

Examiners' report

GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

OCR Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in
Religious Studies

J625

For first teaching in 2016

J625/01 Summer 2025 series

Contents

Introduction	3
Paper 1 series overview.....	4
Question 1 (a).....	6
Question 1 (b).....	6
Question 1 (c).....	7
Question 1 (d).....	7
Question 1 (e).....	8
Question 2 (a).....	9
Question 2 (b).....	9
Question 2 (c).....	10
Question 2 (d).....	11
Question 2 (e)*.....	12

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 [Teach Cambridge](#).

Would you prefer a Word version?

Did you know that you can save this PDF as a Word file using Acrobat Professional?

Simply click on **File > Export to** and select **Microsoft Word**

(If you have opened this PDF in your browser you will need to save it first. Simply right click anywhere on the page and select **Save as . . .** to save the PDF. Then open the PDF in Acrobat Professional.)

If you do not have access to Acrobat Professional there are a number of **free** applications available that will also convert PDF to Word (search for PDF to Word converter).

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 and to show their ability to analyse and evaluate (AO2) aspects of belief, teachings and practices in part (e) of each question. In parts (d) and (e), 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.

Questions (a), (b) and (c) required factual responses. The anticipated responses given in the mark scheme were commonly offered. Appropriate responses not given in the mark scheme, which is indicative not prescriptive, were accepted. For parts (d) and (e), examiners gave credit for any appropriate responses, judging them against the bullet points for the levels of response and giving marks for the best fit. Again, some of those responses or even the approach to the question topic did not feature in the mark scheme, but marks were given for any relevant responses.

This question paper proved accessible, eliciting a full range of responses. Question 1 (a) was accessible to most candidates and seemed to provide a straightforward and encouraging start for candidates. Examiners reported that most candidates had time to respond to all questions. Where there was evidence of candidates running out of time in Question 2 (e) it seemed to be the result of writing extensively in early parts of the paper.

As in previous years, 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 evident. Most candidates seemed familiar with the rubric expectations of part (e) 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. Some responses relied on some very generic teaching as a source of wisdom and authority. For example, 'love thy neighbour', which was not always an appropriate fit for the topic of the question. Knowledge of common and divergent views was also evident in many of the responses. Attaching views to denominations can enhance a response but this is not essential. Examiners ignore the incorrect linking of divergent views to denominations, giving credit for the view(s) rather than the attachment to a denomination that the candidate considered to hold that view.

The structured format of the question paper seemed to help candidates to focus their responses and limit the amount they wrote for the 3 mark parts of Questions (a) to (c). Question 1 (c) for example, required only three place names. As noted in previous reports, some candidates who needed more space than the booklet provided for parts (d) and (e), continued their responses on unlined sections of the page and even around the sides of their response. This compromises the scanning process and could lead to aspects of a response being hidden from the examiner. The examiner can search for the rest of a response, but this could inhibit their understanding of the flow of a response. Candidates should make use of the extra pages at the end of the booklet and clearly identify the question to which the extra material belongs.

Part (d) of both questions is designed to be more challenging, assessing knowledge and understanding only. Question 1 (d) proved very accessible for most candidates. Question 2 (d) presented greater challenge as noted below. In part (e), there were many examples of well thought out and structured discussions, referring to the views of more than one Christian group. The use of 'some Christians' and

'other Christians' is enough to help the candidate to demonstrate knowledge of diversity within the faith, although many responses did accurately connect a view with a denomination.

In the most successful responses for part (e), the discussion was underpinned with sound knowledge and understanding (AO1). Some responses however focused too much on descriptions of views without any comment on them or assessment of their value in the debate. 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 conclusion or judgement. This sort of response can restrict the achievement of an obviously knowledgeable candidate, as the AO2 skill being measured is not evident.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- offered accurate knowledge of beliefs and teachings matching the requirements of the question - wrote concise responses to parts (a) (b) and (c) of each question - identified common and divergent views and practices within Christianity in parts (d) and (e) of each question - demonstrated the ability to compare the appropriateness of different arguments in the evaluative questions - gave appropriate sources of wisdom and authority to support the discussion in part (e) and the response to part (d) of each question - demonstrated the ability to make judgements about the views in the discussion and offer a balanced conclusion to the discussion.	- did not offer accurate knowledge of beliefs and teachings - made only one statement in response to each of parts (a) (b) and (c) of each question, so could not be credited for development or exemplification - in parts (d) and (e) of each question, did not give any, or any relevant, sources of wisdom and authority - did not refer to divergent views within Christianity about the topic or the issue in the stimulus for part (e) of each question - demonstrated limited knowledge of different views in part (e) of each question - offered no comment or evaluation of views in the discussion in part (e) of each question - did not conclude at the end of the discussion in part (e) of each question.

Question 1 (a)

1

(a) State **three** practices which take place at a Christian funeral.

- 1
-
- 2
-
- 3
-

[3]

This question was attempted successfully by most candidates, with many full mark responses. Hymns, prayers, eulogy and requiem mass were frequent responses. Some candidates referred to the preparation of the body or the wake/after party, neither of which could be credited as practices given as part of a funeral service.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Give the meaning of the term **moral evil**.

-
-
-
-
-
-

[3]

Many candidates were able to access this question and gain full marks. More successful responses referred to the difference between natural evil and moral evil, the latter being the result of human behaviour, which is tainted by the Fall. Many responses exemplified moral evil by referencing murder or stealing. A few candidates took the question to be about moral evil done for a good purpose which could not be credited.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Name **three** ecumenical communities.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- [3]

Candidates either knew the correct response to this or did not, it was the least successful 3 mark question on the paper. Many less successful responses referred incorrectly to three Christian denominations, charities, places of pilgrimage or sacraments. Successful responses tended to be three of the ecumenical communities mentioned in the subject specification. The World Council of Churches, which is not mentioned in the specification was also credited.

Question 1 (d)

(d) Describe different Christian attitudes towards pilgrimage.

-
-
-
-
-
-
- [6]

Many responses showed knowledge of the topic of pilgrimage and used knowledge of the significance of visiting certain sites to describe different attitudes. For example, Lourdes as a place of pilgrimage for Christians who see their journey as one of hope that God will aid their recovery from a serious illness. Jerusalem as a place where the attitude towards pilgrimage is that it could bring Christians closer to God through following the path of Jesus as he carried his cross to his execution. These positive attitudes towards pilgrimage were often contrasted with the attitude taken by some Christians, that pilgrimage is unnecessary or even a distraction from the more important work of a Christian, which is spreading the gospel, as Jesus commanded.

Question 1 (e)

(e) 'The most important belief for Christians is that Jesus rose from the dead.'

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]

Successful responses to this question showed a good understanding of the concept of resurrection and articulated its importance to Christian teaching and Christians. Some responses contrasted the importance of the resurrection with the significance of the crucifixion as the full sacrifice required by God to liberate humans from sin and were able to form a good judgement on this basis. Some candidates contrasted it with the other major Christian beliefs, including the virgin birth, the incarnation, creation of the world and the Trinity. A few responses confused resurrection with ascension. A few responses demonstrated a very well-argued and thoughtful discussion of theological points, touching on core systematic theology which underpins the structures of the Christian faith. The views of denominations which do not accept the doctrine of the Trinity were effectively discussed in some responses. Many responses showed a good understanding of why the resurrection might be significant to Christians as it shows God's power, his acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice, confirms that Jesus was both truly divine and human and provides evidence of life after death. The reference to Paul's teaching 'if Christ is not raised...' was used often to good effect, as a source of wisdom and authority.

A few responses to this part of the question were very lengthy which may have had an impact on candidates' time management.

Assessment for learning



Reference divergent views within Christianity

For responses to the stimulus in part (e) of the questions, to achieve the higher levels at AO1 and AO2, there needs to be evidence of knowledge of the views of different Christian groups.

Question 2 (a)

2

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

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

Many candidates secured full marks for this question, with more successful responses stating that God forgives human sin if humans repent or ask for forgiveness because he is omnibenevolent. Some better examples also included the idea that Jesus' sacrifice enables a just God to forgive humans and overcome evil, often quoting John 3.16. Other responses rereferred to the words in the Lord's prayer which indicate that God forgives those who ask for forgiveness and also forgive others.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Outline the Christian belief in original sin.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

This proved to be a very accessible question with many candidates gaining full marks. Many responses followed a narrative approach, describing the Fall in Genesis and its consequences. Some responses followed this with a description of the significance of salvation through Christ and also baptism as enabling the eradication of original sin.

Exemplar 1

Christians believe in the original sin which is the belief that the first sin was committed by Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God and ate from the tree of knowledge. They believe that as a result of that, all humans are born with that 'original sin' and are born sinful. [3]

This is a good exemplar of a concise and accurate response to the question which fulfils the command word 'Outline'.

The first mark comes from the identification of original sin as the first sin, which was committed by Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God. This is development, which gives the second mark. The third mark comes from the final statement that as a result, they believe all people are born with that original sin and are sinful.

Question 2 (c)

(c) Describe what is meant by **praying in the spirit**.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

Responses to this question were mixed. Many responses correctly linked the spirit in the question with the Holy Spirit. Less successful responses described the effects of praying in the spirit such as speaking in tongues (glossolalia), being slain in the spirit, being led by the spirit to speak or take an active part in charismatic worship.

Question 2 (d)

(d) Describe different Christian beliefs about the role of Christ in salvation.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [6]

Many responses referred to the belief that that Jesus' death in some way brought salvation. For example, Jesus' death as a sacrifice, or ransom which was supported by a source of wisdom and authority such as John 3.16 'God so loved the world.....'. As an alternative view, many responses referred to the need for Christians to follow the example of Jesus and live by his teaching to achieve salvation, even though his sacrifice could be considered to have dealt with problem of original sin. Examples of his teaching from the Sermon on the Mount were used to support this view. Other responses included the significance of the incarnation as showing the participation of God in the human experience. A few responses linked salvation to the role of Christ at the last judgement, referring to the parable of the sheep and the goats as a source of wisdom and authority.

Question 2 (e)*

(e)* 'All Christians should practise the Eucharist in the same way.'

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]

Responses to the stimulus showed a knowledge and understanding of the Eucharist and its basis in the last supper and Jesus' words. Many responses referred to the importance, for many Christians, of carrying out Jesus' instructions to 'do this in remembrance of me'. More successful responses showed an awareness of how different practices were the result of significantly different beliefs about the Eucharist. The significance of transubstantiation versus consubstantiation was explored very effectively in some responses and related well to how the Eucharist is regarded and practised in different denominations. Discussions sometimes referred to differences between denominations about who can participate fully in the Eucharist, how often it is celebrated and its significance in the overall pattern of worship. The best responses used knowledge of underlying beliefs and how they led to different approaches to focus on the issue in the stimulus of whether all Christians should practise this significant ritual in the same way. There were some interesting discussions about whether unity being pursued by denominations in the WCC required uniformity of practice for those denominations as well.

Being the final question there was some evidence that candidates were running short of time as some responses lacked a conclusion or finished abruptly. Over long responses to Question 1 (e) may have contributed to this problem for some candidates.

Supporting you

Teach Cambridge

Make sure you visit our secure website [Teach Cambridge](#) to find the full range of resources and support for the subjects you teach. This includes secure materials such as set assignments and exemplars, online and on-demand training.

Don't have access? If your school or college teaches any OCR qualifications, please contact your exams officer. You can [forward them this link](#) to help get you started.

Reviews of marking

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our post-results services. For full information about the options available visit the [OCR website](#).

Access to Scripts

We've made it easier for Exams Officers to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts'. Your centre can use these scripts to decide whether to request a review of marking and to support teaching and learning.

Our free, on-demand service, Access to Scripts is available via our single sign-on service, My Cambridge. Step-by-step instructions are on our [website](#).

Keep up-to-date

We send a monthly bulletin to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, [sign up here](#).

OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular professional development courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. Most of our courses are delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses for your subject on **Teach Cambridge**. You'll also find links to our online courses on NEA marking and support.

Signed up for ExamBuilder?

ExamBuilder is the exam paper builder platform for a range of our qualifications. [Find out more](#).

Free for all OCR centres with an Interchange account, it allows unlimited users per centre. We require an [Interchange](#) username to verify your centre's users for ExamBuilder.

If you do not have an Interchange account, please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username.

Once you have an Interchange username, use the form on [this page](#) to sign up for ExamBuilder, or ask an existing user at your centre to create an ExamBuilder account for you.

Active Results

Review students' exam performance with our free online results analysis tool. It is available for all GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Cambridge Nationals (examined units only).

[Find out more](#).

Tell us what you think

Your feedback plays an important role in how we develop, market, support and resource qualifications now and into the future. We want you and your students to enjoy and get the best out of our qualifications and resources, but to do that we need your honest opinions to tell us whether we're on the right track or not.

You can email your thoughts to resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk or visit our [feedback page](#) to learn more about how you can help us improve our resources.



Designing and testing in [collaboration with you](#) and your students



Helping young people develop an [ethical view of the world](#)



Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) are [part of everything we do](#)

Contact the team at:

☎ 01223 553998

🖥 ocr.org.uk

To stay up to date with all the relevant news about our qualifications, register for email updates at ocr.org.uk/updates

Visit our Online Support Centre at support.ocr.org.uk



OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

OCR is a Company Limited by Guarantee and an exempt charity. Registered in England. Registered office: The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA. Registered company number: 3484466.

We operate academic and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA as listed in their qualifications registers.

We are committed to providing a fully accessible experience across all our products, platforms, and websites. Find out more about our [accessibility standards](#).

© OCR 2025. All rights reserved. We retain the copyright on all our publications. However, our registered centres are permitted to copy and distribute our material for their own internal use, in line with any specific restrictions detailed in the publication. Find out more about our [copyright policies](#).

We update our publications regularly so please check you have the most up-to-date version.

We cannot be held responsible for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and do not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

When we update our specifications, you'll see a new version number and a summary of the changes. While we do our best to reflect these changes in all associated resources on [Teach Cambridge](#), if you notice any discrepancies, please refer to the latest specification on our website and [let us know](#).

Our resources do not represent any teaching method we expect you to use. We cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions in our resources.