

**GCSE (9-1)**

**Examiners' report**

# **RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

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**J625**

For first teaching in 2016

**J625/06 Summer 2023 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 answers is 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 question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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## Paper 6 series overview

GCSE Religious Studies Paper 6 is the Religion, philosophy and ethics in the modern world from a Christian perspective paper. It assesses candidate's knowledge and understanding of different philosophical and ethical arguments and their impact and influence in the modern world from the perspective of Christianity, which will have been studied in Component 1. There are four questions, parts (a) to (d), one for each of the four themes of study: Relationships and families, The existence of God/gods/ultimate reality; Religion, peace and conflict; Dialogue within and between religions and non-religious beliefs. All four questions are compulsory and most candidates attempted all the questions.

The paper was well attempted by candidates, the full range of marks were used, and candidates had a good opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. More successful responses demonstrated good examination skills such as a careful reading of the question and were able to select and deploy relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge. In the part (d) essay questions, the more successful responses demonstrated knowledge of a range of views, supported with relevant sources of wisdom and authority, the views of different Christian groups were compared and contrasted and there was evaluation related to the stimulus.

Some candidates were not given many marks for the part (d) essay questions: some presenting very brief and sometimes unspecific views, others presenting views as block of knowledge with a lack of critical analysis and evaluation or conclusion and failing to include any sources of wisdom and authority. Knowledge of the meaning of key terms from the specification was lacking for some candidates, along with specific knowledge relating to the question. In some cases, candidates attempted to apply generic knowledge without targeting their response to what had been asked.

Some candidates could not display many AO2 skills in the part (c) 6 mark questions, where they were required to apply teachings to behaviour and/or attitudes, resulting in descriptive responses that lacked the explanation and application required.

Most candidates were able to refer to sources of wisdom and authority, although there were a significant number of generalised responses not referring to teachings or denominational specifics.

One distinctive feature which differentiated between responses was candidate interpretation of the question. In many circumstances, candidates limited their marks because they did not respond directly to the precise question. Candidates demonstrated religious knowledge but not the exam technique to access the higher marks, for example talking about beliefs and approaches rather than teachings, or listing teachings rather than explaining **one** teaching, describing rather than explaining.

Some candidates were able to respond well to the precise questions and write sophisticated discussions with analysis and evaluation interweaved, leading to a conclusion, for their part (d) response.

There was little evidence of candidates running out of time.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrated good knowledge of key/technical terms</li> <li>• used relevant sources of wisdom and authority in their responses</li> <li>• demonstrated good exam technique and responses were targeted to the specific question</li> <li>• showed knowledge of both similar and different views within Christianity, with correct denominations</li> <li>• were able to compare, critically analyse and evaluate</li> <li>• were able to explain how teaching impacted on belief and behaviour</li> <li>• wrote balanced discussions with reasoned conclusions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• did not know key/technical terms</li> <li>• did not use sources of wisdom and authority</li> <li>• presented their personal opinions and views of atheists</li> <li>• did not take notice of question wording, such as teachings or different attitudes</li> <li>• gave descriptive responses only</li> <li>• presented 'fringe groups' with key doctrinal differences, such as Quakers and the Amish, as mainstream Christian views</li> <li>• gave common sense, generalised response without specific knowledge from the specification content.</li> </ul>

## Question 1 (a)

### 1 Relationships and families

(a) Outline the purpose of the Christian family.

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This was generally well answered with most candidates gaining some marks. The most common responses included reference to procreation/raising children in the Christian faith, being a source of love and support, the model/pattern/social cell for society. Some responses used sources of wisdom and authority, most commonly 'be fruitful and multiply' and the Catholic Catechism that the family is the 'original cell of social life'. There was some confusion between marriage and family, and other common errors were including the idea of evangelism and describing traditional gender roles and the 'nuclear family'.

### Question 1 (b)

(b) Describe different Christian attitudes towards gender discrimination.

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Most candidates were able to gain marks in Level 2 for this question. There was discussion of traditional gender roles, complementarianism and egalitarianism sometimes linked to denominations, not always correctly, and the role of women in the church. There was description of the Roman Catholic Church not ordaining women, with some citing this as an exemption from the Discrimination Act and others wrongly stating that it was in breach of that, some supported this with teaching of Paul. This was often contrasted with the misconception that Quakers are a mainstream, liberal Christian denomination. Reference to Genesis creation was common, while discussion of the differences between Genesis 1 and 2, applied to the issue of gender discrimination, was rarer. Some linked The Fall to the idea of discrimination against women. Less successful responses gained marks for describing gender roles, while more successful responses linked this more explicitly to gender discrimination.

### Question 1 (c)

(c) Explain different Christian attitudes to celibacy.

You should refer to sources of wisdom and authority in your answer.

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Candidates who understood the term mostly achieved marks within Level 2, but some responses had sufficient depth and explanation to be able to access Level 3. Two attitudes to celibacy were commonly discussed, usually focussing on priests/monks/nuns in the Roman Catholic Church versus ‘go forth and multiply’, and the Church of England. More successful responses included the teaching of Paul and were able to apply this to attitudes today. Some candidates incorrectly stated that Church of England priests are required to be celibate and Quakers again were commonly cited as a mainstream, liberal denomination who did not require celibacy. Very few candidates mentioned celibacy as a choice. There was some significant confusion over the term, the most common by far being that it only refers to temporary abstinence from sex before marriage, but it was also confused with contraception and even celebration.

**OCR support**



The OCR glossary for J625/06 is available to support the teaching and learning of key technical terminology from the specification [here](#).



## Question 1 (d)

(d) 'Christians should never use contraception.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Draw on your learning from across your course of study, including reference to beliefs, teachings and practices within Christianity.
- Explain and evaluate the importance of points of view from the perspective of Christianity.

[15]

 Spelling, punctuation and grammar [3]

Most candidates attempted this question and knew what contraception is and that there are different Christian views. Many were able to discuss that the Roman Catholic Church are against contraception, commonly stating that 'go forth and multiply' was the will of God and that procreation was a purpose of marriage. Some more successful responses referred to natural law. Protestants and Quakers were cited as not against it for reason of family planning, children should be wanted and loved, and prevention of STIs. Some candidates correctly outlined recent comments from Catholic cardinals about using condoms to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and the zika virus. The use of natural family planning within the Catholic Church was also referenced. A common misconception was that the Roman Catholic Church is in favour of the withdrawal method (coitus interruptus), which is not correct with reference to the sin of Onan; it is described as 'doubly monstrous'.

A few less successful responses discussed abortion with reference to 'thou shall not kill' and the sanctity of life without any link to contraception.

Many responses presented contrasting knowledge with some comment and comparison, but fell short of reasoned discussion with a balanced conclusion, and so did not move beyond Level 3 for AO2, although some Level 4 and full mark responses were seen.

The quality of spelling, grammar and punctuation was good overall.

### Assessment for learning



Candidates would benefit from developing essay writing skills that include evaluation and analysis, and developing their skills to weave this knowledge into a discussion and argument leading to a conclusion, rather than just presenting contrasting knowledge.

### Misconception



A common misconception was that the Roman Catholic Church is in favour of the withdrawal method (coitus interruptus).

Exemplar 1

Overall, while commands in the Bible could be interpreted as discouraging contraception, it is more convincing that it should sometimes be used as this is reinforced by the Christian value of love.

Exemplar 1 shows a concise, balanced conclusion from a full mark response. It acknowledges both sides of the issue previously discussed and gives a judgement.

Question 2 (a)

2 The existence of God

(a) What is meant by the term miracle?

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Most candidates knew what a miracle was and so were given some marks, with many gaining the full 3 marks available. Common correct responses included 'breaking the laws of nature', 'impossible', 'supernatural,' 'performed by God' often with exemplification, most commonly from a miracle of Jesus. Some candidates only gave examples, which are not a definition of the term and so did not receive marks without a definition to exemplify. Some were not given marks for vague and generalised attempts at definition such as 'unexpected', 'magical', 'amazing', 'wonderful.'

### Question 2 (b)

(b) Describe how God might be revealed through the conscience.

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**[6]**

There were some good responses to this question seen, with description correctly citing the moral argument, Cardinal Newman and Kant. There were also a significant number of generalised/unspecific Level 1 and 2 responses about the voice of God and the holy spirit linked to moral behaviour. However, some candidates did not know what the conscience was, with many only addressing ‘revealed’ and giving accounts of revelation; how God is revealed through visions and dreams, etc. which was not addressing what had been asked. Some candidates mistook conscience for conscious/consciousness and wrote about God taking over your conscious self or losing consciousness when ‘slain in the spirit’.

#### OCR support



The OCR glossary for J625/06 is available to support the teaching and learning of key technical terminology from the specification [here](#).

### Question 2 (c)

(c) Explain why there are different Christian views about what God is like.

You should refer to sources of wisdom and authority in your answer.

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Many candidates gave descriptions about what the differences were rather than why, which did not fully address the AO2 requirements and often the 'why' was only implicit. There were lots of references to the key agreed attributes of God, the omni words. Many promising responses did not include a source of wisdom and authority and thus could not achieve beyond Level 1. A common response addressed omnibenevolence and the problem of evil, and some responses focused only on this issue. Some higher-level responses address denominational differences and Biblical interpretation, most commonly perceived differences between the God of the Old Testament with the God of the New Testament.

## Question 2 (d)

(d) 'Religious experience is not reliable revelation of God.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Draw on your learning from across your course of study, including reference to beliefs, teachings and practices within Christianity.
- Explain and evaluate the importance of points of view from the perspective of Christianity.

[15]

 Spelling, punctuation and grammar [3]

A range of responses were seen for this question. Most candidates were able to discuss religious experiences. References to Paul's conversion and Bernadette's visions were common, along with experiences through worship such as glossalia, being 'slain in the spirit' and the Toronto blessing. Most candidates knew about different types of revelation, but they did not always explain how they were reliable or not. There were a notable number of Level 2 and 3 AO2 responses that outlined religious experiences without really addressing if they reliably demonstrated the existence of God. More successful responses talked about private events, mental illness and unreliable witnesses, some even referenced William James, Freud and Hume's 'least likely of events.'

Many responses presented contrasting knowledge with some comment and comparison but fell short of reasoned discussion with a balanced conclusion, and so did not move beyond Level 3 for AO2, although some Level 4 and full mark responses were seen.

The quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar was good overall.

### Assessment for learning



Candidates would benefit in developing essay writing skills that include evaluation and analysis, and developing their skills to weave this knowledge into a discussion and argument leading to a conclusion, rather than just presenting contrasting knowledge.

### Question 3 (a)

#### 3 Religion, peace and conflict

(a) Outline **one** Christian teaching about justice.

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Many candidates did not address a teaching, but rather gave a general attitude or belief not linked to a specific teaching, so were not given marks. Others did cite a teaching, either using quotes or paraphrased, with some development. Some candidates gave more than one teaching and this limited the marks they could receive as the first teaching was often stated, followed by a second and then the development. There was a wide range of correct responses including God as a fair judge (psalms), judgement in the afterlife (Sheep and the Goats), Just War, image of God relating to equality/social justice.

**Key point: exam skills**

When a question asks for a teaching, a clear teaching from a source of wisdom and authority should be outlined, for example from the Bible or a specific teaching of a church/denomination such as from the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church or the Church of England.

When a question asks for one, then only the first teaching and relevant development and/or exemplification will be given the marks.

### Question 3 (b)

(b) Describe different Christian attitudes to technological warfare (the use of drones and surgical strikes).

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A range of responses were seen to this question, but few were able to access Level 3. Many responded with general teachings and/or attitudes to war, including Just War, without linking these to the use of technological warfare. The phrases 'technological warfare' and 'surgical strikes' did not seem to be well understood and even when addressed, some misunderstood drones as weapons of mass destruction/nuclear weapons. Some higher-level responses were able to outline the concern that drones take away the personal aspect of war and some addressed that their use may be better than conventional weapons as it is targeted away from civilians. Level 3 responses linking this discussion of surgical strikes was far less common, with some writing about access to medical treatment in response to the word 'surgical'.

#### Misconception



There was a notable lack of knowledge and understanding in this topic area, with misconception of drones and surgical strikes as weapons of mass destruction, or related to medical treatment and recent strike action in the NHS.

### Question 3 (c)

(c) Explain how Christian teachings about peace might influence Christian communities.

You should refer to sources of wisdom and authority in your answer.

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..... **[6]**

A fair range of responses were seen, with most candidates accessing marks in Level 2. There was generally a good knowledge about teachings about peace; the beatitudes, swords into ploughshares, living/dying by the sword, love thy neighbour and thou shall not kill were commonly referenced. Some also explained the different types of pacifism and there was also reference to ecumenical communities, including Taizé and Corrymeela as well as the World Council of Churches. Only some candidates were able to effectively explain how these influenced Christian communities with Level 3 responses using specific examples such as CCND and Peace Jam. Many others attempted this with generalised statements about living in peace, praying for peace and making a peaceful society.

Some candidates contrasted teaching about peace with Just War, or events from the Bible that suggested war and violence were sometimes necessary, which was not relevant to what had been asked and thus gained no marks.

Some candidates wrote about general attitudes to peace without including a teaching or any source of wisdom and authority and thus could only access Level 1 marks.

**Key point: exam skills**

All part (c) responses require sources of wisdom and authority. When a question asks for teachings, then a clear teaching from a source of wisdom and authority should be included, for example from the Bible or a specific teaching of a church/denomination such as from the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church or the Church of England.

This question required the application of the teachings cited to Christian communities, i.e. their beliefs and behaviour, as a demonstration of understanding. Many candidates demonstrated good knowledge but did not access Level 3 as they described the teachings without explaining their impact.



### Question 3 (d)\*

(d)\* 'Acts of terrorism are never justified.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Draw on your learning from across your course of study, including reference to beliefs, teachings and practices within Christianity.
- Explain and evaluate the importance of points of view from the perspective of Christianity.

[15]

Most candidates were able to respond to this with different views on the use of violence and warfare, but few were able to target this to terrorism specifically, resulting in generalised responses discussing war versus pacificism. Many were able to correctly reference the Just War theory, citing that to harm civilians is not conforming with the criteria. The more successful responses gave clear definitions of terrorism with good use of examples, such as the IRA and Nelson Mandela. A common misconception was to discuss Muslim attitudes with reference to ISIS and lesser Jihad, which was not relevant to what had been asked. Some successful responses discussed contrasting views with breach of Just War and pacificism, contrasted with Liberation Theology and Camilo Torres. Many responses were more one sided, with the objections discussed in more detail that reasoned why some may see terrorism as justified.

Again, there were some responses that presented contrasting knowledge with some comment and comparison, but fell short of reasoned discussion with a balanced conclusion so did not move beyond Level 3 for AO2, although some Level 4 responses were seen.

### Question 4 (a)

#### 4 Dialogue between religious and non-religious beliefs and attitudes

(a) What is meant by the term inclusivism?

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[3]

Many candidates did not gain marks for this question by either outlining pluralism or inclusion. Those who did know the meaning of the term 'inclusivism' were often given 3 marks by referring to the idea that Christianity was the correct religion, but that there were other ways one could be saved. Many used the parable of the Sheep and the Goats, and Rahmer's anonymous Christian, as development.

## Exemplar 2

Inclusivism is the belief that Christianity is the true religion but you do not have to be Christian to get to heaven. Rahner describes 'anonymous Christians' as people who ~~are~~ follow Christian values but do not know about Christianity. These people will be saved; those who <sup>see additional space</sup> knowingly reject Christianity will not go to heaven. [3]

Exemplar 2 shows a 3 mark response.

## OCR support



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### Question 4 (b)

**(b)** Describe how Christianity contributes to public life in Britain today.

In your response you must consider that religious traditions in Great Britain are diverse, but mainly Christian.

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**[6]**

Most responses seen to this question achieved marks in Level 2. Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the contribution to public life in Britain. There was much good description of Sunday trading laws, the 26 Lords Spiritual, bank holidays, festivals, school holidays, church schools and the King's coronation. There were fewer Level 1 responses but there were some generic responses about churches. Many candidates did not access Level 3 as they did not address the instruction to acknowledge that religious traditions are diverse, but mainly Christian; while candidates were able to outline examples of Christianity being dominant today, and even historically, few also described the diversity. Some attempted this by describing the decline of Christian impact and quoted statistics to support secularisation which was not sufficient to describe the diversity of religious belief and practice.

## Exemplar 3

There are 26 Lord's Spiritual (Church of England Bishops in the House of Lords). ~~They can contribute~~ The House of Lords controls new laws being passed, therefore these bishops have some power over that. Also, the Church of England is the 'State' church, meaning the King is 'defender of the faith' and that the Church carries out State occasions. The Archbishop of Canterbury crowns Monarchs.

School holidays are arranged around Christian festivals, Christmas and Easter. Although these are becoming increasingly secularised they still have Christianity at their origin. Also the Christian calendar influences other festivals like Pancake Day (shrove Tuesday - the day before Lent).

One third of state-funded primary schools are faith based, meaning they promote Christianity. [6]

Also, in a speech David Cameron (the Prime Minister at the time) said: "we are a country of many faiths but we are still a Christian country". This shows that the UK has many different people with different beliefs - but the majority are Christian.

Exemplar 3 shows a full mark response that addresses the full requirements of the question, using the quotation from David Cameron.

### Question 4 (c)

(c) Explain potential clashes between religious teachings and secular law about marriage.

You should refer to sources of wisdom and authority in your answer.

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Most candidates were able to answer this question and achieve marks. The most commonly discussed areas were divorce and remarriage, same sex marriage and sex before marriage/cohabitation. Many candidates outlined the Christian teaching and there was good use of sources of wisdom and authority, most commonly 'be fruitful and multiply', Leviticus on homosexuality and 'do not commit adultery' often with the Roman Catholic stance on divorce. Most then compared this with secular law with some citing specific Acts with correct dates. However, some described the Christian teaching and did not address the secular law, making it evident that there was some confusion over the meaning of this term. Only a small number of candidates did not include any sources of wisdom and authority.

A few candidates incorrectly cited that the age at which one gets married was a clash, as the Roman Catholic Church allows marriage for 14 year old girls. While this is true worldwide, they only perform marriage within the law of the state so there is no clash with secular law in the UK.

**Question 4 (d)\***

**(d)\*** 'Atheists and Christians share no common beliefs.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Draw on your learning from across your course of study, including reference to beliefs, teachings and practices within Christianity.
- Explain and evaluate the importance of points of view from the perspective of Christianity.

**[15]**

This question was well answered by most candidates. Many were able to point out the key differences in belief between atheist and Christians, such as the existence of God, an afterlife and creation of the universe, and then go on to argue for some shared beliefs and values. More successful responses addressed differences within Christianity, for example, that more liberal Christians share belief in the Big Bang and attitudes to medical ethics with atheists. There were lots of references to Humanism, suggesting that humanists share the values of compassion and kindness espoused in the teachings of Jesus, love thy neighbour was commonly referenced, that they strive for peace over war and are concerned with preserving the environment. Those scoring higher levels went on to address the point that although these values come from different beliefs, they are still shared values in a practical sense. Some candidates utilised material from previous responses and discussed views about contraception, marriage, divorce and warfare.

There were far fewer responses to this part (d) that did not attempt a judgement and some conclusion at the end of the discussion, although there were some simplistic responses that had neither.

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