

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

J625

For first teaching in 2016

J625/06 Summer 2024 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 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.

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Paper 6 series overview

GCSE Religious Studies Paper 6 is the Christianity: religion, philosophy and ethics in the modern world from a religious perspective paper. It assesses candidates' 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. Most candidates attempted all the questions.

Some candidates did not score well on 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 did not include any sources of wisdom and authority. Some more detailed responses did not give a conclusion or judgement. 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.

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

One distinctive feature which differentiated between candidates was candidate interpretation of the question. In many circumstances candidates limited their marks because they did not respond directly to the precise question, for example addressing only the family in Question 1 (c) or not addressing why there are differences in Question 4 (c). Candidates sometimes 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, for example addressing only the importance of marriage in Question 1 (d), or explaining what attitudes to violence are in Question 3 (d) rather than targeting the discussion to evaluate the stimulus.

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) responses.

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"> • demonstrated good knowledge of key/technical terms • used relevant sources of wisdom and authority in their responses • demonstrated good exam technique and targeted responses to the specific question/ command word • showed knowledge of both similar and different views within Christianity, with correct denominations • were able to compare, critically analyse and evaluate • were able to explain how teaching impacted on belief and behaviour • wrote balanced discussions with reasoned conclusions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not know key/technical terms, for example annulment and pluralism • did not use sources of wisdom and authority • presented their personal opinions and views of atheists • did not take notice of question wording, such as 'teachings' or 'different attitudes', 'describe' and 'explain' • gave descriptive-only responses to explanation or evaluative questions • presented 'fringe groups' with key doctrinal differences, such as Quakers and the Amish, as mainstream Christian view, or as a general liberal view • gave common sense, generalised responses without specific knowledge from the specification content • misinterpreted teachings, such as 'free will' to mean that Christians are free to act as they please.

Question 1 (a)

1 Relationships and families

(a) Outline **one** Christian attitude to the annulment of a marriage.

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There was a range of marks awarded for this question. Many candidates did not gain any marks as they wrongly assumed annulment and divorce are synonyms and some because they thought they had been asked about the value/significance of marriage for Christians. Candidates who did know what annulment is generally gained marks for observing that it is the declaration that a marriage is void and for giving examples of circumstances which would make this so. Some candidates who had the correct definition then gave examples that would only apply to divorce, such as physical abuse or adultery.

OCR support



There is an [OCR glossary](#) available for teaching and learning key technical terms from the specification.

Exemplar 1

One christian attitude to the annulment of a marriage is the roman catholic church where it is permissible if the marriage was not consummated or if the pope gives permission.

Exemplar 1 is an example of a concise, full mark response.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Describe Christian teachings about equality.

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A range of marks was seen for this question. Many focused exclusively on gender equality, which is a valid response, but equality is much broader than just this. Many responses compared egalitarianism with complementarianism, although some used complementarianism to mean inequality rather than equal but different. Candidates used roles in the home and roles in the church to exemplify this and some drew on both. There was good use of specific teachings, with the most common being 'made in the image of God' 'the Fall' and 'neither male nor female'. Responses in lower levels were more generic, for example some Christians/other Christians, women should stay at home/men are breadwinners with no reference to Christian teaching or giving only one teaching.

Question 1 (c)

- (c) Explain how Christian teachings might influence the roles of men and women in Christian communities.

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

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..... [6]

For some candidates this response was less successful than their response to Question 1 (b), with some demonstrating relevant knowledge in their 1 (b) response but not in the 1 (c) response. Some ignored the emphasis on community and discussed only roles within the family. Most candidates used relevant sources of wisdom and authority, many repeated those used in Question 1 (b), Paul's teaching that 'women should remain silent in church' and 'Jesus having only male disciples' were also common. Many responses were able to relate the teaching to the Roman Catholic Church not ordaining women as priests or allowing other leadership roles, whereas the Church of England does. A common misconception was to use Quakers as an example of more liberal Christians who allow women to be priests, rather than not having a priesthood. Some responses mentioned the Amish as an example of a Christian community who differentiated roles on gender, but few used specific teachings to support this.

Misconception



A common misconception was reference to Quakers allowing women to be ordained as priests.

Question 1 (d)

(d) 'Church weddings do not matter to anyone anymore.'

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 were able to access this question and there were many good responses achieving full marks for AO1. However, while most candidates had relevant knowledge about marriage ceremonies and their significance in Christianity they struggled to turn that into a discussion about the significance or value of marriage in the modern world. High scoring responses compared the importance of getting married in a church for many Christians with the view that there are other places to marry, and God is everywhere, so the place may not be as important; some used Quaker meeting houses as an example of weddings that are not in a church. There were some excellent attempts to explain that marriage is a sacrament and therefore important, with good development, such as 'a cord of three strands' which was well explained. Some responses referenced the legal status of same sex marriages, which cannot happen in church, as evidence in agreement with the statement. Some candidates wrote about the meaning, purpose and importance of marriage rather than church weddings and some less successful responses focused on other places to get married, such as the beach. Few responses had sufficient analysis and evaluation to achieve Level 4, some had no attempt at judgement or conclusion and very few had a balanced conclusion to the discussion.

Assessment for learning



Essay writing skills that include evaluation and analysis; candidates would benefit from developing evaluation and analysis rather than just presenting contrasting knowledge. They should be developing their skills to weave this knowledge into a discussion and argument leading to a conclusion, that responds clearly and precisely to the stimulus.

Question 2 (a)

2 The existence of God

(a) Name **three** different philosophical arguments for belief in God.

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[3]

A range of responses were seen to this question, candidates who understood what they had been asked for and candidates who clearly did not. The most common correct response were the arguments named on the specification; teleological/design, cosmological/first cause, moral argument and anthropic principle, with less frequent mention of the ontological argument. Some candidates lost marks for listing teleological and design, or first cause and cosmological, as separate responses. Incorrect responses took various forms from lists of random Christian teachings to descriptions of different arguments to reasons someone might believe in (or reject) God. A fairly common incorrect response was to list theodicies.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Describe Christian beliefs about the goodness of God.

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The majority of candidates were able to access this question and gain marks, with most answering quite well, at least into Level 2. Most candidates were able to connect God's goodness with the idea of Christ's sacrifice as well as with biblical examples of God helping believers. The creation of the world and the wonderful things in it were also commonly referenced. Some also described how God gave commandments for Christians to follow which shows his goodness. However, a considerable number used the Problem of Evil argument to answer this question, presenting an incorrect alternative view that some Christians do not believe that God is good.

Question 2 (c)

(c) Explain why Christians believe that God acts in the world today.

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

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A range of responses was again seen, but with fewer at the top end. Candidates generally had examples of God acting in the world but did not always apply these to an explanation of why Christians believe God might do so. A number did not use sources of wisdom and authority in their response and simply answered in general terms resulting in Level 1 marks. Visions and miracles at Lourdes, glossolalia and being 'slain in the spirit' were common examples, alongside sustaining creation. However, some responses did not pick up on the 'today' part of the question and only used Biblical examples, including the Ten Plagues, the incarnation and examples of biblical miracles.

Key point; exam skills

All part (c) responses require sources of wisdom and authority and AO2 content.

This question required the application of knowledge about God acting in the world today and why Christians believe that He continues to do so. Many candidates demonstrated good knowledge but did not access Level 3 as they described examples of God acting in the world without addressing the why.

Question 2 (d)

(d) 'Worship and the sacraments are the most important forms of religious experience'.

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]

Candidates generally displayed good knowledge of the sacraments from a Catholic perspective, but less awareness of divergence between different denominations. Commonly they argued that they are the most important because they are accessible to everyone and because some of them at least were commanded by God or Jesus, and this was well supported with sources of wisdom and authority. Higher scoring responses contrasted this with mystical experiences, miracles and/or visions, with the most discursive responses suggesting that there is likely to be a felt difference in importance for a person who has had a direct miraculous experience of God. Many used pilgrimage as an alternative way to experience God, often exemplified with Lourdes and less frequently Jerusalem. Some responses took a more generalised response to religious experience and focused more on following teachings, with reference to sources such as 'love thy neighbour' and the Ten Commandments as ways in which one can experience their religion, which did not reach higher levels. Lower scoring responses did not address the question and gave descriptive accounts of sacraments and worship, sometimes addressing why they are important practices. Few responses had sufficient analysis and evaluation to achieve Level 4, some had no attempt at judgement or conclusion and very few had a balanced conclusion to the discussion.

Assessment for learning



Essay writing skills that include evaluation and analysis; candidates would benefit from developing evaluation and analysis rather than just presenting contrasting knowledge. They should be developing their skills to weave this knowledge into a discussion and argument leading to a conclusion, that responds clearly and precisely to the stimulus.

Exemplar 2

// To conclude, I agree with the statement to a great extent as through sacraments and worship - Christians can be brought up to the eternal presence of God and also strengthen their faith in their lives now. Other ways are less reliable and may only result in the temporary presence of God.

A concise, balanced conclusion from a full mark response; it acknowledges both sides of the issue previously discussed and gives a judgement.

Question 3 (a)

3 Religion, peace and conflict

(a) Give **three** ways Christians can work for peace.

- 1
- 2
- 3

[3]

There were a wide range of responses to this question with many candidates scoring full marks, very few 'No Responses' (NR's) were seen. There were very broad responses ranging from charity work, peaceful protest, ecumenism, evangelism, Just War, political lobbying to worship. Many candidates gave entirely generic examples and some did not get all the marks because they gave 'peaceful protest' along with repetitions of that point such as boycotts, petitions, etc.

Question 3 (b)

(b) Describe what Christians mean by Holy War.

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The candidates who knew the difference between Holy War and Just War did well with this question by describing the criteria, for example to defend the religion, religious authority and spiritual reward, and supporting with examples of Holy Wars such as 'rouse the warriors', the battle of Jericho and most commonly the Crusades. Many also used the war on Iraq and stated that George W Bush considered this a Holy War, despite a lack of evidence to support this view. Some less successful responses made no mention of anything specifically connected with Holy War and rather opened the response by saying that Holy Wars are fought for God or for religious reasons and then going on to explain the rules of a Just War in some depth. Some candidates also offered an alternative view to say that many Christians are against war, such as Quakers, and citing 'blessed are the peacemakers' which was not relevant to the question. More NR's were seen for this question than others on the paper.

Question 3 (c)

(c) Explain the importance of forgiveness to Christians.

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

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..... [6]

The majority of candidates were able to access this question with very few NR's seen. It was one of the better answered (c) parts, with most including a relevant source of wisdom and authority. Better responses referred to God's forgiveness through the sacrifice of Christ, the crucifixion, providing salvation and how the importance of humans forgiving others as God forgives us is reinforced in the Lord's Prayer. Some developed the importance of forgiveness for the forgiver and exemplified this with modern day examples, most notable Gee Walker forgiving her son's murderers. Much Biblical material was used, most relevant examples were Jesus's teaching to forgive 'not 7 but 70 x 7', forgiving the adulterous woman and the prodigal son which were usually applied explicitly to the question. There were some generic, more generalised responses but less successful attempts often used sources of wisdom and authority. The most common examples were 'love thy neighbour', 'blessed are the peacemakers', 'love your enemies' and 'turn the other cheek'. Although they were not always directly relevant, an attempt was usually made to make them so.

Question 3 (d)*

(d)* 'Christian teachings about violence are not important in the 21st century.'

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 generally quite well answered. Very few NR's were seen. Candidates had a lot of relevant teachings to discuss and were able to relate these to contemporary issues more explicitly than in some other discussion questions. Most responses focused on warfare rather than violence more generally, with some good knowledge of Just War and how it is still relevant today. Better responses referenced the impact of this teaching on the Geneva Convention. Many discussed the impact of modern technological and nuclear warfare, often citing that 'a Just War is no longer possible.' For those that took a broader perspective Jesus turning over the tables in the Temple was often cited as a support for violent action. Pacifism and its relevance or lack thereof was also commonly discussed, most often supported by 'love thy neighbour' and 'blessed are the peacemakers', the example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer was also used by a significant minority. A number of responses were presented in a simplistic 'for and against' way, with little evaluation of what they were saying on either side of what is a very complex and nuanced issue, not making a relevant judgement or conclusion. Some did not address the issue of relevance in the 21st century and simply discussed Christian teachings about violence/war versus those about pacifism.

Question 4 (a)

4 Dialogue between religious and non-religious beliefs and attitudes

(a) What is meant by the term pluralism?

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Not all candidates were able to gain marks on this question, with more NR's seen than on other questions. Many candidates had at least a partial understanding of the concept and were able to gain one or two marks. Better responses that gained full marks knew what it meant and developed/exemplified with Hick and the blind men and the elephant, and 'my father's house has many rooms' was also commonly cited. A significant number of candidates used a general English language understanding of 'plural' to guess at what it might mean. The most common incorrect response presented it as a belief in many gods. A few were confused with inclusivism, but most confusion arose with 'diversity' in general, polytheism or dialogue/ecumenism.

OCR support



There is an [OCR glossary](#) available for teaching and learning key technical terms from the specification.

Question 4 (b)

(b) Outline some of the challenges for Christian religious traditions 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 candidates were able to gain some marks on this question, but very few were Level 3 responses, mostly due to not addressing the command to consider that religious traditions in Great Britain are diverse but mainly Christian. More responses did cover the idea that Christianity is the predominant religion in Great Britain, but then did not address diversity or contradicted the statement with census data that Christianity is no longer the majority religion. Most responses said that secularisation was the primary challenge to Christianity and illustrated this with the idea of festivals losing their meaning, churches losing their congregations and/or Christians having to go to work on Sundays. Many responses focused on the traditions of Christmas and Easter and how they are losing their Christian element due to commercialisation and secularisation, supported with description of gift giving and chocolate eggs. Some suggested that evangelism was a challenge because of the risk of offending practitioners of other religions. There was not much developed description of Christian traditions although some linked in marriage, homosexuality, faith schools and evangelism. A common error was to read the question the wrong way round and to respond with the ways Christianity/Christian tradition is a challenge to other religious traditions present in Great Britain.

Key point; exam skills

Question 4 (b) has an extra command in the strapline to the question. In order to achieve Level 3 candidates need to 'consider that religious traditions on Great Britain are diverse but mainly Christian', in their own words, with relevance to the question asked.

Question 4 (c)

(c) Explain why there are different Christian attitudes to abortion.

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

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..... [6]

The majority of candidates were able to access this question and gain some marks, knowing what abortion is. Very few NR's were seen. Most responses referenced different views, with many using the terms pro-life and pro-choice. The Roman Catholic view was most often correctly stated with some support from sources of wisdom and authority, most commonly 'you knit me together in my mother's womb', 'do not murder' and life beginning at conception. This was very often contrasted with explanation of the view that some Christians allow abortion, although this view was less well supported, sometimes with agape love but also with more generalised content such as 'love thy neighbour' and 'be fruitful and multiply', or with reasons why abortion might be permitted such as rape or the mother's life being at risk. There were a lot of inaccurate statements suggesting that liberal Christians, often incorrectly exemplified with Quakers or the Church of England, were entirely pro-choice, with some suggesting that this was down to being given 'free will'. Some conflated the views of society, such as 'my body, my choice' with Christian views. Better responses were able to address why there were these differences, but these responses were not a majority.

Key point; exam skills

All part (c) responses require sources of wisdom and authority, and AO2 content.

This question required the application of knowledge about the different attitudes to and why those differences exist/ the reasons for the differences. Many candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the different views, with denominations and sources of wisdom and authority but did not access Level 3 as they described these but did not address why there were these differences, such as a difference in the belief about when life begins, a lack of direct Biblical teaching requiring interpretation and absolute or relative morality.

Exemplar 3

Christian attitudes on abortion differ, because ~~some~~ ~~think about~~ it is unclear when life starts in the womb. Some Christians believe that life starts at conception. Thus abortion is murder. The Catholic Church agrees with this as it says that you mustn't kill the fruit of the womb. Therefore as to not anger God some Christians are against abortion. Catholics agree with this view as they think abortion is infanticide. Therefore some Christians are against abortion due to the belief on when life starts.

Other Christians are against abortion because they believe life and the ability to create life is a gift from God. Thus abortion is disrespectful to God as it is an appreciation of his gift. Because God created humans in Genesis 2 the concept of sanctity of life was created to say that all life is important. Thus ~~some~~ Christian attitudes differ because of the concept of sanctity of life.

A Level 3 response that addresses why views differ, with sources of wisdom and authority.

Question 4 (d)*

(d)* 'Everyone should have the right to choose when to die.'

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 accessed this question, focusing on euthanasia, with some also including suicide and occasionally abortion. The majority of responses were able to give more than one view, predominantly Roman Catholic and Church of England, and often Quakers although not always correctly. There were good use of sources of wisdom and authority, commonly 'image of God', 'breadth of God', 'you shall not murder' and 'free will', which was again sometimes incorrectly used to suggest any action is permissible. Better responses addressed the possible suffering, with some using Mother Teresa and Job as support and palliative care as an alternative to euthanasia. There was some good comment and comparison of the different views, with better analysis and evaluation. Far fewer responses to Question 4 (d) did not give a judgement and conclusion. Less successful responses did address the issue but with more generalised and sometimes secular views with little to no specific Christianity.

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