

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

J625

For first teaching in 2016

J625/07 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 7 series overview

OCR GCSE Religious Studies 9-1 enables centres and candidates to choose optional papers to specialise in particular faiths and the perspectives they take on issues. Paper 7 is one of a series which enables candidates to specialise in looking at issues from a Muslim perspective. Common issues, such as views about God, war and peace and so on, are studied. Candidates are encouraged to look into different perspectives from Muslims within the faith tradition, to help them to appreciate diversity.

For candidates to be successful in this paper it is important that they know and understand sources of wisdom and authority as relevant to the different topics, and employ them in their answers. They should demonstrate awareness of the issues raised and their significance in the modern world. Successful candidates will be aware of different Muslim perspectives and be able to discuss them, particularly in part (d) responses.

A full range of responses was received, including those which scored very few marks right up to those which scored well over 100 marks, in the paper which was marked out of 126. However, there were many weak papers and far fewer excellent responses. In this year's paper, topics 1 and 4 proved the most challenging, with candidates finding celibacy and Civil Partnerships in topic 1, and the role of the Church of England in public life and secularism in topic 4, the most difficult. By contrast, the use of world resources and genetic manipulation were well understood.

A significant number of candidates missed out most or all of Question 4, suggesting they had run out of time. Time management is therefore an issue centres are advised to emphasise with candidates. Some candidates covered the questions in the wrong order, but there was no evidence this made any difference to their overall mark. In some cases, these scripts missed one or two questions and the risk for candidates taking this approach is that they accidentally miss out one or two parts as it may be more difficult for them to keep track of what they have already answered.

Some candidates referred to sources of wisdom and authority well, whereas others omitted them. It is worth underlining that reference to these are important features of good responses for parts (c) and (d) questions. Sources of wisdom and authority might be quotes, as in the case of the Qur'an and Hadith, or generally referred to, and other sources such as Imams could also be mentioned.

The best responses to part (d) extended questions focused specifically on the stimulus given. Many mid-range responses follow a formula of agree and disagree, but where this covered the topic but did not address the specific focus of the statement given, the answer fell short. According to the AO2 descriptors, some measure of analysis is needed and if the focus of the statement given is missed then it is difficult to come to a valid conclusion, usually restricting a response to Level 2. Often candidates were able to refer to relevant knowledge sufficient for the demands of the question, but struggled to interpret and discuss it sufficiently to achieve higher marks.

Question 1 (a)

1 Relationships and families

(a) State **three** purposes of the family according to Muslims.

[3]

The purposes of the family were generally identified with many candidates gaining 2 or 3 marks out of 3. Some candidates described families or what they did, rather than identifying the purpose according to Muslims.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Describe Muslim attitudes towards celibacy.

[6]

The best responses, of which there were few, differentiated between celibacy in different situations: outside of marriage as opposed to within marriage; and some mentioned alternative sexualities. Most candidates wrote that Muslims opposed celibacy as it was seen as a duty to marry. Some candidates mistook the meaning of celibacy.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Explain how culture influences the views of Muslims about equality.

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

[6]

Many candidates wrote about the importance of equality in Islam, the implication being that culture should not influence Muslim views. Some wrote about aspects of culture, such as the position of women, and situations where women felt under pressure to marry despite their right to refuse according to Islamic tradition. Not all candidates understood what culture was.

Question 1 (d)

(d) 'Muslims should accept Civil Partnerships.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Draw on your learning from across your course of study, including reference to beliefs, teachings and practices within Islam
- Explain and evaluate the importance of points of view from the perspective of Islam. [15]

 Spelling, punctuation and grammar [3]

Not all candidates knew what Civil Partnerships were but most did and were able to write a balanced argument. Many responses cited traditional Islamic teachings which are said to prohibit homosexual Civil Partnerships, and then argued that others might refer to the free will Muslims are given to take their own decisions and therefore live according to the way they feel is right for them. A few found common ground in the Islamic nikah as a contract with the idea of a Civil Partnership as a formal contract, which was an interesting angle in favour of the argument.

Exemplar 1

The Qur'an details a story of the ummah of Musroth luth (pbuh) where ~~the people of~~ his people indulged in same sex relationships. Though he tried to convince them to change their ways they continued. The people were punished and ~~hot~~ fireballs were thrown into the city and they perished. Some Muslims take this as evidence not to indulge in such activities. ~~USA~~

Some Muslims do however support the LGBT cause and argue that Allah made everyone in "pairs" and that does not necessarily mean that the 'pair' is between a man and a woman. Websites such as imam.org support and give advice for those facing the problem of dealing with being Gay or Lesbian.

This is an extract from an extended essay in response to 1d. The response refers to sources of wisdom and authority and shows understanding of different views within Islam. The response demonstrates adequate but underdeveloped analysis – this could be further expanded in detail. The full response overall, with a conclusion, meets the criteria for AO2 Level 3.

Question 2 (a)

2 The existence of Allah

(a) Give three forms of religious experience.

[3]

Candidates generally did not know what a religious 'experience' was as opposed to an action, and most described actions such as the Five Pillars of birth rites. Some did identify visions, dreams, Sufi dhikr/zikr experiences among others.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Outline Muslim beliefs about Allah as good.

[6]

This was well answered and many candidates referred to sources of wisdom and authority, such as the names of Allah contained in the Qur'an, to help them explain why Muslims believe Allah is good.

Question 2 (c)

(c) Explain how reading scripture might help Muslims believe in Allah.

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

[6]

Responses for this question were generally reasonable and a few candidates referred to specific passages, parables or stories within the Qur'an, such as miracles of Jesus (Isa) or the Hadith recording the Night Journey of Muhammad, as evidence which helped Muslims believe in Allah's existence and power. Others interpreted the question in terms of personal devotion and explained how the practice of a Muslim in reading the Qur'an helped them to believe. Both approaches were valid.

Question 2 (d)

(d) 'Humans have the right to use the world and its resources in any way they want.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Draw on your learning from across your course of study, including reference to beliefs, teachings and practices within Islam
- Explain and evaluate the importance of points of view from the perspective of Islam. [15]

 Spelling, punctuation and grammar [3]

This question was fairly well answered on the whole. Many candidates referred to humankind as 'khalifahs' or guardians of what Muslims regard as Allah's creation, and therefore should not treat it any way they liked but adhere to Allah's commands. On the other hand, many quoted traditions suggesting the world was a gift from Allah to be used and enjoyed by people. Some candidates interpreted resources very widely and discussed weapons and medical ethics. With environmental matters being topical in the news this year, many candidates were well informed and able to make a discussion out of this stimulus.

Question 3 (a)

3 Religion, peace and conflict

(a) Describe **one** Muslim teaching about attitudes towards violence in society.

[3]

Candidates generally wrote that Muslims opposed violence. Many did not respond to the aspect of the question which asked them to consider violence 'in society' and instead wrote about war.

Question 3 (b)

(b) Describe how Muslims might help to work for peace.

[6]

There were some reasonable answers for this question. Note that it asked about how, and not why, Muslims might help work for peace. Some candidates gave a justification but did not describe any method of working for peace, but better responses identified particular ways of peace-making. Peace could be worked for in different situations: to make peace between countries, between different communities or even individuals and all were considered valid responses.

Question 3 (c)

(c) Why might a Muslim want to challenge social injustice?

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

[6]

Not all candidates understood the question was about social injustice. Those who did often mentioned Muslims should challenge injustices, such as when women were not treated equally, or when Muslims faced prejudice such as being denied equal opportunities when applying for a job. The best responses referred to sources of wisdom and authority to explain why Muslims ought to challenge social injustice, and quoted from the Qur'an or from examples from Muhammad's Sunnah of examples, mostly contained in the Hadith.

Question 3 (d)

(d)* 'Muslims cannot be pacifists.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Draw on your learning from across your course of study, including reference to beliefs, teachings and practices within Islam
- Explain and evaluate the importance of points of view from the perspective of Islam. [15]

The best responses referred to different types of pacifism and general emphasis of peace and peace-making within Islam, balanced by the existence of teachings about lesser Jihad, and the conditions for this. While most candidates identified different views, the best were able to discuss the significance of 'cannot' in the stimulus quotation, pointing out that a few Muslims chose to be pacifists and they had the freedom to make that interpretation, as opposed to most who took a more nuanced position.

Exemplar 2

One on hand, Muslims may believe they cannot be absolute pacifists. This means that violence is often the right answer under any circumstance and this cannot be done in Islam according to many Muslims because Mohammed (pbuh) did fight wars. A Muslim may say that they can't be absolute pacifists because if they were then they wouldn't be able to follow the Sunnah of Mohammed. Also the Quran says that Muslims must 'only fight those who fight you' in Surah 4:7-40 telling us that Muslims can't be absolute pacifists if they are permitted to fight in self defence. Also for conditional pacifism is seen as more accepted in Islam because it can be justified and follows Mohammed's acts. Muslims may use violence as long as no civilians are harmed, a religious leader declares it, as a last resort and if the enemy ask for peace it must be granted. Conditional pacifism can be

Two short extracts from an extended response to 3d are shown here.

The response demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of sources of wisdom and authority for AO1, appropriately chosen and relevant to this question.

There is some evidence of critical evaluation in the exploration of different types of pacifism, and the handling of different views within Islam for AO2.

Question 4 (a)

4 Dialogue between religious and non-religious beliefs and attitudes

(a) State **three** occasions when Muslims might join interfaith dialogue.

[3]

A variety of occasions were identified for interfaith dialogue, although some were too short to be given a mark. Mosque, for example, was insufficient; a mosque open day, where those of other faiths might attend and discuss, was a better response.

Question 4 (b)

(b) Describe the attitudes some Muslims might have towards the role of the Church of England in public life.

In your response you must consider that religious traditions in Great Britain are diverse, but mainly Christian. [6]

This question was poorly answered. Some candidates wrote about general similarities, or differences, between Islam and Christianity. Few specifically identified the role of the Church of England. A few mentioned particular occasions, such as Remembrance, or the importance of Bishops in the House of Lords, which some said Muslims might welcome as a means to air religious views, and others thought Muslims might have less favourable attitudes towards.

Exemplar 3

Some Muslims might dislike the role or power and authority that the church of England has in the public life. This is because they could argue that society is diverse, and there are many other religions around, worldwide, therefore such as Islam, therefore it is wrong to impose their religious laws on the rest of the public. Muslims could argue that having them as the part of the 'House of Lords' is unfair and promotes anti-diversity and in some cases, even racism. They could argue that Islam is faster growing, therefore should be represented more in public. Some other Muslims may argue that Muslims ~~can~~ should be fine with the COE in public life, because the UK is not a Muslim place. They may also argue that they have a similar belief system to Muslims, therefore should be acceptable to be the main faith with the most power in public.

This response is adequate but underdeveloped, reaching band 2 for knowledge, 3 marks.

Some aspects of religion in public life and Muslim attitudes towards it are recognised but could be further expanded on.

Question 4 (c)

(c) Explain why some Muslims might disagree with secularism.

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

[6]

This question was not well answered. Few understood what secularism is. Those who did argued that some Muslims might disagree because of the belief that everything was connected with following a way of life ordained by Allah. Some chose specific matters where issues might be dealt with differently by a secular authority than guidance considered from a religious authority.

Question 4 (d)

(d)* 'Muslims should never take part in genetic manipulation.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Draw on your learning from across your course of study, including reference to beliefs, teachings and practices within Islam
- Explain and evaluate the importance of points of view from the perspective of Islam. [15]

Genetic manipulation was well understood and most candidates were able to make a balanced discussion in response to this quotation. Many argued that Allah created people, plants and animals as intended and willed and Muslims should not interfere. To counter this, others argued that curing diseases and providing food security could be positive outcomes from genetic manipulation. The best answers ensured reference was made to sources of wisdom and authority in Islam to back up arguments made.

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