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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

J625
For first teaching in 2016

# J625/03 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

Contents

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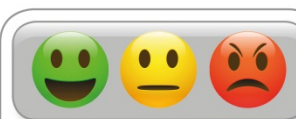
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Introduction

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 exam 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 3 series overview

J625/03 is a one hour paper which includes two 30 mark questions, each broken down into five parts. There are three questions worth three marks, followed by a six mark and a fifteen mark question. All the assessment objectives are assessed in the course of the paper. The three mark questions target AO1. On the longer answer questions, both AO1 and AO2 are assessed. Candidates must attempt all parts of the paper and additional marks are given for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Candidates need to have a good knowledge and understanding of Jewish beliefs, practices and teachings. They must also have the ability to analyse and evaluate the issues that these aspects of the faith might raise. In doing so they should refer to sources of wisdom and authority. Candidates must be able to use the available time effectively and communicate with appropriate spelling, punctuation and grammar. Candidates are not penalised for misspelling words transliterated from the Hebrew.

The time spent on questions should be dictated by the number of marks available. It is crucial that candidates devote adequate time and effort to part e responses. The space available in the answer booklet is indicative of how much a candidate should write for each question. Time-consuming and complicated essay planning is rarely of benefit although a few brief notes and some acronyms can be of help. One of the main challenges for candidates following this specification is to address two assessment objectives in the space of one question. Part d questions primarily deal with knowledge and understanding. Due to the nature of the question, examiners had no expectation of seeing any evaluative responses. In this context, analysis was interpreted as 'deeper understanding' and one or two marks were given accordingly. Part e questions primarily deal with analysis and evaluation. Up to three marks were given for knowledge and understanding and these were often apparent. It is important for candidates to make clear reference to sources of wisdom and authority. Candidates are no longer required to overtly present their own opinion.

Once again, there were very many examples of good knowledge, understanding, analysis and evaluation. Many different effective revision strategies were apparent and exemplary teaching was evident in the way candidates approached the questions. Centres are increasingly coming to terms with the new format. In general, candidates made good use of the available time. They were able to make clear references to sacred texts and they communicated effectively.

As was the case last year, there was some confusion between Judaism and other faiths, especially Christianity and, to a lesser extent, Islam. In particular, many candidates had been coached to set out the attitudes of different Jewish denominations. This was rarely done well. Candidates regularly display simplistic and stereotypical understandings of the Jewish denominations. If they are encouraged to make reference to Orthodox and Progressive Judaism, then they must be properly informed of the main beliefs and differences in practice.

Question 1 (a)

1   (a)   State **three** Jewish beliefs about Shekinah.

1 ....

....

2 ....

....

3 ....

.... **[3]**

Candidates, perhaps unsurprisingly, found this to be the most challenging of the shorter answer questions. A significant number left the question unanswered, while others confused the Shekinah with a festival, a sacred text and so on. Exemplar 1 shows the kinds of responses that were credited.

Exemplar 1

1   (a)   State **three** Jewish beliefs about Shekinah.

1 ~~femial~~ a eenisuline aspect of God

2 was the cloud on sinai

3 God's presence on earth

.... **[3]**

Question 1 (b)

(b)   Name the **three** Pilgrim Festivals.

1 ....

....

2 ....

....

3 ....

.... **[3]**

Although the concept of a 'festival' was familiar to nearly all, there was some confusion here. While many readily identified the three festivals, a significant number of candidates proposed Yom Kippur, Shabbat and so on.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Give **three** negative commandments.

1 ....

....

2 ....

....

3 ....

.... [3]

This question was well answered. Many gave examples from The Ten Commandments, though not exclusively, as may be seen in Exemplar 2. Exact wording was not required and written and oral commandments were credited. The main misconception was related to what constituted a 'negative' commandment.

Exemplar 2

1 do not kill

2 do not cook a kid in its mother's milk

3 dont commit adultery
[3]

Question 1 (d)

(d) Explain different Jewish views about the connection between the synagogue and the Temple.

....

....

....

....

....

.... **[6]**

Some candidates were able to achieve their marks via a historical survey of the connections between the two institutions. Others were more inclined to make links between the artefacts. Both approaches were worthy and some responses incorporated a combination. Weaker candidates were inclined to assume that the Temple was being used for worship and that the synagogue was an alternative for Reform Judaism, for example. The main misconception was this idea that the Temple was still being used for worship by the Jewish community.

Question 1 (e)

(e) 'The existence of suffering makes it impossible to believe in G-d.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Judaism

- Refer to sources of wisdom and authority.   **[15]**

✎ Spelling, punctuation and grammar **[3]**

In general, candidates performed well on this question. They made use of many traditional justifications for G-d's existence in the face of suffering. These included the ideas of free will, testing and a punishment. Most recognised why suffering might be problematic in the first place. Some impressive use was made of the story of Job and effective reference to the Holocaust and the challenges that it poses for religious belief. The discussions of Job supported the need to include references to sources of wisdom and authority. At times, candidates also alluded to the Creations stories in Genesis but these were not always viewed from a Jewish perspective. The main concerns, other than the misuse of Jewish denominations, related to the attribution of Christian concepts like original sin and The Fall to Judaism. In order to address the common and divergent views, candidates would be advised to avoid specifying denominations, unless they are confident in their understanding of what the members actually believe. Examiners will credit different views that are not necessarily attributed.

Question 2 (a)

2   (a)   State **three** reasons why Jews might pray.

1 ....

....

2 ....

....

3 ....

.... **[3]**

> This question was well answered. Candidates identified the standard responses of Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication, as in Exemplar 3. More generic responses relating to 'bringing them closer to G-d' were also credited.

Exemplar 3

1 *Thanksgiving* ....

2 *Adoration* ....

3 *Confession* .... **[3]**

Question 2 (b)

(b) Give **three** Jewish beliefs about the nature of the Messianic Age.

1 ....

....

2 ....

....

3 ....

.... **[3]**

This was another well answered question, despite the tendency of some candidates to refer to the 'return' of the Messiah. This misconception relates to Christian beliefs about the Messiah. Examiners interpreted more general observations about the nature of the Messiah as pertaining to the Messianic Age and credited these accordingly. Many candidates correctly referred to the ingathering of the exiles, the rebuilding of the Temple and a time of peace.

Question 2 (c)

(c) State **three** ways in which the Tenakh is significant for Jews in their daily lives.

1 ....

....

2 ....

....

3 ....

.... **[3]**

A significant number of candidates did not know what the Tenakh was. Those that confused it with the Torah were not badly affected, but others made reference to the tallit, tephillin, Talmud and so on. These latter misconceptions could be more costly for candidates. Examiners credited responses that referred to both beliefs and practices as both approaches were seen as relevant to the question. That said, where there was too much evidence of overlap, marks were not given.

Question 2 (d)

(d) Explain different views in Judaism about the importance of Abraham.

....

....

....

....

....

.... [6]

Many candidates were able to set out the main features of the Abrahamic covenant and discuss the importance of the covenant to Jews today. A significant minority unfortunately confused Abraham with Moses and discussed the covenant on Sinai and the Passover instead. This was the most common misconception reported by examiners. There were good discussions of the significance of monotheism, circumcision and the binding of Isaac, as in Exemplar 4. Some used certain aspects of his life as being less relevant to Jews today and this was credited as relating to 'different views'. There was, once again, a tendency for some to misrepresent different Jewish denominations and to stereotype attitudes towards circumcision and the Promised Land, for example.

Exemplar 4

(d) Explain different views in Judaism about the importance of Abraham:

Jews believe that everyone jewish was descended from Abraham, as he was the first Jew by choice. His significance is confirmed through the Abrahamic covenant, expressed in Genesis 17. The covenant is that it all male jews are circumsised, Brit milah, jews will recieve the promised land. All jewish boys will have been circumsised. For Orthodox jews it might be because they believe the Torah to be the direct word of God. For Reform jews, although they don't believe the Torah to be divine, they may still participate in this act of worship as it makes them feel part of a chain of tradition. For both, the Brit milah is transformative, as it Abrahams importance as it will lead them to the promised land, something that became particularly necessary after the Shoah. [6]

Question 2 (e)

(e)* 'Judaism could not survive without Shabbat.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

*   Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Judaism

*   Refer to sources of wisdom and authority. [15]

Most candidates correctly identified the Sabbath, although a small minority confused the day with Passover. Aside from the ubiquitous misuse of Jewish denominations, most were able to discuss and analyse the importance of Shabbat. It is important to reiterate that candidates should not be advised not to specify Jewish denominations, unless they are sure of what these groups believe and how they celebrate. The need to refer to common and divergent views is better addressed by discussing more general themes and attitudes within the faith. Candidates explored its importance to the family and to the community, making reference to the Friday night meal and the synagogue service on Saturday morning. Use was often made of the Creation Story and The Ten Commandments in emphasising the significance of the day and in addressing the need to reference sources of wisdom and authority. That said, candidates might have been advised to refer more closely to the stimulus. In doing so they might have focused more on the notion of surviving, rather than just the importance of Shabbat. Those that did focus on survival, often held up other practices as being more important in ensuring that the religion might continue. This was a sensible and effective way to approach the question and fairly reflected the stimulus.

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