 - Level 3 – 5 out of 6 marks

J625/09

3c. Explain why Buddhists might think forgiveness is important. (6)

Response

Anger is one of the Three Poisons which Buddhists believe keeps someone trapped in samsara. The Wheel of life in Tibetan Buddhism shows the Three Poisons, anger, greed and ignorance as three animals chasing each other's tails forever. This shows that each of these emotions keeps someone trapped in samsara. Forgiveness is a way of overcoming anger and breaking the vicious circle so that someone can become enlightened. Even for Theravada Buddhists forgiveness will be important as not forgiving people causes suffering and the Buddha taught that suffering is one of the Four Noble Truths that his teaching seeks to overcome. Buddhists would try to overcome suffering by following the Eightfold Path including Right Action, which might include forgiving people if they hurt you.

Commentary

There is clear reference to sources of Wisdom and Authority through the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path and the Three Poisons. These are appropriately applied to the question. There is consideration of the ways in which forgiveness would be significant to both Theravada and Tibetan Buddhists, although this could be more developed, and some mention could be made of the key differences between them. The question is clearly focussed on the importance of forgiveness and does not concentrate only on describing teachings that support the idea of forgiveness in Buddhism.

AO2 - Level 3 – 5 out of 6 marks

J625/10

3c. Explain why Hindus might have different views on using violence to achieve peace. (6)

Response

Peace is an important value for Hindus because they have a virtue called ahimsa. This means not doing any harm and because it is a virtue they will get good karma and blessings if they are peaceful. So a lot of Hindus would object to violence. But sometimes there is no other way to achieve things and if violence is necessary to save a lot of other lives or to prevent something terrible from happening then acting to stop those things would also get a Hindu good karma so the answer isn't obvious. Different people have different duties in life, and if your duty is to protect other people then being violent to achieve that will be seen as a good thing, but if it's not your duty then ahimsa is part of your duty instead, and you shouldn't be violent even if your motive is good because Krishna says that it is better to do your own duty badly than to do another person's well.

Commentary

This response would gain a Level 3 (5 marks out of the available 6). The candidate is clearly aware that this is not a clear-cut issue, since they recognise that good karma could arise from both peacefulness and violence depending on the specific circumstances. The response also shows a recognition of the connection between virtue and dharma, it does not use the term dharma however and the idea that dharma has both personal and universal expression is implied rather than explained explicitly. Therefore, there is some recognition of different perspectives on the issue within Hinduism, but lacking in the development necessary to achieve full marks.

AO2 – Level 3 – 5 out of 6 marks

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