

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

J625

For first teaching in 2016

J625/02 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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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. 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 can be downloaded from OCR.

Assessment structure change

Following feedback from teachers and examiners, we are replacing the 6-mark combined assessment objective questions in GCSE Religious Studies J625. These changes will make our assessment more straightforward for students, teachers and examiners. We have also made a minor change to a level of response descriptor in the mark scheme. These changes will be introduced for the 2020 exam series.

What has changed?

- For Components 01–05 (Beliefs and teachings and Practices) the 6-mark question which was previously assessed using a combination of AO1 and AO2, is being replaced by a 6-mark question which will be assessed using **AO1 only**.
- For Components 06–10 (the religion, philosophy and ethics papers) there are two 6-mark questions. One will continue to be assessed using AO1, and the other which previously used a combination of AO1 and AO2, will now be assessed using **AO2 only**.
- In our levels of response descriptors we have changed 'adequate but underdeveloped' to 'satisfactory'.
- We **haven't** changed 15 mark questions which are assessed using a combination of AO1 and AO2, or made any changes to the specification content.

How are we supporting you?

We have updated the sample assessment materials to reflect these changes for 'Christianity Beliefs and teachings and Practices', 'Religion, philosophy and ethics in the modern world from a Christian perspective', so you can see what our new question papers and mark schemes will look like. These can be found under the assessment tab on the GCSE Religious Studies qualification pages. We will update the sample assessment materials for the remaining components ready for teaching in September 2019.

In September we are hosting a webinar which will add further clarification to this update, and answer any questions which this might raise. Look out for more information on how to book your space on this in the next few weeks.

In September we will also provide a candidate exemplar resource, which will provide more details about these changes to help your students become familiar with the knowledge and skills needed in our qualification.

If you would like further information please contact the Religious Studies Subject Advisor on 01223 553998 or email religious.studies@ocr.org.uk.

Paper 2 series overview

GCSE Religious Studies Paper 2 is the Islam: Beliefs and teachings & Practices paper. It assesses both candidates' knowledge and understanding of key elements which are part of Islam as it is practiced in the contemporary world and the ability to discuss and evaluate the impact of Islamic belief and practice on different groups of Muslims.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally demonstrated the ability to use their examination time effectively, not writing too extensive responses to the short-answer, points-marked questions (a-c) and dedicating more of the available time to the more extended responses.

Candidates who did less well had often missed out or not attempted some questions. They were also often those who were restricted in their discursive responses to part e questions. Many candidates clearly used writing frames to structure their responses but too rigid an adherence to these can, and does, inhibit actual engagement with the issue. There is limited value in concluding a paragraph or section with the declaration that a particular point is strong or weak if the ability to analyse and communicate why that might be judged to be the case is not developed. Candidates who deploy their knowledge more discursively, offering an argument or viewpoint and a counter or alternative to it for example, tended to achieve better analysis because they were making explicit connection between perspectives rather than considering them in isolation. Responses that are structured into blocks of self-contained viewpoints, without explicit relationship or connection being drawn between them are unlikely to achieve the higher level of marks because they lack discursive engagement.

<i>Most successful responses</i>	<i>Least successful responses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated an understanding and familiarity with important concepts in the study of Islam and the ability to select and apply that knowledge • Indicated awareness of how religious belief and practice impacts on/relates to everyday living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showed confusion over meaning of technical terms used in the question, which prevented successful application of knowledge • Demonstrated difficulty in relating understanding of common and divergent views to the issue in the question

Question 1 (a)

1 (a) State **three** ways in which Allah is omnipotent.

1

2

3

[3]

Most candidates were able to offer at least some examples of Allah using or demonstrating power. The range of creditable material included reference to the various roles Allah is ascribed by Muslims, actions Allah is believed to undertake, such as determining when the Last Day will be, and specific examples of miracles.

Most candidates gained at least some of the available marks here; those who did not gain all three most commonly had offered three examples of the same power - such as listing three different things Allah created - which does not constitute three distinct expressions of omnipotence.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Give the names of **three** angels in Islam.

1

2

3

[3]

Most candidates were able to gain these marks, giving the names of angels listed in the specification. A few offered names of angels which are not so listed and, where these were correct, they were credited. Anglicised and phonetic spellings were credited where the meaning was clear.

Where candidates did not gain the marks it was usually because they had confused the names of prophets with those of angels - Ishmael and Musa were among the most commonly offered.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Describe **one** way in which belief in the recording angels might affect the life of a Muslim.

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[3]

The majority of candidates gave confident responses to this question, referencing the recording of deeds and the relationship of this to judgement and the afterlife. A few candidates appeared to have missed the term 'recording' in the question and wrote more generally about belief in angels, which was not a creditable response in terms of the requirement of the question.

Question 1 (d)

(d) Explain the importance of Eid-ul-Ghadeer for different groups of Muslims.

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[6]

This question was left unattempted by some candidates. Responses were often brief and there appeared to be a lot of confusion about which Eid this is with some offering material about other festivals.

Among those able to identify the correct event in terms of the association with Ali or the Prophet's Last Sermon candidates could be divided into those who knew that this was more important for Shi'a Muslims and those who didn't, and then divided again into those who knew why that was the case and those who didn't, with those who knew both things being the minority.

Exemplar 1

One reason Eid-ul-Ghadeer is important to Shi'a Muslims is that Muhammad named his successor. Muhammad set up a tent in which all believers ~~betrayed~~ paid pledged allegiance to Ali as his successor. Sunni Muslims do not believe this happened but instead believe Muhammad wanted Muslims to respect Ali.

Another reason Eid ul Ghadeer is important is that Shi'a Muslims acknowledge that Ali was to be the first of twelve Imams. When reciting the Shahadah, Shi'a Muslims say 'I bear witness there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger and Ali is his Wali'. This shows that Shi'a Muslims ^{acknowledge} [6] ^{Their} ^{faith} ^{for} ^{Ali}.

Exemplar 1 shows a response where the candidate deployed their knowledge effectively in direct response to the question; the candidate demonstrates knowledge and understanding of what Eid-ul-Ghadeer commemorates as well as why different groups feel differently about those events.

Question 1 (e)

(e) " 'Fair and just' is the best way to understand Allah."

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]

The most common approach to this question was to focus on the meaning of the terms 'fair' and 'just' and to explain these in relation to the way life can appear to be neither. For the stronger responses this involved some discussion about concepts such as predestination or more generally philosophical ideas like the problem of evil. Weaker responses often turned into accounts of some of the terrible things that happen in the world without then relating this back to the idea of a fair and/or just deity overseeing all of that. Most candidates were able to offer differing perspectives on the issue by either exploring different Muslim approaches to predestination and omniscience, or by arguing that there are so many names given to Allah no single one can be the best or simply by taking the view that Allah is wholly beyond human understanding.

Overall most candidates handled the question effectively, with no obvious misunderstanding or confusion about the issue to be considered.

Question 2 (a)

2 (a) Give **three** groups of people who are exempt from fasting in Ramadan.

1

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2

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3

.....

[3]

Almost all candidates gained all three marks here.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Name **three** places that Muslims visit during the Hajj pilgrimage.

1

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2

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3

.....

[3]

This proved a more problematic question than might have been expected. Exemplar 2 shows a typical example of how candidates struggled with specific names for places.

Some candidates knew things that are done on Hajj but did not have the names of places and so could not gain the marks. Others knew that Makkah, or Saudi Arabia is the main location, but struggled to offer anything further. Some candidates didn't even offer these but gave sites of pilgrimage from other religions, such as Lourdes, or even a selection of more general tourist attractions.

Exemplar 2

1 *Pillars at Mina*

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2 *The kabbah*

.....

3 *The Grand mosque at Mecca*

.....

Question 2 (c)

(c) Outline the purpose of the khutba.

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[3]

This question was commonly left unattempted and, equally commonly, wholly misunderstood. Candidates appeared confused by the term Khutba, with a substantial number thinking they had been asked about the Kab'aa and an almost equally large number focussing on Khutub.

Question 2 (d)

(d) Explain the importance of du'a prayers in the life of a Muslim.

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[6]

Candidates generally had a lot to say about prayer, and there was creditable material to be picked out from this. However, they were less good at being clear or explicit on the difference between salah and du'a prayers. A minority clearly did not know the difference, but most did, they simply did not target their knowledge to the question they had been asked. Most responses included more about salah than they did about du'a.

Question 2 (e)

(e)* 'The best way for a Muslim to prepare for the afterlife is to perform Hajj.'

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]

Most candidates showed good knowledge of the Hajj here - even those who apparently struggled with 2b usually managed to include relevant material for this question. Most took the view that as one of the pillars Hajj is a useful part of preparing for the afterlife but only one part of a whole lifetimes preparation. The discursive aspects of the response tended to take the form of considering some or all of the other pillars and their importance relative to Hajj.

Overall most candidates handled the question effectively, with no obvious misunderstanding or confusion about the issue to be considered.

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