

Candidate Style Answers

GCSE Religious Studies A

OCR GCSE in Religious Studies: J620

Unit: B580 (Judaism)

These candidate style answers are designed to accompany the OCR GCSE Religious Studies A specification for teaching from September 2009.

GCSE Religious Studies A

B580 Judaism 2 (Worship, Community and Family, Sacred Writings)

OCR has produced these candidate style answers to support teachers in interpreting the assessment criteria for the new GCSE specifications and to bridge the gap between new specification release and availability of exemplar candidate work.

This content has been produced by senior OCR examiners, with the support of the Qualification Manager, to illustrate how the sample assessment questions might be answered and provide some commentary on what factors contribute to an overall grading. The candidate style answers are not written in a way that is intended to replicate student work but to demonstrate what a “good” or “excellent” response might include, supported by examiner commentary and conclusions.

As these responses have not been through full moderation and do not replicate student work, they have not been graded and are instead, banded “medium” or “high” to give an indication of the level of each response.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

3e) ‘A Jewish community does not need a synagogue.’ Discuss this statement. You should include different, supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Judaism in your answer. (12)	
<i>Candidate style answer</i>	<i>Examiner’s commentary</i>
<i>To answer this question you must look back into Jewish history. Synagogues first developed as meeting places for Jews in the later first millennium B.C. under the influence of the exile, when Jews had no temple to visit. So clearly, in Moses’ time there were no synagogues and Moses makes no reference to them. Yet no one would argue that Moses and his people and the great kings and prophets of Israel were not true Jews even though they had no synagogues. If they were not true Jews their descendants cannot be true Jews either. Nowhere in the books of the law and prophets is there any reference to synagogues, so they cannot be part of the Torah given by G-d.</i>	High level response This is a high level response towards the upper end of the band. The candidate comes to the point quickly and grounds his/her argument in the history of Judaism and in accurate reference to the Tenakh. This is important because it demonstrates that the candidate has selected information pertinent to the question and has applied it effectively.

Ideally, if all things were right, the Jews would have their temple and would meet there. It is the temple that is part of the Jewish faith, not the synagogue. But even before the temple the Hebrews had a simple tent of meeting before which they worshipped. This was a simple meeting place that was there right at the beginning of Judaism.

But religions evolve and what was not needed at one time might be needed at another. The early Hebrews were a small community living together, so a simple tent was all that they needed. But as the nation began to grow in numbers and spread geographically it became more and more difficult to reach the central focus of the faith, and after the destruction of the temple there was no focus left. The synagogues arose to meet the needs of the Diaspora, and without them these Jews would never have had an institution in which they could meet. So the Jews needed an institution that would enable them to meet together for prayer and worship. The synagogue met this need.

Every religion needs some institution for its people to meet and worship together and where its ministers can work. The synagogue, which is a simple meeting house, is the Jewish institution for doing this. So yes, to meet this universal need for a meeting place where Jews can share their faith and worship, Judaism does now need synagogues.

In my personal view the synagogue is very useful because it meets a need for a place of meeting. Yet it does not need to be a building. Any spot where Jews agree to meet is a synagogue. It may be outdoors or a room in someone's house. There may have been impromptu and secret synagogues in Nazi occupied Europe and even a room in a concentration camp hut could be a synagogue if the Jews chose it to be. There is no need for the elaborate furnishings in such places. However, this

The candidate continues the argument with more reference to the history of Judaism and draws out the implications of their point.

The argument moves forward fluently into a consideration of the alternative view. The candidate continues with their analysis of the history of the Jews to demonstrate that the synagogue represents an institution that had to develop in Judaism to meet the needs of an evolving religious community. Note that the candidate shows some specialist vocabulary in his use of the term Diaspora. The paragraph concludes with a clear statement of the point that the candidate is making.

This paragraph broadens the argument by situating the need for a synagogue in the wider context of the general need of all religions to have meeting places. While this is not necessary in all essays, it is pertinent in this one. The candidate finishes the paragraph with a statement that Judaism now needs synagogues. Some subtlety of thought is shown here.

The essay moves on to the candidate's personal view. While the candidate favours the view that a synagogue is necessary this section does not simply repeat the case that but develops it by pointing out that the synagogue may not need to be a building or have specifically Jewish furnishings, although these are shown to be useful.

The candidate has covered the issue well and has done so with a well structured argument that does justice to all sides of the question. Note that the response concludes with a clearly stated personal point of view.

is not to say that the synagogue architecture and decor is not useful. Emergency arrangements are never satisfactory. A religion benefits from a specialist building whose features reflect its beliefs and values. The synagogue meets this need. So yes, I believe that while a special building is not necessary, it is certainly desirable that Jews have their synagogues because it is necessary that they meet for worship.

3e) 'A Jewish community does not need a synagogue.'

Discuss this statement. You should include different, supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Judaism in your answer.

(12)

Candidate style answer

Every religion needs a place for its people to meet. They need to gather together for prayers and to learn religious education.

Jews need their synagogues so that they can meet for Sabbath prayers. They need a building to meet in, otherwise it could be uncomfortable in cold and wet conditions, so a synagogue is essential. There are other reasons why Jews need synagogues. The Jews run their lives according to the Torah. This means that they have to have courts that meet to make legal decisions about the application of law in specific cases. This court is the Beth Din and it meets in synagogues, especially in important ones.

Many synagogues have Hebrew school. This is where young Jews go to learn the Hebrew language and the Scriptures. As ordinary schools do not provide this kind of service and Jewish schools are not widespread across Britain, where else would young Jewish men get their religious education? Without this institution the Hebrew language may well die out and Jewish knowledge would not be as widely spread as it is now.

On the other hand, you do not need a specially designed building for a synagogue. You could use any place, such as a room in house or you could even have it in the open air.

Anyway, is not religion a private matter? You do not need to worship with other people as long as you pray and read the Scriptures. You can worship with your family. After all Judaism is a family orientated faith that places

Examiner's commentary

Medium level response

The response begins with a statement in favour of one viewpoint. The candidate is working originally from a general statement about religions, which is then applied to Judaism. This is acceptable.

The candidate then gives specific, practical reasons for the Jews' needing synagogues. There is some detail here about the range of activities which are performed in synagogues and the implication is that they are needed for these purposes.

The next paragraph develops the point made in the previous one. The implications of the synagogue activities for the survival and health of Judaism are developed. The point is effectively made, but the response relies more on facts rather than religious principles.

The candidate then gives an alternative view, but again it is factual statement about synagogues and what can constitute one. The implications for believers are not drawn out.

This paragraph makes a controversial statement drawn from popular religious culture rather than Judaism. They are valid alternative viewpoints, but they need to be evaluated. The statement about the importance of family is a Jewish type of statement. Both are acceptable as arguments but need evaluation.

The candidate finishes with a personal viewpoint in which he responds to one of the alternative views in an accurate, critical way. The response ends with a final statement about whether the candidate agrees with the statement in the question. Whilst this does not add anything to the arguments offered, it does complete the response effectively.

great value on families, so you don't need a synagogue if you have a Jewish home.

In my opinion a synagogue is necessary because Judaism is not a purely private religion. It is a religion with a strong sense of community, so the community needs to meet together in a particular place. A Jewish family is a good place to worship, but you need to belong to the wider community as well, and so you need to meet with them. A synagogue is needed to do this, so I do not agree with the statement. Jews do need synagogues.