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GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES (SHORT COURSE)

J125

For first teaching in 2016

J125/01 Summer 2023 series

# Contents

Introduction	3
Paper 1 series overview	4
Section A overview	5
Question 1 (a)	5
Question 1 (b)	5
Question 1 (c)	6
Question 1 (d)	6
Question 1 (e)	7
Question 2 (a)	8
Question 2 (b)	8
Question 2 (c)	8
Question 2 (d)	9
Question 2 (e)	9
Section B overview	10
Question 4 (a)	10
Question 4 (b)	11
Question 4 (c)	11
Question 4 (d)*	12
Section C overview	13
Question 7 (a)	13
Question 7 (b)	13
Question 7 (c)	14
Question 7 (d)*	16

#### 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 1 series overview

In general most candidates performed to a satisfactory level or higher. Those who performed well 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 and e essay questions the higher scoring responses demonstrated knowledge of a range of views, supported with relevant sources of wisdom and authority, the views of different groups within religions were compared and contrasted and there was evaluation related to the stimulus.

Candidates who performed less well often left questions unanswered. Some candidates did not score well on the part (d) and (e) essay questions; some presenting very brief and sometimes unspecific, generalised views, others presenting views as blocks of knowledge with no evaluation or conclusion and not including 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 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 and e responses.

It has been possible to award almost the full range of marks. The most popular combination of questions was Question 1, Question 2, Question 4 and Question 7. Christianity was the main religion studied, with Islam as the second most popular choice. Very few centres chose Judaism as the second religion.

Rubric requirements were adhered to well with very few candidates attempting more than the required responses.

There was very little evidence of candidates running out of time. Spelling, punctuation and grammar was generally very good.

<ul> <li>were able to explain reasons for differences, for example, different interpretations or conflicting teachings, with examples</li> <li>were able to link belief with impact, such as behaviour, and teaching with attitudes</li> <li>were able to analyse and evaluate</li> <li>did not fully address the question, for example explained different attitudes but not why they differed</li> <li>presented contrasting knowledge with sufficient analysis and evaluation</li> </ul>	Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
recognising validity of arguments and views points  • did not draw justified conclusions or make judgements on the stimulus.  • were able to draw justified conclusions.	<ul> <li>terminology</li> <li>were able to cite sources of wisdom and authority to support in their responses</li> <li>were able to explain reasons for differences, for example, different interpretations or conflicting teachings, with examples</li> <li>were able to link belief with impact, such as behaviour, and teaching with attitudes</li> <li>were able to analyse and evaluate, recognising validity of arguments and views points</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>did not cite relevant sources of wisdom and authority</li> <li>gave common sense/generalised responses</li> <li>did not fully address the question, for example, explained different attitudes but not why they differed</li> <li>presented contrasting knowledge with sufficient analysis and evaluation</li> <li>did not draw justified conclusions or make</li> </ul>

### Section A overview

Most candidates responded to Question 1 and in general did so to at least a satisfactory standard. More successful responses were able to show understanding of the technical terms, discuss different views within Christianity and provided support from sources of wisdom and authority. Many candidates were able to recognise and identify most technical terms and discuss more than one view within Christianity, sometimes attributed to a denomination. The questions were widely accessible and differentiated well with no significant issues identified.

Question 2 was the second most popular question. Most candidates were able to respond to a satisfactory level or above, demonstrating some knowledge of different views within Islam and providing some support from sources of wisdom and authority.

Question 3 has been removed as few responses were seen.

#### Question 1 (a)

#### 1 Christianity

(a) Outline what Christians mean when they describe God as omniscient.

[3]

Most candidates answered correctly that this term means 'all-knowing'. Many developed this with the idea of knowing past, present and future. Some linked the concept of knowledge to power, or God's role as creator leading to knowledge of His creation. A few candidates supported their response by referring to Isaiah 55:8; Psalm 139:4; Luke 5: 22-23 and Matthew 9: 4. Some candidates confused the term with omnipotence, omnipresence or omnibenevolence and answered incorrectly with 'all powerful', 'everywhere' or 'all loving'.

## Question 1 (b)

**(b)** Outline what is meant by the term 'natural evil'.

[3]

Most candidates were given 3 marks on this question by correctly identifying that natural evil was evil not caused by humans or beyond human control, then giving an example. The most common examples were tornadoes, hurricanes, tsunamis, or natural disasters as a blanket term. Some candidates added development that Christians view natural evil as a test from God and some linked the concept to original sin. Those who did not gain marks mostly mistakenly stated that natural evil is caused by humans/was natural evil that humans are born with.

#### Question 1 (c)

(c) Describe the significance of the term 'Son of God' for Christians.

[3]

Most candidates were able to identify that Jesus was the Son of God and able to develop this with the incarnation or the trinity. Some candidates addressed the significance by adding development about sacrifice, atonement, salvation or the importance of his teachings. Some responded that the term referred to the status of all humans as sons or children of God.

#### **OCR** support



The OCR glossary for J625/02 and J125/01 is available <u>here</u> on Teach Cambridge and will support the learning of terminology from the specification.

#### Question 1 (d)

(d) Outline Christian beliefs about salvation.

[6]

Many candidates knew the meaning of the term 'salvation', although a minority referred to 'salvage'. Many were able to develop the idea with links to the sacrifice of Jesus repairing the broken relationship, and original sin with links to the afterlife. Some candidates explained different views about this, such as through works or baptism or grace. Very few responses were able to do both and explain the term, the reason and method, and different beliefs about how salvation was achieved.

#### Question 1 (e)

(e) 'The Bible gives an accurate account of creation.'

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]

Most candidates wrote a relevant response to this question, which differentiated well. Very few Level 1 responses were seen, but there were also few Level 4 responses.

Many candidates were able to identify contrasting views within Christianity; that it was an accurate account because the Bible is the word of God with discussion of different interpretations including literal, metaphorical and that the accounts are myth. Some candidates discussed the presence of the trinity in creation and counter-argued with the unitarian rejection of the trinity. Some also put too much focus on Genesis 3 and the account of The Fall, with some discussing issues raised by the problem of evil. Many candidates wrongly attributed a literal interpretation to the Roman Catholic Church and a more liberal metaphorical interpretation to Quakers as an example of liberal Christians.

Many candidates at all levels were able to reference Genesis as a source of wisdom and authority. Some included Pope Francis's 2012 statement that God was not 'a magician with a magic wand' to support theistic evolution, a technical term used by some candidates. The chronology in Genesis 1 was used to either disagree with the statement 'sunlight not present until day four', or agree because of the recognition of God's omnipotence being responsible for the Big Bang (Day 1 – let there be light) and because there has been a mistranslation of the Hebrew word for day.

Some promising discussions remained in Level 2 for AO2 as they lacked any form of judgement on the issues and few responses had sufficient critical analysis and evaluation for Level 4. Many responses presented contrasting knowledge with some comment and comparison, but did not give a reasoned discussion with a balanced conclusion. The quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar was good overall.

#### Assessment for learning



Candidates would benefit from developing evaluation and analysis skills, rather than just presenting contrasting knowledge, and then learn how to develop their skills to weave this knowledge into a discussion and argument leading to a conclusion.

#### Question 2 (a)

#### 2 Islam

(a) Describe what is meant by the term 'risalah'.

[3]

This question differentiated well as many candidates received full marks, but it was also one of the questions most commonly left with either no response or incorrect responses. A common incorrect response was to say it was prayer, due to 'salah' forming the part of the term.

#### **OCR support for Section A**



For Question 2 (a), the OCR glossary for J625/02 and J125/01 is available <u>here</u> on Teach Cambridge and will support the learning of terminology from the specification.

#### Question 2 (b)

(b) Outline one Islamic belief about the Qur'an.

[3]

Most candidates were given some marks for this, with the most basic responses stating that it was the holy book. Many candidates outlined the Night of Power and some stated that it was uncorrupted and must not be translated. A common incorrect response was that it was written by Muhammed. This question specifically asked for one belief, and many candidates were able to give one belief with development, few gave a second belief but only their first belief was given the mark.

## Question 2 (c)

(c) Describe the role of the angel Jibril in Islam.

[3]

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There was much overlap in the responses to Questions 2 (c) and 2 (b). Many candidates described the role of Jibril in revealing the Qur'an, with developed detail about the Night of Power. Most candidates received some marks for other common responses, identifying Jibril's role as Allah's messenger developed with his revelation to Maryam about Isa, his role on the Day of Judgement and/or him being an important or chief angel.

#### Question 2 (d)

(d) Describe the importance of tawhid for Muslims.

[6]

Most candidates were able to identify tawhid as the 'oneness' of Allah, with some concise responses only stating this. Other more developed responses were able to describe the importance, such as its inclusion in both the Sunni Six Articles of Faith as well as one of the Shi'a Five Roots of Usul ad-Din. More developed responses also included the Shahada, how this is one of the Five Pillars and should be the first and last thing a Muslim hears. Many candidates were able to describe its importance with reference to shirk, and more developed responses described examples and the consequences and so linking to the importance of tawhid.

#### Question 2 (e)

(e) 'Allah cannot be both just and merciful.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Islam
- Refer to sources of wisdom and authority. [15]
   Spelling, punctuation and grammar [3]

Most candidates wrote a relevant response to this question, which differentiated well. Very few Level 1 responses were seen, but also few Level 4 responses. Many candidates were able to refer to different beliefs including the Sunni belief of Al-Qadr in contrast to the Shi'a belief of Divine Justice. The terms just and merciful were analysed and examples were given as to why Allah could be both (Qur'an, 99 names, Allah transcendent and beyond human understanding) and why Allah could not be both (the condemnation of unbelievers and the unfairness of forgiving some sinners but not all).

The problem of evil was referenced by some candidates with Allah allowing evil to exist also being used by some to argue for or against the stimulus. Once again, some promising discussions remained in Level 2 for AO2 as they lacked any form of judgement on the issues and few responses had sufficient critical analysis and evaluation for Level 4. A significant number of responses presented contrasting knowledge with some comment and comparison, but fell short of reasoned discussion with a balanced conclusion.

#### **Assessment for learning**



Candidates would benefit from developing evaluation and analysis skills, rather than just presenting contrasting knowledge, and then learn how to develop their skills to weave this knowledge into a discussion and argument leading to a conclusion.

#### Section B overview

Most candidates answered Question 4 with a very few responding to Question 5. No responses were seen to Question 6, with the exception of a rubric error that did not go beyond brief generalised statements. Question 4 allowed most candidates to make at least satisfactory responses and differentiated well, particularly in parts (b) and (c) with regard to depth, detail and use of relevant sources of wisdom and authority.

#### Question 4 (a)

#### 4 Christianity

(a) Outline one Christian view about divorce.

[3]

This question specifically asked for one view and most candidates were able to respond appropriately, although a minority went on to describe a second view which did not gain any marks. Those candidates who gained full marks usually responded from a Catholic stance emphasising that divorce was a legal status and not spiritual. Some stated that it was a sacrament or developed their response with a Biblical quote, for example 'a cord with three strands', or reference to the vows or spiritual bond with God. Candidates who gave a second view most commonly contrasted the view with the liberal view that allows divorce for circumstances such as adultery and abuse, or annulment as an alternative. Some candidates spent time writing far more than is required for a 3 mark response

#### Exemplar 1

		<u> </u>
4	a	Catholis believe that divorce is never acceptable
		and cannot be done as 'what God has boined
		together ut man not seperate. They are instead
		encorrege maniage counselling.
		9

Three marks can be achieved with a concise response, as seen here.

#### Question 4 (b)

**(b)** Describe Christian attitudes to same-sex marriage.

[6]

Most candidates responded to this well, with different Christian attitudes. God's command to 'go forth and multiply', Adam and Eve being opposite genders and Leviticus 20:13 were used as sources of wisdom and authority to oppose same-sex marriage. Candidates cited 'Roman Catholic' most commonly as the denomination who are opposed. Some candidates also stated that the Church of England are opposed and do not perform same-sex marriages, although some wrongly cited that they were in favour. Some better responses referenced the recent decision by the Church of England to bless same-sex marriages. This was contrasted with the Law on Civil Partnerships and same-sex marriage along with the Quaker acceptance and the Biblical command to 'love thy neighbour'. More detailed responses also included the Episcopal Church who perform same-sex marriages.

#### Question 4 (c)

(c) Explain why Christians might have different views about the roles of men and women.

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

[6]

This question differentiated well with some generalised responses about the traditional roles of men going to work to provide for and lead the household, and women at home doing housework and childcare that did not address why. More detailed responses explained different Biblical interpretations and church teaching. Most candidates offered some response. Egalitarian and complementarian views were commonly discussed, often linked to denominations of Roman Catholic as traditional and Church of England and/or Quakers as more liberal; sometimes exemplified with the stance on women priests.

More detailed responses used sources of wisdom authority well, including Genesis 1 and 2, Paul's statement in Galatians that there is 'neither male nor female' for 'all are one in Christ'. The view that the Bible was written during patriarchal eras was discussed by some, exemplified with the statement that Jesus' disciples were all men, although one or two did counter-argue this with the example of Mary Magdalene and other important women in the early church. Some otherwise promising responses did not include a source of wisdom and authority, as required by this question, so were not given marks above Level 1, but this was rare.

#### Question 4 (d)\*

(d)\* 'Christians should never have sex before they are married.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

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

[15]

The majority of candidates were able to give different Christian views on this stimulus with very few AO2 Level 1 responses seen, but also few Level 4 responses. Some responses included references to the Songs of Solomon and Hebrews 13: 4. Sex was seen as both procreative and unitive. The responses regarding God's command to 'go forth and multiply' sometimes diverted into arguments for and against contraception/abortion. References to abstinence and the 'silver ring' were made to support the statement and that the couple should only become 'one flesh' after marriage. There was also discussion of marriage as the only suitable place for children and this was used as an argument against sex before marriage. There were some misunderstandings seen. Some believed that premarital and extra marital sex are the same, confusing fornication with adultery and so relied on the Ten Commandments or 1 Corinthians 6:9 to support their response.

Some promising discussions remained in Level 2 for AO2 as they lacked any form of judgement on the issue and few responses had sufficient critical analysis and evaluation for Level 4. Some top-level responses were seen and a significant number of responses presented contrasting knowledge with some comment and comparison but fell short of reasoned discussion with a balanced discussion.

#### **Misconception**



A common misconception was to equate premarital sex, fornication with extra marital sex, adultery and make this the focus of the discussion and cite sources of wisdom of authority, such as the 7th Commandment.

#### **OCR support for Section B**



The OCR glossary for J625/02 and J125/01 is available <u>here</u> on Teach Cambridge and will support the learning of terminology from the specification.

#### Section C overview

The vast majority of candidates answered Question 7 with a very few responding to Question 8. No responses were seen to Question 9 with the exception of a rubric error that did not go beyond brief generalised statements. Question 7 allowed the majority of candidates to make at least satisfactory responses and differentiated well, particularly in part c with regard to depth, detail and use of relevant sources of wisdom an authority.

#### Question 7 (a)

#### 7 Christianity

(a) Outline the role of faith schools.

[3]

Most candidates were given 2 or 3 marks for their responses, showing that they understood the role of faith schools. Some gave more detail than was needed for 3 marks, which when under time pressure is not advised.

#### Question 7 (b)

(b) Describe how the role of religion in public life might affect Christians.

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

[6]

Many candidates cited the role of Christianity in Great Britain, including the Monarch as the head of the church, the calendar following Christian festivals and Sunday seen as a day of rest; the spiritual Lords in Parliament; Christian values/teachings such as the Ten Commandments. However, fewer were able to explain how these would affect Christians. Some explained how Protestant/Church of England Christians would be happy with the status quo, whereas other Christian denominations not represented in Parliament might be upset/concerned at the lack of their representation. Similar to previous years many candidates struggled to respond to the diversity part and were unable to progress to Level 3, despite some good descriptions relevant to the question. David Cameron's comment 'this is a Christian country....' was referred to by some and this fulfilled that requirement. Some candidates did refer to diversity of religions and secularisation, citing census figures, but were unable to explain how this would affect Christians other than a simplistic statement such as this would upset or isolate them.

#### Assessment for learning



Exam technique/skills: part (b) of this section always includes the instruction '*In your response you must consider the fact that religious traditions in Great Britain are diverse, but mainly Christian*' although only a minority of candidates address this.

#### Question 7 (c)

(c) Explain why Christians might disagree with the law on abortion.

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

[6]

Candidates were able to address why Christians might be opposed to abortion, which is allowed under UK law (if certain criteria are met), and were able to support this view with sources of wisdom and authority such as 'the sanctity of life' (knitted in the womb/Psalm 139 or Jeremiah 1:5; Ten Commandments; the Didache; or God's command to procreate). Some responses addressed the advantages and disadvantages of abortion, or the stances between pro-choice and pro-life, and did not recognise that they were supposed to explain the problems Christians have with the law. Other responses demonstrated some knowledge of the law, such as the 24 week limit for most reasons. Some candidates also included why Christians might be in favour of the law to allow abortion under certain circumstances, which was not directly relevant to what had been asked. More Level 1 and 2 responses were seen compared to previous part (d) responses in the paper. This might be related to this being the final question on the paper, and time constraints, or it might relate to the topic of the question.

#### Exemplar 2

7	۷	In the UN it is legal to howe an abortion but, unless
		in cost emergency cases, two doctors home to
		approve the abortion and I must happen before the
		pregnancy has last 24 weeks. Some Christians may
		disagree with this due to the that as they believe
		conception starts when the egg has been fertilised
		and therefore howing an abortion is wrong and
		should not happen because it hills an innovent life.
		Not only is blue immoral, but it goes against the 6th
		commandment which ays "Bo not muder." They
		may also disagree with the low because they think
		that the control had as many make as a ke
		that the footis how just as many rights as a to
		buby or ashit & they should not be hilled. They also
		may disagree because at they may think aborton
		goes against the Christian belief of the genging
		of life because it suggests that the unbern child
		is unmanted and therefore that its like is not
	_	special or important. They may also think that
	_	abortion interferer with God's plan becouse y
		no get progrand initially, it because he nanted &
		to as a pert of his plan
	l	

This is a Level 3 response where the candidate concisely addresses reasons why Christians would oppose the law, supported with relevant sources of wisdom and authority.

#### Question 7 (d)\*

(d)\* 'Arranged marriage should not be allowed in a secular state.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

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

[15]

This question had two areas to be addressed: arranged marriage and the secular state. Many candidates gave some strong arguments against arranged marriages (choice/consent/love), but the arguments in support were not as strong. Some responses referenced the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment, however, many did not address the 'secular state' part of the question other than just writing 'in a secular state' in their introduction or conclusion. Some candidates demonstrated knowledge of what a secular state is, citing France, for example. Candidates were not able to suggest whether secularisation would support or not allow arranged marriages to occur in a satisfactory manner, with the exception of contrasting freedom with the idea of preventing religious restrictions. Some candidates equated arranged marriage with forced marriage, and some made the distinction but argued that the former might lead to the latter as a reason against it. Very few acknowledged that arranged marriage can be a free choice, although cultural and religious reasons were cited as evidence to support arranged marriage.

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