

**GCSE (9-1)**

**Examiners' report**

# **RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

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**J625**

For first teaching in 2016

**J625/03 Summer 2022 series**

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Paper 3 series overview .....	4
Question 1 (a) .....	6
Question 1 (b) .....	6
Question 1 (c) .....	7
Question 1 (d) .....	8
Question 1 (e) .....	10
Question 2 (a) .....	10
Question 2 (b) .....	11
Question 2 (c) .....	11
Question 2 (d) .....	12
Question 2 (e) .....	13

## Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate responses are also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the exam paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

### Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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## Paper 3 series overview

J625/03 is a one-hour paper assessing Beliefs and teachings & Practices for Judaism. It includes two 30-mark questions, each broken down into five parts. There are three questions worth 3 marks, followed by a 6-mark and a 15-mark question. Both assessment objectives are assessed during the paper. The 3- and 6-mark questions target AO1. On the 15-mark questions, both AO1 and AO2 are assessed. Candidates must attempt all parts of the paper and extra marks are given for spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Candidates need to have a good knowledge and understanding of Jewish beliefs, practices, and teachings. They must also be able to analyse and evaluate the issues that these aspects of the faith might raise. In doing so they should refer to sources of wisdom and authority. Candidates must be able to use the available time effectively and communicate with appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar. These are assessed in different ways in the two part (e) questions. Candidates are not penalised for misspelling words transliterated from the Hebrew.

The time spent on questions should be dictated by the number of marks available. It is crucial that candidates devote adequate time and effort to part (e) responses. The space available in the answer booklet is indicative of how much a candidate should write for each question. Time-consuming and complicated essay planning is rarely of benefit although a few brief notes and some acronyms can be of help. Part (e) questions primarily deal with analysis and evaluation. Up to 3 marks were given for knowledge and understanding, and these were often displayed. It is important for candidates to make clear reference to sources of wisdom and authority. Candidates are no longer required to overtly present their own opinion. One of the main challenges for candidates following this specification is to address both assessment objectives in the part (e) questions. A top level response will normally incorporate good knowledge and understanding of the topic at hand.

There were very many examples of good knowledge, understanding, analysis and evaluation. After the enforced break, it is encouraging to observe that candidates are performing as well as ever. Centres should take great satisfaction from this. Many different effective revision strategies were apparent and exemplary teaching was evident in the way candidates approached the questions. Centres are clearly preparing candidates well for the paper. In general, candidates made good use of the available time. Examiners reported that a small number of candidates struggled with their timing this year. Occasionally handwriting can be difficult to read. They were able to make clear references to sacred texts and they communicated effectively.

It remains the case that some candidates confuse Judaism with other world faiths, especially Christianity and Islam. Sometimes this might just be a slip of the pen. On other occasions, candidates are presenting quotations from the New Testament as relevant sources of wisdom and authority in the Judaism paper.

### Assessment for learning

Candidates are required to reflect a range of Jewish beliefs, and this understandably leads to discussion of the Orthodox and Progressive traditions. At times this can be rather simplistic and stereotyped.

#### Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:

- allocated time for each question relative to the number of marks available
- made effective use of subject specific terminology
- read questions carefully before answering.

#### Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:

- confused different Jewish festivals
- confused the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants
- confused Jewish beliefs with those of another faith.

### Question 1 (a)

1 (a) Give **three** features of the Shabbat meal.

1 .....

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2 .....

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3 .....

.....

[3]

This question was often well answered. Examiners did credit more generic responses like 'bread', 'wine', 'blessings' and so on. Some candidates identified the white tablecloth, kiddush, the challot cover and so on. There was a tendency, however, for candidates to confuse the meal with both Havdalah, Rosh Hashanah, and the Seder meal. As such, there were many references to a plaited candle, a spice box, parsley, and bitter herbs.

### Question 1 (b)

(b) Describe **one** difference between body and soul in Judaism.

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[3]

Jewish beliefs about the body and soul and life after death are not always uniform and marking of the question reflected this. The main concern expressed by examiners was that candidates sometimes did not identify a 'difference' between the body and soul. Only the soul was sometimes described, with no reference to the body. This obviously significantly impacted on the number of marks attained. A difference as obvious as physical/spiritual formed the basis for further development and the chance to achieve full marks.

**Question 1 (c)**

(c) Describe the use of the Huppah in a Jewish marriage ceremony.

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**[3]**

If candidates knew what the Huppah was, they achieved well on this question. Examiners credited a basic description of what the Huppah is, what it represents and how it is used during the ceremony. Some candidates mistakenly identified the Huppah as the breaking of the glass, the veil or 'promises'. Others wrote as though it was the entire ceremony. What follows is from a candidate struggling to achieve marks without any clear awareness of the nature of the Huppah. This sort of response was not uncommon.

**Exemplar 1**

..... The use of the Huppah in a Jewish marriage ceremony is to show their faith to fellow Jews. They use a Huppah because to show to other Jews the purpose of marriage and to show their respect. [3]

### Question 1 (d)

(d) Outline why the covenant with Abraham is significant for many Jews.

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..... [6]

The best responses explored the full range of the covenant and how the different components remain significant for Jews today. Candidates were often able to discuss the nature of monotheism and Abraham’s strength of faith. In addition, they were often credited for explaining the significance of circumcision in Judaism. The idea of the Promised Land was often reflected on and how it is important in contemporary Jewish thought. Less successful responses tended to focus on just one facet, or to confuse the covenant with that made with Moses. The following response was classed as good. Although it omits clear reference to monotheism, it recognises the significance of the covenant in terms of the Promised Land, circumcision, Abraham’s commitment, the idea of ‘chosen’ and the link to Sinai.

#### Assessment for learning



Candidates need to be able to differentiate between the covenants made with Abraham and Moses.



## Exemplar 2

The covenant with Abraham holds significance as it was the first covenant between God and the Jews and ultimately lead them into becoming his 'chosen people'. Abraham is often referred to as the founder of Judaism as it was he who travelled to Canaan at God's order and set good examples that resulted in him being promised the land from the border of Egypt to the Euphrates river by God. This covenant symbolises the unity of God and his chosen people and is a foundation block to all Jewish belief - Jews believe that the covenant is an important deal that they must uphold to honour <sup>God</sup> that ~~Jesus~~ has given.

It is also significant as ~~it is the~~ ~~the~~ the sole reason Jews exist. Without the covenant God wouldn't have given Sarah and Abraham their desired child to then bring up in their faith and so on. This covenant is the literal beginning of Judaism, therefore holding significance. It also ties into Moses' covenant for following the mitzvot and serves a reminder to what rules they're expected to follow and how to live good lives (not example: circumcision).

[6]

### Question 1 (e)

(e) 'All Jewish communities need a synagogue.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Judaism.
- Refer to sources of wisdom and authority.

[15]

 Spelling, punctuation and grammar [3]

This 15-mark question proved to be accessible to most candidates. Occasional effective use was made of variations in different Jewish movements. Candidates discussed the use of the synagogue as a community centre, as well as a place of worship and study. They also examined the role of the different features of the synagogue in worship. Many referenced times in Jewish history when a synagogue has not been present and they also explored the role of the home in worship. Less successful responses were inclined towards generalisations about places of worship and different Jewish traditions. As had been observed before, it might be advisable for candidates to avoid discussing specific traditions, unless they are confident in their understanding. There was clear reference to sources of wisdom and authority and candidates often discussed the role of the Shekinah. That said, some candidates were inclined to quote from New Testament sources. Overall, responses were detailed and reflected different viewpoints, personal opinion, and an understanding of the Jewish tradition.

### Question 2 (a)

2 (a) Describe the Jewish belief in G-d as all good.

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..... [3]

Some candidates simply listed different qualities of G-d – omnipotent, omnipresent, and so on - rather than reflecting on his omnibenevolence. Others discussed various theodicies. The most successful responses either gave examples of his goodness in general terms like 'G-d is just' or 'G-d is loving' or provided instances from Jewish history like leading the Jews to the Promised Land or making the covenant with them.

### Question 2 (b)

(b) State **three** ways in which Jews celebrate Sukkot.

1 .....

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2 .....

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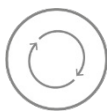
3 .....

.....

[3]

The most successful responses identified the sukkah as a tabernacle, booth, hut, or shelter. Some candidates described it as a tent but were still able to achieve marks if they could explain how it is used. Some identified the four species but became confused about they related to the sukkah. The least successful responses either provided completely generic responses or confused Sukkot with another festival, often Shavuot.

#### Assessment for learning



Candidates need to be clear about the different festivals and which traditions are involved. As far as Sukkot is concerned, more time might be spent reflecting on the four species.

### Question 2 (c)

(c) Give **three** ethical mitzvot.

1 .....

.....

2 .....

.....

3 .....

.....

[3]

This question was generally very well answered. Very many candidates were able to cite relevant examples from the Ten Commandments. Examiners also credited more general responses like tikkun olam and pikuach nefesh. A significant minority of candidates clearly confused ethical and ritual mitzvot. They may have been unfamiliar with the term 'ethical'. The following example demonstrates the confusion felt by some over what constitutes an ethical mitzvot.

Exemplar 3

- 1. Only believe in one G-d
- 2. Only believe in one creation story
- 3. Human error in the Torah

[3]

Question 2 (d)

(d) Outline why teaching children to pray is important for many Jews.

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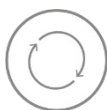
.....

.....

[6]

The most successful responses included reference to the different purposes of prayer – adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Good use was made of specific prayers, especially the Amidah and the Shema. Many did not mention that prayer is a mitzvah, and some responses were a little generic. Candidates often correctly identified the necessity for Jews to pass on tradition through their children for the faith to thrive in the future. Sometimes references were made to the role of Jews in the synagogue and the need for a minyan. Less successful responses dwelt exclusively on preparations for Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

**Assessment for learning**



Candidates must aim to make responses on prayer specific to Judaism. Stronger responses avoid a completely generic explanation, equally applicable to Christianity or Islam.

## Question 2 (e)

(e)\* 'Jews need the Torah to provide structure to their lives.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Judaism.
- Refer to sources of wisdom and authority.

**[15]**

Overall, candidates found this question to be accessible, although, once again, examiners were concerned at the misrepresentation of different Jewish traditions. There was a tendency for candidates to focus their discussion on whether the Torah was still relevant in contemporary society. This approach had some merit although sometimes did not address the idea of 'structure' in the stimulus. This was sometimes replaced by a discussion about the relevance of the Torah, or whether it is outdated. Where the stimulus was fully addressed, candidates informed their discussion with plenty of examples of how the Torah impacts on all aspects of Jewish life – food, festivals, relationships and so on. Some went on to consider the way that the Torah, and the structure it can impose, affects free will. The most successful responses saw clear evaluation of different points of view. The nature of the subject area meant that sources of wisdom and authority were regularly referenced.

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