

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

J625

For first teaching in 2016

J625/01 Summer 2022 series

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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

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Paper 1 series overview

J625/01 examines the Beliefs and teachings & Practices part of the GCSE Religious Studies specification for Christianity. Candidates are required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of those beliefs, teachings and practices (AO1) in all parts of each question and to show their ability to analyse and evaluate aspects of belief, teachings and practices (AO2) in part (e). Candidates are also required to demonstrate knowledge of sources of wisdom and authority which underpin the beliefs, teaching and practices as well as knowledge of common and divergent views within Christianity, about the issue raised in the evaluative section of each question (part (e)).

The nature of the specification requires some quite specific questions to be asked but as always, examiners applied the principle of positive awarding wherever possible and used the levels of response to give credit to any appropriate responses, some of which did not feature in the mark scheme, which is an indicative document rather than a proscriptive one.

This paper proved accessible, eliciting a wide range of responses. Outstanding knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs and teachings and practices was exhibited by some candidates and well-developed analytical and evaluative skills were also clearly evident. The majority of candidates seemed familiar with the rubric expectations of part (e) mentioned above. A broad view is taken by examiners of the meaning of sources of wisdom and authority to include scripture, tradition, statements of churches, lives and examples and teachings of key figures in the religion and significant events in the history of the religion. Some candidates offered very specific knowledge. However, examiners reported that a significant number of candidates did not identify any sources of wisdom and authority and thus limited their responses to Level 1 despite exhibiting otherwise sound knowledge, gaining only 1 mark for AO1 out of a possible 3 marks.

The structured format of the response sections of the answer booklet seemed to help candidates to focus their responses and limit the amount they wrote for the 3 mark parts of the questions, (a)-(c) and the 6 mark parts (d). Question 1(c) for example required only three words while 2(a) only required three short statements. Despite the answer booklet containing additional answer sheets some candidates who needed more space than the booklet provides for parts (d) and (e) continued their responses on unlined sections of the paper and even around the sides of their response. This is not helpful for the scanning process which loads the responses on to the marking system or for the examiners, who will always do their best to read whatever the candidate writes. Even so, the potential for poor organisation and tiny and untidy handwriting to compromise the flow of the argument in a response is potentially significant.

Part (d) of both questions required sound knowledge of the topics, showing awareness of different beliefs and/or practices and knowledge of sources of wisdom and authority underpinning them.

In part (e), analysis and evaluation (AO2) accounts for 12 of the 15 marks. There were examples of well thought out and structured discussions, referring to the views of more than one Christian group which is a specification requirement. The best responses were underpinned with sound knowledge and understanding and referred accurately to some kind of appropriate source(s) of wisdom or authority. Some candidates offered a personal viewpoint which is not a requirement of the evaluative question and can inhibit the flow of the response. Similarly some responses included a paragraph about the view of an atheist. This can not be credited as the rubric requires that the discussion is to be focused on Christianity. Good responses demonstrated some judgement on the arguments presented, based on evidence and made comments throughout the discussion, ending with a balanced conclusion.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• offered sound knowledge of beliefs and teachings• identified common and divergent views and practices within Christianity• demonstrated the ability to weigh arguments supported by sources of wisdom and authority• discussed an issue within Christianity demonstrating the ability to make judgements about the views and offer a balanced conclusion to the discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lacked secure and detailed knowledge of beliefs and teachings• tended to offer vague references to beliefs and practices• did not include references to sources of wisdom and authority especially in the (e) parts• presented limited knowledge of views without comment or evaluation and offered no appropriate conclusion to the discussion.

Question 1 (a)

1 (a) Describe what Christians mean when they say that God is benevolent.

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This question proved accessible to candidates, most of whom were able to offer some creditworthy material, securing some if not all of the marks. Responses commonly referred to benevolence as meaning loving or all-loving. To achieve full marks candidates needed to extend their definition with further development as in the exemplar where the loving nature of God is shown in the sacrifice of his Son on the cross. The exemplar is a good demonstration of this sort of response.

Exemplar 1

Benevolent means all loving. Christians believe God is benevolent because he has shown that he cares for them. For example God sent his son Jesus to sacrifice himself for the atonement of human sin. [3]

Responding to 3-mark questions with the command words Describe or Outline.

Candidates need to make sure their responses offer three points or a statement with development and further development or exemplification to achieve the 3 marks.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Outline **one** of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount.

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The best responses to this part offered accurate outlines of, for example; the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, the Narrow Gateway, Building on the Rock and the Golden Rule. However, some responses referred to teachings which are not found in the Sermon on the Mount and which could not be credited. Other responses offered more than one teaching. Only the first teaching offered could be credited.

Question 1 (c)

(c) State **three** things that are said or done during charismatic worship.

1

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2

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3

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..... [3]

A high proportion of responses accurately referred to aspects of charismatic worship, for example; singing, dancing, clapping, slain in the spirit, healing and speaking in tongues. The technical term glossolalia appeared in many responses. In the exemplar the candidate has correctly identified three things that are said or done and the candidate has wasted no time by giving just a one word response for each.

Confusion with liturgical worship was noted in some responses. For example 'set prayers' could not be accepted.

Some responses referred to more than three things with only the first two and the fourth being correct. The marking of this sort of response requires examiners to accept the first three responses and as a result some responses only gained 2 out of the 3 available marks.

Exemplar 2

- 1 Speak in tongues.....
-
- 2 sing hymns.....
-
- 3 dance.....

Responses listing more than the required number of answers

If the question asks for **three** responses, only three will be credited and in the order they are written. For example, if four responses are offered of which three are correct but the third response in the list is incorrect, only 2 marks can be given as the fourth response has to be ignored. The format of the response space on the exam paper is designed to guide candidates to provide three responses only.

Question 1 (d)

(d) Outline Christian beliefs about why God allows evil and suffering.

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This question proved accessible and most candidates had no problems in explaining with examples, at least one reason for God allowing evil and suffering. There were examples of good descriptions of the idea that evil is a test with reference to Job or that it is a result of God giving humans free will as described in Genesis in the narrative of the Fall. The best responses described the theodicies of Irenaeus, Augustine and Hick to explore these ideas. These were explained, in context of the question, with varied levels of success. Good references to the Fall and Job were also evident. Some responses focused on outlining the problem of evil referring, for example, to the inconsistent triad and the theological debate about this without connecting it to the question. Similarly, some described moral and natural evil but did not connect it to the idea of why God allows evil and suffering. For this question the various theodicies, the narrative of the Fall and the story of Job were good examples of sources of wisdom and authority.

Part d of each question is assessing knowledge and understanding

Responses to 1(d) and 2(d) should focus on knowledge of the teaching or the subject of the question. These questions do not require candidates to express views, weigh the points of view against each other or come to a conclusion.

Question 1 (e)

(e) 'Christian beliefs about life after death mean that a funeral should never be a sad occasion.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

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

[15]

 Spelling, punctuation and grammar **[3]**

The stimulus was understood and addressed with varying degrees of success by the majority of candidates so there was a full range of performance with some engaged discussions and others that showed little specialist Religious Studies knowledge. Simplistic responses focused on the view that a funeral would be happy if the deceased had been a Christian and would therefore be going to heaven while the doubt about heaven or hell as a destination for the deceased could lead to a funeral being sad.

Other responses showed good knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs about life after death referring for example to Jesus' words used in the funeral service "I am the resurrection and the life" or his words in the fourth Gospel about there being "many rooms in my father's house". The beliefs were not always successfully related to the issue in the stimulus however. Knowledge of funerals was generally not strong and some candidates clearly struggled to identify detailed arguments against the statement in the stimulus. There were however examples of balanced conclusions, which referred to the comfort and possible joy of the Christian hope being muted by the inevitable and justifiable sadness of losing a loved one.

Question 2 (a)

2 (a) State **three** apocalyptic ideas of the early church.

- 1
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- 2
-
- 3
-

[3]

This question proved difficult for many candidates some of whom did not know the meaning of the term apocalyptic. Some did not give any response at all while others offered examples of rules set up by the early church such as 'women should remain silent'. Other responses confused general Christian beliefs about life after death, for example heaven and hell, with apocalyptic. These responses could not gain credit. A tendency to repeat the same point was also evident, for example, Last Judgement and Jesus will come to judge were sometimes offered as two separate points. They could however only gain credit as one point about judgement. Explanation of the teaching was sometimes attempted which was not required nor could it be credited. The focus of responses should have been on knowledge of apocalyptic ideas and the best responses gave three distinct examples such as: the Second Coming, The last Trumpet and Judgement stated succinctly and without explanation, as in the exemplar.

Exemplar 3

- 1 Jesus will return for the Second coming:
- 2 A trumpet will be blown
- 3 living and dead will be judged.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Describe the purpose of human beings according to the biblical accounts of Creation.

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The focus of this question was on the purpose of human beings according to the Genesis creation narratives. Credit was therefore not given for general Christian teaching about the purpose of humans. A high proportion of responses referred correctly to dominion, stewardship or procreation as the purpose of human beings according to the text of Genesis. Others referred to humans being made in the image of God. These responses did not always develop the significance of this to show the partnership between God and humans suggested in Genesis.

Question 2 (c)

(c) Describe why Christians celebrate Christmas.

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..... [3]

Most responses gained 1 mark for the idea that Christians celebrate Christmas because it marks when Jesus was born. The development of many responses was about the significance of his birth which was often exemplified by reference to Jesus as the incarnation of God and to the purpose of his birth to bring salvation through his eventual sacrifice on the cross.

Question 2 (d)

(d) Outline the work of ecumenical communities.

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This question proved challenging for a significant number of candidates. The core idea of ecumenism as cooperation between different churches and denominations was often overlooked, although there was a general sense of Christians working together. Many confused ecumenical communities with charity work sometimes offering explanations of the work of organisations such as CAFOD or Tear fund. Some credit could be given for the idea that ecumenism led to directing the focus of Christians of all denominations towards problems of world poverty or the persecution of Christians but not to responses wholly devoted incorrectly to description of a charity.

There were good responses which offered accurate sketches of the work of ecumenical communities such as Iona, Taizé and Corymeela. For this question identification of ecumenical communities (given in the specification) or to statements from those organisations and others such as the World Council of Churches about the importance of Christians working together, could be accepted as sources of wisdom and authority.

Question 2 (e)*

(e)* 'Baptism should only be for adults.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

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

[15]

The stimulus proved accessible for the range of candidates and almost all responses showed an understanding of the issue to be debated. For some the discussion concentrated on ideas of free will and freedom of choice to be baptised as an adult, against being forced to be a Christian (as expressed by the candidates) by parents making a choice for the child.

Other, better responses showed a good understanding of the nature of infant baptism as a sacrament, the concept of original sin and the support given for infant baptism on the book of Acts. These responses also tended to explain support for adult baptism on the basis of consent and the baptism of Jesus as an adult. Knowledge of different denominational views and practices was often good in terms of content although the attribution of them to particular denominations was sometime inaccurate.

Many responses recognised that confirmation gave the person who had been baptised as an infant the ability to choose and consent to being a member of the church in a way similar to adult baptism. There was sometimes confusion about confirmation as a second baptism in some responses.

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