

**GCSE (9-1)**

**Examiners' report**

# **RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

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**J625**

For first teaching in 2016

**J625/01 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.

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

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## Paper 1 series overview

J625/01 examines the Beliefs and Teachings and Practices section of the GCSE Specification for Christianity. Candidates are required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding (AO1) of those beliefs, teachings, and practices in all parts of each question and to show their ability to analyse and evaluate (AO2) aspects of belief, teachings, and practices in part (e) of each question. In part (d) candidates are required to demonstrate knowledge of sources of wisdom and authority which underpin the beliefs, teaching and practices, as well as demonstrate knowledge of common and divergent views within Christianity. The same is true for part (e) the evaluative question, where candidates should discuss and evaluate the issue in the stimulus.

Questions (a) (b) and (c) require factual responses. The mark scheme contains possible responses but as always, examiners applied the principle of positive awarding wherever possible. The mark scheme is indicative not prescriptive, so appropriate responses not given in the mark scheme can be credited. For parts (d) and (e), examiners use the levels of response to give credit to any appropriate responses. Again, some of those responses or even the approach to the question did not feature in the mark scheme, but credit is given for any relevant responses.

This paper proved accessible, eliciting a wide range of responses. Outstanding knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs and teachings and practices were exhibited by some candidates and well developed evaluative and analytical skills were also clearly evident. The majority of candidates seemed familiar with the rubric expectations of part (e) mentioned above and employed sources of wisdom and authority and referred to common and divergent views within Christianity. 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. Biblical references and quotes are not required but were often given, usually as accurate quotes or satisfactory paraphrases.

The structured format of the exam paper helped candidates to focus their responses and limit the amount they wrote for the three mark parts of the questions, (a) to (c). 1 (a) for example, required only three words or short phrases. Even so, a handful of candidates did offer more than was required for these questions which could have affected their time management negatively.

Although the answer booklet contains extra answer sheets some candidates who needed more space than the booklet provided for parts (d) and (e) continued their responses on unlined sections of the paper and even around the sides of their response. This is obviously not helpful for the scanning process which is required to load the responses on to the marking system or for the examiners who will always do their best to read whatever the candidate provides.

Part (d) of both questions is designed to be more challenging, assessing knowledge and understanding only. 1 (d) proved very accessible for most candidates. 2 (d) presented greater challenge because it concerned outlining a link between two key aspects of Christian doctrine rather than just outlining key points of a belief, teaching or practice.

Part (e), evaluation and analysis (AO2), accounts for twelve of the fifteen marks. There were many examples of well thought out and structured discussions, referring to the views of more than one Christian group. While it is pleasing to see, it is not a requirement that the responses accurately link a view or attitude to a particular denomination. The use of 'some Christians' and 'other Christians' is enough to help the candidate to demonstrate knowledge of diversity within the faith. In the best responses, different views were underpinned with sound knowledge and understanding (AO1), which is credited separately. Many of those responses referred accurately to some kind of appropriate source(s) of wisdom or authority and recognised divergent views. Some responses however, focused too much on

descriptions of views rather than analysis and evaluation of them. Other responses, after a brief introduction or no introduction at all, consisted of blocks of information about differing points of view without comment and often no final conclusion or judgement. This sort of response is likely to be given no more than the top mark at Level 2 (Limited) for AO2. Some responses offered a personal viewpoint as a conclusion, sometimes as a fresh argument. Stating a personal viewpoint is not a requirement whereas a critique of different arguments from a neutral standpoint is considered the best approach to help a response to match the descriptors for the higher levels.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>offered accurate knowledge of beliefs and teachings matching the requirements of the question</li> <li>wrote concise responses to parts (a) (b) and (c) of each question</li> <li>identified common and divergent views and practices within Christianity in parts (d) and (e)</li> <li>demonstrated the ability to compare the appropriateness of different arguments in the evaluative questions</li> <li>gave appropriate sources of wisdom and authority to support the discussion in part (e) and the response to part (d)</li> <li>took account of the rubric for part (e) about keeping the discussion within Christianity</li> <li>demonstrated the ability to make judgements about the views in the discussion and offer a balanced conclusion to the discussion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>did not offer fully accurate or detailed knowledge of beliefs and teachings</li> <li>made only one statement in response to parts (a) (b) and (c) so could not be credited for development or exemplification</li> <li>in part (d), tended to offer vague or very general references to beliefs and practices</li> <li>references to sources of wisdom in parts (d) and (e) were either omitted or, sometimes, irrelevant</li> <li>did not refer to divergent views within Christianity about the topic or the issue in the stimulus</li> <li>in part (e) demonstrated limited knowledge of different views</li> <li>offered no comment or evaluation in the discussion</li> <li>referred to non-religious views or views drawn from another religion as a component of the discussion</li> <li>did not come to a conclusion at the end of the discussion in the (e) parts.</li> </ul>

## Question 1 (a)

1

(a) Name **three** Christian sacraments.

1 .....

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2 .....

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3 .....

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[3]

The vast majority of responses listed three sacraments; Marriage, Eucharist and Baptism being the most common. The misconception that a funeral is a sacrament was seen occasionally. Some responses did not use the technical terms but could still gain credit. For example, the bread and wine ceremony for Eucharist.

## Question 1 (b)

(b) Describe what Christians mean when they say that God is omnipotent.

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..... [3]

All powerful, was the correct response from most candidates and a high proportion were able to expand this and give exemplification. Frequently Gods' power as creator or as being able to raise Jesus from the dead were given as development or exemplification of God's omnipotence. Some candidates wrote about omniscience, misreading the word. Those responses could not gain any credit.

## Question 1 (c)

(c) Outline what Christians believe hell is like.

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..... [3]

This question proved accessible to the vast majority of candidates. Some descriptions referred to biblical ideas, while others drew on the popular views of hell as a place of fire, suffering and punishment. The idea that hell was the absence of any relationship with God was evident in many responses. Responses which just said that hell is the opposite of heaven did not gain any credit as no knowledge of either heaven or hell was displayed.

## Question 1 (d)

(d) Outline reasons why Christians pray.

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..... [6]

A high proportion of responses focused on how, through prayer, a Christian could get closer to God and develop the personal relationship with him. Many responses described different reasons for a Christian to pray such as for intercession, adoration, thanksgiving and confession. The example of Jesus, and the Lord's prayer were offered by some as sources of wisdom and authority to back up the importance of prayer. Some responses missed the point of the question and just focused on how Christians pray, for example privately or as part of congregational prayer. These responses were sometimes made relevant to the question. For example, how by praying as part of a congregation, a person could feel united with other worshippers or by praying privately, the Christian would be following Jesus' words in the sermon on the mount.

## Question 1 (e)

(e) 'Christians don't need to believe Jesus was both God and human.'

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]

There were many examples of responses which dealt with this key aspect of the Christian faith very well. Arguments often reflected the heated debates of the early centuries of Christianity. The importance of Jesus as a human was well understood by most candidates. Some expressed how Jesus' human experience was vital so Christians could know that he understood what people have to go through in life. On the other hand, he clearly demonstrated divine powers and if he was not also God, the sacrifice on the cross was not sufficient to cleanse the sins of humanity. Discussions about the Trinity sometimes took over and responses lost the focus on the stimulus, being more concerned with the relationship between God the Father and God the Son than Jesus as God and man. Sources of authority and wisdom were evident in most responses as the topic naturally led either to references to Jesus' life and work or to other sources such as the creed or the doctrines of the church. Some candidates struggled to find anything to say in support of the stimulus as in their view believing Jesus is God is a tenet of the Christian faith, which means it has to be accepted or the person is not a Christian. The diversity of Christianity was often exemplified by reference to Unitarianism with good discussions about the problem for Christianity, as a monotheistic faith, of the doctrine of the Trinity.

### Assessment for learning



In response to the stimulus, it is essential for the higher levels of AO2 that there is a recognition and exemplification of the diverse views about the topic, within Christianity.



## Question 2 (a)

2

(a) Outline what the term mission means to Christians.

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..... [3]

## Exemplar 1

To ~~new~~ Christians, mission is the act of evangelising. Jesus told the disciples to "Spread the word and make disciples", and so Christians believe it is their purpose, and mission, to spread the Christian faith, and evangelise. So for example There are mission groups around the world. [3]

This is a good example of a candidate using an appropriate technical term and also of how the response is developed to help it to be given three marks. In this exemplar the candidate has given a definition of mission, as understood by Christians, and has used the technical term evangelism. That is the first mark. The candidate then refers to Jesus' command to the Disciples which is the second mark as it shows development of the significance as a purpose for Christians because the command was given by Jesus. The third mark comes from further development and exemplification by pointing out that this results in mission groups around the world.

## Question 2 (b)

(b) Describe the role of God as creator in the Genesis narrative.

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..... [3]

Most responses showed an accurate selection of knowledge from the Genesis narratives. There were many possible correct responses and most kept to what is in the Genesis narratives, but some were very general about God as creator, just repeating what was in the question, which could not be credited. A considerable proportion of candidates wrote far too much for three marks. They gained appropriate credit but must have lost some precious time in the process.

## Question 2 (c)

(c) Describe the purpose of a Christian aid agency.

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..... [3]

Some responses focused on the charity Christian Aid itself which was fine if they wrote about the purpose of that aid agency. Other responses referred to the work of aid agencies generally while other responses suggested incorrectly that Christian Aid agencies only helped Christians. Some responses linked the purpose in terms of outcome (for example helping to provide access to water) with the teaching of Jesus about acting to show love on one's neighbour which is a purpose for many Christians who are influenced by Jesus' example or his teaching in the parable of the sheep and the goats.

## Question 2 (d)

(d) Outline Christian beliefs about the link between sin and grace.

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..... [6]

The majority of responses accurately defined sin. A smaller number of responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the concept of grace but did not always describe the link with sin. There were however some very strong responses which showed a sound grasp of the diverse nature of the theology concerning sin and grace. Those responses explored original sin, existential sin, grace as repair, forgiveness and reconciliation with God, freely given and channelled through the atonement of Christ and the sacrament of baptism.

Grace as a prayer of thanks before a meal could not be credited.

### Key point: Responding to the whole question

For the higher levels, the response had to address both aspects of the question because the requirement of the question is to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the **link** between both concepts. A good response which defined and showed sound knowledge of one or the other could only be considered as fitting the description of Level 1 as a limited response. It might however be given two marks at Level 1 if the description one aspect (sin or grace) was sufficiently good.

## Question 2 (e)\*

(e)\* 'Putting Christian love (agape) into action should be more important for Christians than evangelism.'

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 evoked many well developed and clearly argued responses. A majority of candidates understood the concepts of agape and evangelism described them and compared their importance for Christians. For agape, sources of wisdom and authority included the Good Samaritan, Love thy Neighbour (always thy!) and the parable of the sheep and the goats. For evangelism sources of authority tended to be the Great Commission, the example of the disciples/apostles and the mission of the church. Most responses referred to agape as being demonstrated through practical help, for example the support given by aid agencies, charities and personal work. Evangelism was understood to be driven by the concern among some Christian groups that everybody should have heard the good news (gospel) to make sure they have a chance to enter heaven and avoid hell. The differing attitudes of Christians towards evangelism and agape were to be found in some responses. Many responses pointed out that the best form of evangelism was to demonstrate agape and that evangelism itself was a form of agape as the loving thing is to make sure all people hear the gospel. Some responses referred to the potential difficulty of evangelism in a multi faith society and possible offence to followers of other faiths.

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